

CHAPTER 2: PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

The Process Implementation Study consists of five distinct sub-studies, all addressing structural or service delivery changes being implemented systematically in all or some of the demonstration counties (see text box). As a whole, these sub-studies explore most of the substantive changes in child welfare policy and practice currently underway in the demonstration counties. Prior to the beginning of the second waiver, the Consortium selected and developed these interventions, and agreed that all demonstration counties would participate in Family Team Meetings and at least one other intervention strategy.¹ The evaluation team then designed ways to study the success of each intervention, and added some supplementary questions to round out the Process Study.

This chapter has four main sections: a description of the Process sub-studies and the methodologies employed (Section 2.2), a discussion of key contextual issues impacting county-level practice (Section 2.3), an examination of demonstration county perceptions of waiver impact (Section 2.4), and an analysis of changes in PCSA-court relationships in demonstration and comparison sites (Section 2.5).

Topics of Process Implementation Sub-studies

Family Team Meetings
Supervised Visitation
Kinship Supports
Enhanced MH/SA services
Managed Care

2.2 PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION SUB-STUDIES

2.2.1 Nature of the Sub-Studies

Process evaluation sub-studies explore the impact of the waiver on each of the five intervention strategies. The interventions include:

- *Family team meetings*: Regular meetings, facilitated by an independent, trained professional, discuss case goals and plans, progress made, and possible next steps for children who are at risk of placement or have already been placed out of the home. These meetings include not only the case worker and family members but also relatives and friends of the family, service providers, child advocates, etc., and seek to reduce the need for out-of-home placement. The FTM sub-study is described in Chapter 3.
- *Supervised visitation*: Regular, structured visits between parents and their children who have been placed in out-of-home care provide opportunities for parents to spend time with the

¹ The process is described in the Evaluation Plan (HSRI, April 2005) and in the Interim Evaluation Report (HSRI, June 2007).

children, to improve parent-child interactions and speed the return home. The Supervised Visitation sub-study is the subject of Chapter 4.

- *Kinship supports*: Kinship caregivers, who are relatives or friends of the child they are caring for in their home, receive supportive services and financial assistance to help them provide temporary respite from a difficult home situation or prepare for a permanent change in the child’s living arrangement. The Kinship Supports sub-study is presented in Chapter 5.
- *Enhanced mental health and substance abuse services*: Various improvements in the availability and timeliness of assessment and treatment for families with mental health and/or substance abuse issues seek to reduce the need for out-of-home placement and continued involvement with the public child welfare agency. The Enhanced Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services sub-study is discussed in Chapter 6.
- *Managed care*: Case rate contracting gives private agencies full responsibility for case management and service delivery for children in ongoing PCSA cases. This is an approach used by one PCSA to enhance system efficiency and effectiveness. The findings from this sub-study were presented fully in the Interim Evaluation Report (HSRI, June 2007) and are not presented here.

Table 2.1 shows county participation across the various interventions. Although each county was required to engage in only two strategies, many chose to do more.

Table 2.1: Strategies Chosen by each Demonstration County					
Demonstration County	ProtectOhio Service Interventions				
	Family Team Meetings	Kinship Supports	Visitation	Enhanced MH/SA Services	Managed Care
Ashtabula	x	x			
Belmont	x			x	
Clark	x		x		
Coshocton	x			x	
Crawford	x		x		
Fairfield	x		x		
Franklin	x				x
Greene	x	x			
Hamilton	x		x		
Hardin	x	x			
Highland	x		x		
Lorain	x	x		x	
Medina	x	x	x		
Muskingum	x	x	x	x	
Portage	x	x	x		
Richland	x		x		
Stark	x		x		
Vinton	x		x		
TOTAL	18	7	11	4	1

2.2.2 Data Collection Methods and Analytic Approach

Over the course of the second waiver, the evaluation team gathered and analyzed information in numerous ways from a variety of sources, to answer basic questions about the impact of the waiver on county child welfare practice. The data collection methods described below yielded information about the five intervention strategies as well as about supplementary issues presented later in this chapter.

