

# Implementation Findings

Throughout the second Waiver period, the study team gathered qualitative information from both demonstration and comparison county staff in order to gain a sense of the overall impact of the waiver.

- Interviews in both demonstration and comparison sites revealed that demonstration county PCSAs and juvenile courts communicate better than their counterparts in the comparison sites, and they also have a larger array of program and staffing options to serve unruly/delinquent youth, making them feel better able to serve those youth.

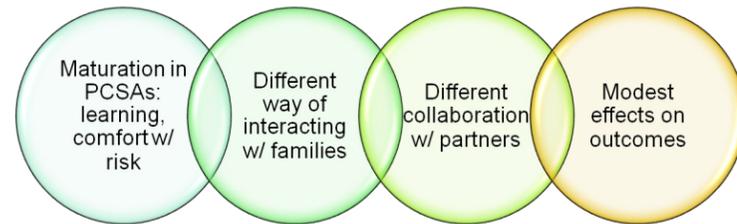
A survey of demonstration county PCSA managers with extensive experience under the waiver revealed the following perceptions of the Waiver:

- A large majority of PCSA managers reported that the waiver had a significant impact on practices for managing ongoing (in-home), placement, and permanency cases.
- 16 out of 18 PCSA managers reported that the waiver had a positive impact on their agencies' philosophy and culture. In addition, increased predictability of funding levels was perceived as having a positive impact on PCSA service planning.

*The Title IV Waiver enables ProtectOHIO counties to adopt innovative practices, making structural and cultural changes that positively impact child and family outcomes.*

## Overall Waiver Effect

In sum, the second waiver period has offered clear evidence of systemic change at the county level, in terms of agency philosophy and culture, service options, and collaboration. The evaluation team has observed an overall maturation in the demonstration sites, as they have learned from their experiences and have become more comfortable with the flexibility and risk intrinsic to the waiver.



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This information was gathered from the Comprehensive Final Evaluation Report: Ohio's Title IV-E Waiver Demonstration Project "ProtectOHIO". To view the full report, visit: <http://www.hsri.org/publication/protect-ohio/>

By the end of the second waiver, the shift in PCSA spending towards non foster care activities finally emerged as a statistically significant change. And the waiver yielded modest effects on child-level outcomes: more children were served in-home and some placements and case episodes shortened, without any added harm to children.

# ProtectOHIO Evaluation Overview

HSRI Evaluation Brief

Fall 2010



## WAIVER THEORY

WAIVER FLEXIBILITY



SYSTEMS REFORM



FAMILY INTERVENTIONS

- Family Team Meetings
- Kinship Supports
- Supervised Visitation
- Enhanced Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services



IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

## Background of Ohio's Title IV-E Waiver

In October 1997, Ohio implemented ProtectOHIO, a Title IV-E Child Welfare Waiver Demonstration project. ProtectOHIO experiments with the flexible use of federal IV-E dollars; funds normally allowed to be spent only for foster care can be spent for a range of child welfare purposes, based on the belief that purchasing services upfront will benefit children & families. The intent of ProtectOHIO is to reduce the number of children coming into care, decrease the length of stay in care, and increase the number of children reunited with their families or placed in other permanent situations.

The first ProtectOHIO Waiver demonstration program operated for five years, from October 1, 1997 through September 30, 2002. The waiver was extended into a second phase through September 30, 2009, with an additional short-term extension through July 2010.

In this phase, the 18 participating counties focused on a number of distinct service strategies: 1) Family Team Meetings (FTM), 2) Kinship Supports, 3) Supervised Visitation, 4) Enhanced Mental Health/Substance Abuse, and 5) Managed Care. All counties were required to participate in the FTM strategy, and chose at least one other strategy.

## HSRI's Evaluation of ProtectOHIO

Since 1998, Ohio has contracted with Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the ProtectOHIO demonstration. HSRI's evaluation team has included subcontractors Westat and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

Essential to the evaluation is the examination of a group of comparison counties (see figure at left). The central evaluation hypothesis is that children and families served by the demon-

stration sites experience better outcomes than the comparison group, and better outcomes than children in the demonstration sites prior to the waiver.

The evaluation included a Participant Outcomes study, a fiscal study, and separate studies of each of the waiver's five core strategies. Analyses were conducted at the county and case level, using qualitative and quantitative data collected by the evaluation team, plus SACWIS data files.



ProtectOHIO Evaluation Counties  
 ■ Demonstration Counties  
 ■ Comparison Counties  
 Counties labeled with red typeface have Children's Services levies.

# The ProtectOHIO Waiver Strategies

**FAMILY TEAM MEETINGS (FTM):** All ProtectOHIO demonstration county PCSAs participated in the FTM strategy. For families receiving ongoing services, PCSAs conducted meetings among families members, support people, and professions in order to plan and/or make crucial decisions regarding a child, using an independent, trained facilitator to arrange and support the process.

**SUPERVISED VISITATION:** Twelve PCSAs participated in the supervised visitation strategy. For children in placement, this involved participating in regular visits with birth family members (at least weekly), in supervised settings with structured activities to improve parent-child relationships and improve the likelihood of reunification.

**KINSHIP SUPPORTS:** Six PCSAs participated actively in the kinship supports strategy during the second waiver period. PCSAs emphasized identification & recruitment of, support for, and permanency with kinship caregivers for PCSA-involved children.

**ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH/ SUBSTANCE ABUSE (MH/SA):** Four PCSAs participated in the enhanced mental health/ substance abuse strategy. For families with mental health/ substance abuse needs, these counties strove to provide more prompt and more comprehensive assessments and treatment, with a goal of decreasing placement or speeding reunification. In each county, the evaluation compared cases served prior to starting the strategy with those served afterwards. Results

for Lorain, Belmont, and Muskingum county analysis show patterns of significantly greater likelihood of children receiving assessment, parents completing MH/SA treatment, and a shorter average length of case opening.

The FTM and Supervised Visitation analyses utilized an intent-to-treat approach, while the kinship study included exploration of data from a case level survey of children in kinship placements. Findings regarding FTM and Kinship Supports may be found in separate Evaluation Briefs. Selected outcomes findings for FTM, Supervised Visitation, and Kinship Supports are also included in this Brief.

*Whether served in-home or in placement, children in the demonstration counties remained as safe as their counterparts in the comparison counties.*

## Child Outcomes: Safety

The evaluation looked at child safety in five analyses. Overall, results showed that children were **not** at increased risk as a result of the Waiver.

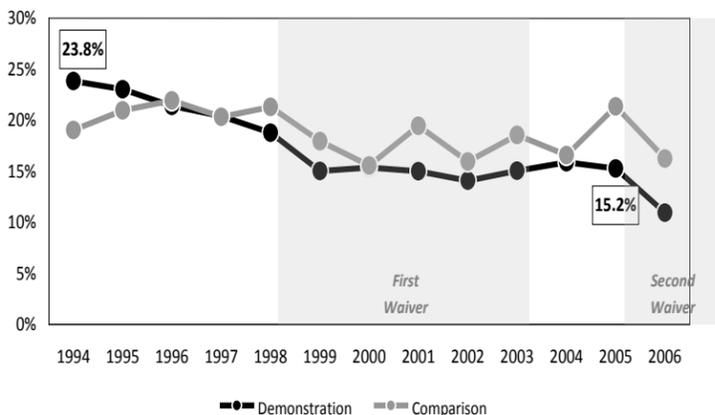
Looking at all cases served between 1994 and 2006, the evaluation found very little change in the percentage of children with a subsequent CAN investigation among either the demonstration or comparison county groups, suggesting that the waiver did not affect children's safety.

By the end of 2006, demonstration counties were serving a substantially larger portion of children in-home than were comparison sites (18.7% versus 10.5%). Demonstration children served in-home were no more likely to be the subject of a subsequent maltreatment investigation than were comparison county children.

Looking at placement cases that closed during the first Waiver, the evaluation found no difference in re-entry to foster care, among children who exited their first foster care placements to the custody of either parents or kin, suggesting the waiver did not compromise child safety.

Children in FTM counties were significantly less likely to have subsequent case openings within a year of case closure than children in comparison counties, although the effect was slight (11% versus 12%). Children in Visitation counties did not differ from other county groups in re-opening after case closure.

% Children Served In-Home having subsequent Investigation w/in 12 Months of Case Opening



# Fiscal Outcomes

The fiscal analysis examined changes in spending patterns over time, comparing each year in the second waiver period (2005 to 2008) to the baseline year of 2004.

Declines in paid placement days and in the average daily cost of foster care occurred in both demonstration and comparison groups; the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant.

Between 2004 and 2008, average annual foster care expenditures as a share of total

child welfare expenditures decreased in 26 of 33 counties. This change was significantly associated with demonstration status. The largest decreases (11%) occurred in demonstration counties, while the largest increases (11%) were found in comparison counties.

All but one of the original demonstration counties received capped allocations of IV-E waiver dollars that were greater than what they would have received through regular IV-E reimbursement. Altogether, these 12 counties received an additional \$27.9 million

## Using Waiver Savings to Boost Non-Foster Care Spending



during the first four years of the waiver, of which \$22 million was spent on non-foster care services. In addition, counties increased their non-foster care spending by another \$30 million.

# Child Outcomes: Placement Duration and Permanency

The Placement Outcomes Analysis examined the effects of the second waiver on counties' resolution of foster care placements, for children in their first placement. The study team used counterfactual imputations that estimated what would have happened in the absence of the waiver.

- Minor improvements were seen in the length of the first placement. The waiver had no overall impact on median duration of placements; at a county level, four counties experienced decreases in overall duration of placements and two counties experienced increases. However, the wait for adoption was shortened under the second waiver (by 2 months).
- Significant waiver effects were found for children in placement who exited to custody of kin (2% more did so under the waiver) and who exited to reunification (4% less).
- Exits to adoption increased slightly (1% more) relative to pre-waiver conditions, suggesting that exits to adoption increased very slowly over the two waiver periods.

The reunification finding above was echoed in the FTM analysis, where demonstration counties showed a lower proportion of exits to reunification (9% less) than comparison counties.

FTM analysis also showed that children in demonstration counties had significantly shorter case episodes than did comparison county children. In addition, demonstration county children were significantly less likely to go to placement than were comparison county children (2% less), although no significant difference was found with regard to length of stay in placement.

Supervised visitation also showed that case episodes were shorter (43 days, on average).

The kinship survey analysis showed that the length of stay with kinship caregivers was 66 days longer, on average, in kinship counties than in comparison counties, but the proportion of children ending a placement in the legal custody of a kinship caregiver was much 20% greater.

Effects of the Second Waiver on Exit Types from 1st Placements		
First Placements Ending with:	% Cases During 2 <sup>nd</sup> Waiver	2 <sup>nd</sup> Waiver compared to Pre-waiver
Reunification	51.03%	-4.27%
Custody to Kin or Third Party	23.13%	2.43%
Adoption	12.61%	0.74%
Runaway	2.12%	1.12%