



Introduction

- Today there are about 400,000 children in foster care in the United States
- Children ages five and under make up the largest percentage of children in foster care
- The most common reason for placement in foster care is neglect
- Reunification with their family of origin is the first goal for children who have been placed in foster care
- The likelihood of reunification decreases the longer a child is in foster care
- Looking at different factors that affect reunification and the time that it takes to achieve reunification can be useful in aiding families as they work their case plans
- We hypothesized that parental allegation type would affect the length of time it took for a child to be reunified and that if a child experienced neglect, they would spend the most amount of time in foster care before reunification

Methods

- Data was collected from 479 LSU Infant Team cases from the years 1998-2017
- From this group, 114 cases were chosen from which the child was reunified with either their mother, their father, or both of their parents
- Different allegation types were analyzed including physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, dependency, which refers to when a child is without proper care, drug-exposure, and cases with multiple allegations, which refers to more than one of the previous
- A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the relationship between parental allegation type and the length of the parent's case until reunification
- The relationship between parental allegation type and the length of the entire case was also analyzed for comparison

Data

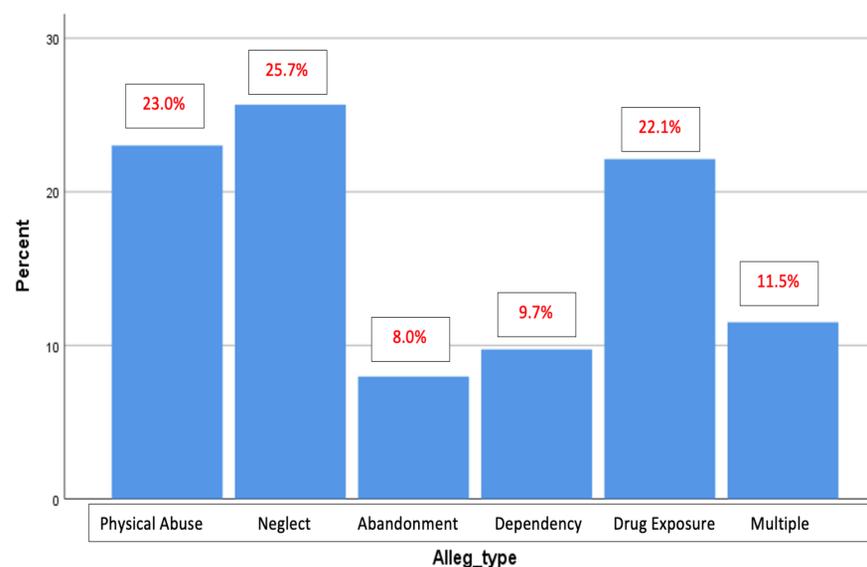


Figure 1. Mean Percentage of Each Parental Allegation Type

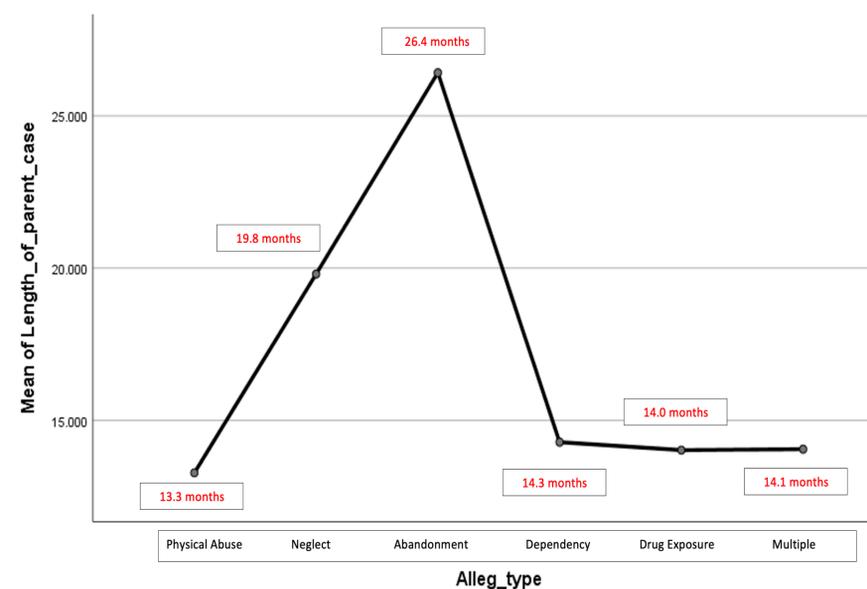


Figure 2. Mean Length of Parent's Case for Each Allegation Type

References

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (2021). Child Maltreatment 2019: Summary of key findings. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau. https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/canstats/Children_in_foster_care_by_age_group_Kids_Count_Data_Center. KIDS COUNT data center: A project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. (n.d.). <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/6244-children-in-foster-care-by-age-group#detailed/1/any/false/574,1729,37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867/1889,2616,2617,2618,2619,122/12988,12989>
The AFCARS report - welcome to ACF. (n.d.). <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcarsreport28.pdf>

Results

- Of the children who reunified with their parents, 51.4% were males and 48.6% were females
- Of the children who reunified, 13.2% reunified with both their mother and father, 62.3% reunified with just their mother, and 24.6% reunified with just their father
- The average age of a child when they were removed from their parent's home was 26.4 months
- Children who experienced abandonment spent the longest amount of time in foster care at about 26.4 months
- The average length of a parent's foster care case until reunification was 15.9 months while the average length of the entire case until reunification was 16.3 months
- A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effects of parental allegation type on the length of a parent's case until reunification with their child.
- We found that there was no significant effect of parental allegation type on mean length of time of a parental case until reunification, $F(5,89)=1.98, p> .05$.
- We found, however, that there is a significant effect of parental allegation type on mean length of an entire foster care case until reunification, $F(5,87)=4.57, p< .05$.
- Pairwise comparisons using a Tukey's HSD test showed that when abandonment is the parental allegation, the mean length of time of an entire foster care case is significantly different from the other allegation types.

Conclusion

- Infant Mental Health clinicians can utilize a variety of interventions to increase parents' protective capacity despite the parent's allegation type.
- One limitation of this study is that there are many other factors to consider besides parental allegation type that affect the length of time it takes to achieve reunification.
- Further research should investigate other factors related to abandonment of a child and its impact on the parent-child relationship.