2.2.2.1 Data Collection

The evaluation team gathered extensive information at both a county level and a case level. Data come from six types of sources:

1. *ACCESS database:* FTM and Visitation strategy data were captured in all strategy counties using an ACCESS database. In 2007, HSRI created this database to support data collection for the ProtectOhio strategies during the transition from FACSIS to SACWIS. ODJFS was not able to include in SACWIS the original SIS events, the source of strategy data during the first waiver and under FACSIS, so this ACCESS database became the primary data collection mechanism throughout the remainder of the second waiver period. HSRI continued to provide telephone support to the counties regarding data entry, and received data files from each county approximately monthly. (More detail is provided in Chapter 3: FTM and Chapter 4: Supervised Visitation.)
2. *Site visits:* The evaluation team conducted county site visits twice during the second waiver period. The 2007 site visits to each of the demonstration counties included interviews with managers regarding the impact of the waiver and the operation of the county’s strategies; interviews with workers, supervisors and other staff focused on details of the counties’ strategies; focus groups of parents involved in FTM, supervised visitation and kinship supports; and observation of FTMs and supervised visits in selected counties. The 2009 site visits to both demonstration and comparison sites focused primarily on observations of FTM and supervised visits, with some additional questions to managers regarding the PCSA-court relationship.
3. *Telephone interviews:* The evaluation team conducted telephone interviews four times during the second waiver period, typically with management or administrative level PCSA staff in both demonstration and comparison sites. Two rounds of interviews occurred in 2006; in the spring,

Table 2.2 Process Study Data Collection		
Year	Method	Counties
2006	Telephone Interviews	All
2007	Site Visits	Demonstration
	Telephone Interviews	New Demonstration & Comparison
2008	Telephone Interviews	All
2008	Kinship Survey & Caregiver Interviews	All
2009	Site Visits, Observations	Demonstration and 12 Comparison
2009	Management Survey	Demonstration
2009	Mental Health/ Substance Abuse Survey (PCSAs, providers)	All
2009	Supervised Visitation Survey	All

the first set of interviews addressed FTM, adoption and court issues; in the fall, the second round of interviews focused on kinship supports and supervised visitation. In 2007, wide-ranging interviews were held with the seven new study counties. In 2008, phone interviews to all counties explored FTM, kinship supports, mental health & substance abuse services, adoption and PCSA-court relations.

4. *Case Record Reviews*: On several occasions during the second waiver, the evaluation team conducted on-site case record reviews to gather primary data on kinship caregiving and use of enhanced mental health/substance abuse services.
5. *Web-based surveys*: The evaluation team utilized web-based surveys for data collection on a number of occasions, covering a number of topics, throughout the second waiver period. In 2008, a web-based survey was utilized to collect case-level information for the kinship study; and in 2009, three separate web-based surveys were done: (1) demonstration county PCSA manager perspectives regarding waiver impact, (2) PCSA managers as well as mental health/substance abuse providers in all ProtectOhio counties regarding MHSA service systems, and (3) supervised visitation staff regarding practice in all counties.
6. *SACWIS*: The evaluation team relies very heavily on state-level administrative data contained in SACWIS, in particular information related to case events such as maltreatment reports, case openings and closings, placement and custody status.

2.2.2.2 Analytic Approach

In each of the Process sub-studies, analysis focuses on identifying the impact of the waiver on demonstration county performance. In all the studies, analysis looks at practice differences between demonstration and comparison sites. The study team consistently uses a qualitative rubric for expressing differences between small groups of cases, where statistical testing is inappropriate or unfeasible: “substantial” for differences in percentages exceeding 50 points, “moderate” for differences in percentages of between 35-50 points, and “slight” or “somewhat” for percentage differences of between 20-34 points. In some studies, analysis is expanded to compare pre-waiver practices and case outcomes to what occurred during the second waiver period.

For FTM and Supervised Visitation, the evaluation team completed several analyses. The implementation analysis compares county policy and standard practice in the demonstration and comparison groups, using both county-level and case-level data. The outcome analysis compares long-term outcomes (length of stay, rate of reunification, etc., as appropriate to the specific intervention) between demonstration county and comparison county cases; this analysis uses only case-level data, and tends to use a smaller number of children. Finally, the study team also conducted a fidelity analysis of FTM practice, which applies only to the participating demonstration counties, to assess the extent to which each county has put into practice the defined intervention model, using both county-level and case-level data.

The analysis of Kinship Supports includes an implementation analysis and an outcomes analysis as described above. In addition it includes a placement analysis based on case-level survey data collection, and qualitative analysis of caregiver experiences based on telephone interviews with caregivers.

The Mental Health/Substance Abuse Enhancements sub-study has a somewhat unique analysis. Like the other process studies, it includes an implementation analysis comparing demonstration and comparison county practices, but it also relies on a pre-post design, comparing data on cases served prior to implementation of the service enhancements, to cases served once the enhancements were fully in place; this analysis is conducted for each participating county individually.

One key analytic consideration relates to the use of multiple interventions in each of the demonstration counties, as illustrated in Table 2.1. While each study topic is somewhat distinct in content and methodology, there may be co-varying effects within demonstration counties that participate in multiple special studies. Because of methodological and timing issues, the data collection windows for many of the special studies overlap with each other, which means that, especially in the smaller counties, analyses for the various strategies use some of the same cases; for example, a case included in supervised visitation may also have participated in family team meetings. The evaluation thus far has not taken this multi-treatment effect into account; should the ProtectOhio waiver continue, it may be possible to code cases by county and strategy, to explore any interaction among the strategies.

In accordance with the Ohio Waiver Terms and Conditions and the project team's preferred approach, each of the Process Implementation sub-studies addresses the following topics:

- Delineation of a logic model showing the relationship between the objective of the service intervention, the discrete activities comprising the intervention, and the expected outputs, intermediate outcomes and high-level outcomes;
- Organizational aspects of the targeted intervention, such as administrative structures, monitoring activities, and training components;
- The array of services and supports offered and how these change over time;
- Relevant demographic information on children exiting to reunification, guardianship and adoption;
- Challenges and barriers encountered during implementation of the targeted intervention, and resulting modifications made in the original design and logic model; and
- Relevant external, contextual factors that likely impact the effect of the intervention, such as new statewide initiatives.

The final bullet listed above is discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

2.3 CONTEXTUAL ISSUES INFLUENCING PROCESS SUB-STUDIES

During the second waiver period, several issues have arisen that directly impact counties' behavior under the waiver. At various times, the evaluation team has asked questions about the impact of outside conditions on PCSA activity. This section presents a limited summary of the contextual factors thought to have the greatest impact on county-level practice and performance under the waiver.

- *Economic Hardship*: The nationwide recession that began in December 2007 has deeply affected state and local budgets during the second waiver period, while simultaneously driving up need

for services and supports. As of December 2009, Ohio suffered from an unemployment rate of 10.9%, 3.5 percentage points higher than a year earlier, and a bit worse than the national rate of 10%.² Families in poverty experience even greater stress in times of overall economic hardship and poverty remains a big concern in much of Ohio – in 1997 the overall poverty rate for Ohio was 11%, in 2005 it had climbed to 13% and it remained just over 13% until 2008. The figure for those living in poverty under the age of 18 presents an even more dire picture – at 18.5% in 2008 (up from 16% in 1997).³ The evaluation team heard about, and witnessed during site visits, greatly reduced staffing levels and resources within the ProtectOhio PCSAs throughout the second waiver period.

- *SACWIS*: SACWIS implementation began in 2006, with Muskingum PCSA serving as the pilot county. By the end of 2008, all Ohio counties were officially utilizing SACWIS to manage cases, and some counties were also using the financial tracking systems within SACWIS. As discussed in Chapter 1, SACWIS implementation was difficult and frustrating for many PCSA staff, in some ways detracting from their ability to not only pursue special waiver initiatives but also conduct normal case management functions.
- *Alternative Response (AR)*: The AR Pilot, sponsored by ODJFS and the Ohio Supreme Court, was implemented in July of 2008 in ten counties. It marked a big change in how a PCSA processes allegations of abuse and neglect. Rather than undergoing a traditional investigation, eligible cases receive an alternative assessment and strengths-based, family-centered case management support. Formal findings of child abuse and neglect are avoided as long as families are able to complete their alternative case plan. Four of the ten AR pilot sites were ProtectOhio demonstration sites, and two were comparison sites.
- *Juvenile Court Improvement*: A number of efforts at the national and state level have sought to improve PCSA interactions and relationships with local juvenile courts. In 2004, the Ohio Supreme Court launched *Beyond the Numbers - Ohio's Response to the CFSRs*, a series of symposia held at state and local levels aimed at better coordinating efforts to improve CFSR performance and thus outcomes for children and families. In 2008 and again in 2009, the Ohio Supreme Court convened the Ohio Summit on Children, gathering juvenile court, PCSA, and other community leaders to collaborate and brainstorm about furthering local action plans intended to improve outcomes for children and families involved in the juvenile court system. In a number of counties, some of them ProtectOhio sites, the statewide initiatives led to targeted local efforts to enhance ongoing communication and collaboration between PCSAs and courts.

Each of these factors likely had some impact on all Ohio counties, and it is beyond the scope of the evaluation to assess the differential effect on demonstration versus comparison sites. The AR pilot, since it included six evaluation sites, likely had a different effect on the participating sites than on the rest of Ohio, but this evaluation cannot isolate those effects from the effects of the waiver. By identifying these contextual issues, we acknowledge the limitations of any evaluation design applied to dynamic social service environments.

² Bureau Labor and Statistics: <http://www.bls.gov>

³ US Census Bureau: www.census.gov

2.4 FINDINGS: PCSA PERCEPTIONS OF WAIVER IMPACT

During the summer of 2009, PCSA managers in all demonstration counties, most with significant tenure in their child welfare agencies⁴, were asked to complete a survey on their counties' experiences with the waiver. This section discusses findings on the impact of the waiver in the following areas: case processes, agency structure and focus, services and supports, and collaborative efforts. These managers were able to provide a perspective base on their experience over the course of both waivers. Additionally, PCSA perspectives on waiver strategy sustainability are explored in the final section of this chapter. Appendix B.1 contains the management survey.

2.4.1 Waiver Impact on Case Processes

Table 2.3 shows the breadth of PCSA perceptions of waiver impact on case processes. While counties reported mixed waiver impact on the intake process, all counties reported some or significant impact on ongoing case management, placements, and permanency, with the vast majority judging the impact as significant.

Table 2.3: Impact of Waiver on Case Processes (n=18)			
	No Impact	Some Impact	Significant Impact
Intake	6	4	8
Ongoing	0	6	12
Placements	0	4	14
Permanency	0	7	11

A few themes arose from counties' comments about this area of waiver impact:

- Seven counties discussed increased service availability or connectivity. For example, one county stated that “we have some service contracts in place for services that would not be available or [would be] available in much more limited quantities than without the waiver, [such as wraparound services & on-site mental health assessments]. These have allowed intake to close some cases with referral to other community resources that might otherwise have gone to ongoing services.”
- Six counties noted a shift to preventive or ‘front door’ focus – doing more preventive work or getting families linked into services much earlier in the case trajectory.
- Several counties acknowledged the effect of particular waiver strategies on case processes. For example, one county stated that “FTM has given us an added tool to prevent placements and

⁴ Seventeen of the 18 survey respondents have been in management positions or directly involved in the ProtectOhio Consortium since prior to the end of the first waiver, or in the case of the four new ProtectOhio counties, since their counties first joined ProtectOhio.

close cases quicker. Also, those cases closing appear to stay closed longer and not return to the agency.”

- Counties also mentioned increased creativity with regard to placement options, and increased focus on outcomes.

2.4.2 Waiver Impact on Agency Structure and Focus

PCSA perspective on the waiver’s impact on agency structure and focus is presented in Table 2.4. The two areas in which the counties reported the most impact were improvement of agency philosophy and culture, and improvement in planning due to increased predictability of funding levels. Sixteen of the 18 counties cited at least some impact for each, and half or more judged the improvement as significant. A few county comments follow:

- “Having predictable funding allocations helps us in decision-making and in designing contracts with other agencies, which impacts continuity of service, quality and availability.”
- “Flexible funding allowed us to reconfigure our organizational chart, hire the staff we need, develop our CQI department to assure we have needed data, etc. The agency is outcome-oriented and decision-making is pushed down to the caseworker level so that children and clients can get what they need when they need it. Because we were able to retain and attract master-degreed, licensed staff, the culture is one of professionalism, opportunity-seeking and of learning. We build child protection for each child instead of having children come through the child protection program. This was possible because we didn't have to think in terms of programs and funding streams. The flexibility in funding allowed for greater professional capacity of staff, leading to better outcomes for clients.”
- “The culture of the agency has changed to one that is more focused on customer (client/consumer) service. The waiver has helped the agency become more focused on outcomes and outcomes measurement; there is more confidence in data for decision-making.”

Table 2.4: Impact of Waiver on Agency Structure and Focus (n=18)			
	No Impact	Some Impact	Significant Impact
Staffing changes (additions, shifts)	8	3	7
Reconfiguration of unit structure	11	2	5
Improvement in philosophy or culture	2	6	10
Focus on quality improvement and utilization review	5	8	5
Increased use of data in policy and practice decision making	5	9	4
Improvement in planning due to predictable funding levels	2	7	9

2.4.3 Waiver Impact on Services and Supports

Demonstration counties' views of the waiver's impact on services and supports offered by the PCSA are shown in Table 2.5. At least two-thirds of demonstration counties reported some or significant impact in all but the post-permanency supports category. The waiver impact was deemed most significant in three areas – more than half the respondents said the waiver had a significant effect on purchased services, out of home placement options, and expedited reunification.

	No Impact	Some Impact	Significant Impact
Purchased goods and services	5	4	9
Early Intervention Services	6	4	8
Crisis Intervention Services	6	6	6
Out of Home Placement Options	3	4	11
Expedited Reunification	2	6	10
Post-Permanency Supports	9	6	3

Of particular interest to ODJFS and the Consortium is the waiver's impact on adoption as a permanency option. As noted above (Table 2.3), most demonstration sites said the waiver had a significant effect on the permanency process (11 of 18 counties); when asked particularly about the waiver's impact on adoption, 14 PCSA managers said the waiver had some or significant impact. In describing this impact, counties responded in the following ways (a county may be counted in more than one area):

- Six counties described an ability to pay higher subsidies or provide more supports to adoptive families;
- Five counties indicated that overall agency culture/practice change has led to more successful adoptions;
- Three counties described increased involvement of relatives (including adoption of children by relatives);
- Two counties described an increased focus on prevention, particularly the provision of services 'up front' to prevent the need for placement; and
- One county described the development of new programming to emphasize better permanency planning.

Given PCSA managers' views that the waiver has considerable impact on permanency, especially adoption, where does this impact manifest in practice? In interviews with a variety of county staff in both demonstration and comparison sites, the study team explored adoption subsidy payment rates, changes in subsidy spending over time and reasons for those changes, and availability of other adoption supports. Very little difference appeared between demonstration and comparison groups.

- All demonstration and comparison counties are able to offer more than the standard \$300 adoption subsidy rate, in at least special circumstances, such as in adoptions of children with especially high needs.⁵ The range in the amount of subsidy payments varies little between the two county groups, since most are tied in some way to the foster care per diem (either a formal cap at the foster care per diem rate or an informal guideline).
- When asked whether spending on adoption subsidies has changed since the beginning of the waiver, most counties indicated that spending has increased (roughly 70% of each county group). Reasons cited for increased spending differ noticeably between the demonstration and the comparison groups (Table 2.6). Demonstration county responses were fairly well distributed across the response options, with the greatest number pointing to increased per diem rates. In contrast, most comparison counties indicated that increased spending reflects the increased needs of the children being adopted.
- In examining whether the waiver has enabled demonstration counties to provide more, or more formalized, supports for adoptive families, the study team found few differences in the level and nature of non-financial supports offered to adoptive families. Demonstration and comparison counties were equally likely to offer a formal or substantial mix of supports (nine or ten counties in each group) including support groups, social events, and other services specific to adoptive families.

Table 2.6: Reasons given for Increase in Adoption Spending		
	Demonstration (n=13)⁶	Comparison (n=12)
Change in reimbursable rates or foster care per diems	7	2
Change in negotiation process	3	3
More adoptions, or increasing length of placement	2	6
Increase in children’s needs	4	14
Increase in adoptive parent expectations	3	4
Change in neighboring county or private agency rates	2	1

Thus, with respect to demonstration counties’ assertions of the waiver having an impact on adoption and other permanency for children, few systematic practice differences are evident when comparing demonstration and comparison county groups. However, a few examples provided by demonstration counties illustrate waiver impact on adoption supports:

- One county stated that local dollars used to support higher subsidies would not be available without ProtectOhio.

⁵ \$300 is the current federally reimbursable rate for IVE eligible children. At the time of our interviews this was also the state reimbursable rate for children not meeting IVE requirements but eligible per state regulations. However, in fiscal years 2009/2010 the state reimbursable rate was reduced to \$240.

⁶ Counties may have cited more than one reason and thus are represented more than once in this table.

- Another county noted that they were able to replace the Special Services Subsidy (SSS) through local and ProtectOhio dollars until January of 2009.
- One demonstration county described using ProtectOhio dollars to fund an adoption conference for families, as well as to pay for additional or one-time expenses for supportive services post-adoption in lieu of increasing subsidy amounts.
- Another demonstration county funds its own financial subsidy system via ProtectOhio funds for those families who do not qualify for adoption subsidies.

2.4.4 Waiver Impact on Interagency Collaboration

Compared to other areas of waiver impact, PCSA respondents were less sanguine about the positive effects of the waiver on interagency relationships (Table 2.7). The majority of PCSAs reported at least some impact of the waiver on their communication with or relationship with community providers, mental health providers, and juvenile courts (12, 15, and 15 PCSAs, respectively). Further discussion about the PCSA-mental health provider relationship is presented in Chapter 6. Exploration of PCSA-juvenile court interactions and relationships is offered in Section 2.5.

Table 2.7: Impact of Waiver on Interagency Relationships (n=18)			
		No Impact	Some or Significant Impact
PCSA communication/ collaboration with:	Juvenile court	6	12
	Mental health providers	3	15
	Community providers	3	15
PCSA contributions to specific community programs		8	10
PCSA contributions to pooled funding to support multi-agency children		7	11
Use of shared or out-stationed staff		13	5

Summary: A majority of PCSA managers report that ongoing, placement, and permanency case processes are significantly impacted by the waiver (12, 14, and 11 counties respectively, the remainder indicating some impact). Improvement in philosophy or culture is attributed to the waiver to at least some degree by 16 of the 18 demonstration counties. Out of home placement options and expedited reunification are the most common types of services or supports attributed to the waiver, with a majority of PCSAs reporting significant impact (11 and 10 respectively).

2.5 FINDINGS: PCSA RELATIONSHIP WITH JUVENILE COURT

Research in the past decade has clearly linked juvenile delinquency with child maltreatment, and vice versa, both in the sharing of cases and in the impacts of both systems' programs and functions.⁷ Child welfare agencies are particularly interwoven with their local juvenile courts by the various court functions on which the child welfare agency relies, such as determinations of child abuse and neglect case outcomes (dispositions), custody and removal hearings, permanency decisions (such as grants of legal custody to relatives), and placement usage considerations (such as mutual group home use, or court order of foster care placement). Because these dynamics affect so many layers of child welfare practice and policy, an understanding of PCSA-juvenile court interactions is essential to assessing waiver impacts. While this evaluation does not include an exhaustive study of PCSA-juvenile court interactions, the Process Study team has explored several questions about the impact of the waiver on this key relationship:

- How do PCSA-juvenile court relationships differ between the demonstration and comparison county groups, especially in terms of referral of unruly/delinquent youth and ongoing communication?
- Does the waiver enable the demonstration counties to offer more intervention options for unruly/delinquent youth?
- How has participation in the waiver influenced the operation of Title IV-E courts?

The information included in this section regarding PCSA-juvenile court relationships comes primarily from county-level interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009. In addition, the study team conducted interviews with juvenile court administrators/managers in a few demonstration counties, to get the perspective of the court and to gain further insight into the nature of the PCSA-court interactions. These juvenile court manager perspectives are included throughout this section as appropriate.

2.5.1 Unruly/Delinquent Referrals

County child welfare agencies work with their local juvenile courts on a daily basis at both a management level and direct service level. Not only do the courts make decisions involving children already in PCSA custody, they also refer cases to the PCSA which the court feels would be most appropriately served by child welfare, or when there simply seems to be no other safe alternative. These referrals, typically of youth determined to be unruly and/or delinquent (U/D), and often with child abuse and neglect backgrounds, represent one of the most complicated interactions between the juvenile court and the PCSA. During the course of the waiver, the study team has sought to better understand this dynamic by asking questions about the volume of U/D cases referred over time, the appropriateness of the referrals, and the ability of the PCSA to serve the cases. The views expressed by the demonstration county group differ little from those of the comparison group.⁸

⁷ Bilchik & Nash (2008); Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and American Public Human Services Association. (2008); Sudol (2009) and many more.

⁸ Sample size varies by question – 16-18 for demonstration sites, 15-16 for comparison sites.

- Both county groups tended to judge the volume of U/D referrals as manageable (11 counties or 69% in each group), and about half of each group (10 demonstration and seven comparison counties) reported that the volume has not changed in the past few years.
- Both county groups gave mixed reviews to the appropriateness of the referrals: one-third of each group said referrals were appropriate, while most of the others (10 demonstration sites and seven comparison sites) said referrals were sometimes appropriate and sometimes not (mixed appropriateness).
- The only notable difference between the two county groups is in their perceived ability to serve the cases referred: demonstration counties slightly more often reported that they were able to serve the U/D referrals (eight demonstration counties versus four comparison sites). Further, of those demonstration sites citing an ability to serve U/D youth, three do so despite reporting referrals of mixed appropriateness. Anecdotal information suggests that waiver flexibility has helped demonstration counties to cope, but no systematic patterns could be detected.

2.5.2 Communication between PCSA and Juvenile Court

A second key aspect of the PCSA-court relationship is the ability of the two agencies to communicate effectively. The study team explored three dimensions of communication – its strength, its frequency, and the ways that it occurs. In terms of strength, the study team compiled information on the formality of interagency communication and whether it is ongoing, and we rated each county as having ‘strong,’ ‘good/mixed,’ or ‘poor’ communication.⁹ In the nine demonstration counties where juvenile court managers were interviewed, the court’s perspective on communication was taken into consideration; it is important to note that these nine counties fall into all three levels, suggesting that the court comments enriched but did not bias the scoring. Table 2.8 presents these communication rankings, and shows that slightly more demonstration counties than comparison counties, eight compared to four, rank in the ‘strong’ category.

	Demonstration	Comparison	Total
Strong	8	4	12
Good/Mixed	7	9	16
Poor	2	3	5
Totals*	17	16	33

*Missing information for one demonstration and one comparison site

The study team also explored the frequency of communication between the PCSA and the juvenile court. Similar proportions of PCSAs in each county group reported regular weekly, monthly, quarterly/biannual meetings, with monthly being the most common (five of 15 demonstration counties, four of eight comparison counties). A slight difference was observed between the two groups in the

⁹ Counties rated ‘strong’ presented evidence that their communication levels were consistent and ongoing. Counties rated ‘good/mixed’ also reported ongoing communication, as primarily informal, or with some disagreements. Counties with ‘poor’ communication expressed that there were few to no ongoing efforts at communication and some also expressed that their relationship with the court was strained.

number of PCSAs reporting ‘as needed or informal’ communication – seven demonstration counties but only one comparison county.

The third dimension of PCSA-court communication is the nature of the communication. Two venues for communication were described more often in demonstration counties than in comparison counties:

- Formal interagency team meetings, to staff cases, occur slightly more often in demonstration than comparison sites – in 11 of 17 demonstration counties but in only six of 17 comparison counties.
- Informal communication is moderately more common in demonstration counties – in 10 demonstration counties but only two comparison counties.

No differences are evident between the two county groups with regard to other venues for PCSA-court communication and collaboration – regular meetings regarding specific cases, regular meetings focused on management issues, and meetings related to Court Improvement Project events.

Overall, communication between PCSAs and their local juvenile courts appears to be slightly stronger, more informal and more frequent in demonstration sites than in comparison sites. This communication differential may serve as a crucial foundation for shared programming and staffing, the subject of the next section of this chapter.

2.5.3 Programs and Staff Dedicated to Unruly/Delinquent Youth

Another aspect of the PCSA-court relationship is shared responsibility for programming and staffing to support unruly/delinquent youth. A variety of programs and services made available by the PCSA and/or juvenile court can be crucial to adequately serving U/D youth. In interviews with PCSA managers, the study team identified 44 relevant activities in the 18 demonstration counties and 23 in the 17 comparison counties. The difference occurs in programming efforts – 35 distinct programs in the demonstration counties and 13 in the comparison counties. Table 2.9 shows the number of counties with each type of program or staffing. The demonstration counties clearly have more programs targeting U/D youth than do the comparison counties.

Table 2.9: Types of Programs and Staffing Serving Unruly/Delinquent Youth				
		Demonstration (n=18)	Comparison (n=17)	Total (n=35)
General Diversion	Court operated, I&R focused	3	0	3
	Court operated, services focused	7	1	8
	PCSA operated, I&R or services focused	1	2	3
	Other Diversion, I&R or services focused	0	2	2
Liaison/ Staffing	From Court to PCSA	7	5	12
	From PCSA to Court	3	5	8
School Truancy		5	3	8
Rehabilitative /Step-down services		3	1	4
Drug Court		10	1	11
Specialized Placement Resources (incl. residential)		5	3	8
Totals	Staffing	10	10	20
	Programming	34	13	47

The most common activity to support U/D youth is a court liaison to the PCSA: 12 counties have established such a position, including comparable numbers of counties from both the demonstration group (seven) and the comparison group (five). In two other categories, demonstration counties are more likely to have programs in place: slightly more demonstration sites have court-operated diversionary services (seven compared to only one comparison site), and moderately more demonstration counties have drug courts (ten compared to only one comparison site). Other fairly common programs, equally available in the two groups of counties, include school truancy programs, specialized placement resources, and PCSA liaisons in the courts.

Several examples of county programs are described below, offering insight into the wide range of programmatic initiatives seen more often in demonstration counties than in comparison sites.

- **General Diversion:** These programs include intake diversion or mediation programs, sometimes managed at the juvenile court and sometimes managed by the PCSAs. For example, in one county, the juvenile court runs a mediation program which serves all first-time juvenile offenders. This program includes development of a case plan, and is staffed by the Court of Common Pleas.
- **Liaisons/Staffing:** This includes all staff or part-time positions dedicated to working with U/D youth who are also served by the PCSA, or who otherwise serve as liaisons between the two agencies. For example, in one county, positions exist for an assessment worker from the PCSA's court intake unit who handles all unruly youth prior to their court filing, as well as two court specialist workers from the PCSA who attend preliminary hearings and provide services prior to youth coming into agency custody.

- **Specialized Placement Resources:** These programs include treatment foster placements, residential resources targeting U/D youth, and crisis shelter programming specifically for U/D youth. For example, one county has a residential treatment center that has shifted focus over the past few years to target juvenile offenders. Another county has court-managed group homes that specifically serve these youth.

Several counties offer a diverse mix of programmatic and staffing initiatives targeted to U/D youth:

- **Belmont County** described seven separate programs or staffing resources for serving U/D youth. Among these many resources is a PCSA liaison to the court and a court liaison to the PCSA, an intake diversion program, a truancy program, and a family drug court. Additionally, Belmont has a program which combines community services, outdoor school, and a volunteer program for youth who would otherwise be incarcerated; called C-CAP, it is run by the juvenile court and funded primarily through ReclaimOhio and Title IV-E dollars. Belmont attributes its family drug court at least partly to waiver funding – although it is managed by the juvenile court, it has a variety of funding sources and reports great success.
- Programming and staffing targeted to U/D youth in **Lorain County** are primarily housed and managed by the juvenile court. Lorain’s programming includes a juvenile-court-based investigation and referral team which provides screening and assessment for drug, alcohol, mental health, school, home and community problems. Lorain’s Community Intervention Program (CIP) is a comprehensive program that provides frequent contact, supervision, and evening and weekend programming for youth that have been identified as high risk for continued delinquent behaviors. Treatment and intervention plans are developed in close cooperation with community providers to address significant risk factors. Children are referred to CIP through the Investigation and Referral Team, and placed in the program by a judge or magistrate. Other programming in Lorain includes a resource review committee, and as well as a juvenile drug court and emergency shelter.
- **Muskingum County** has a dedicated unit of staff for court-referred youth, a juvenile court liaison to the PCSA, and programs that serve youth at both ends of the juvenile court system -- diversion from court as well as re-entry following detention. The PCSA considers waiver flexibility and the ability to financially support some of these efforts as central to the county’s ability to serve this population.

2.5.4 Title IV-E Courts

Title IV-E court agreements allow juvenile courts to bill Title IV-E for placement costs for youth adjudicated as unruly/delinquent. For demonstration counties, this agreement has two advantages: inappropriate referrals are usually reduced and waiver funding is not needed for these youth. The latter advantage arises from the fact that direct

ProtectOhio Title IV-E Courts		
Demonstration	Comparison	
Belmont (1998)		
Clark (1999)	Allen (2006)	Morrow (2009)
Fairfield (2004)	Clermont (2004)	Summit (2006)
Greene (1997)	Guernsey (1996)	Trumbull (2008)
Hamilton (1997)	Mahoning (2006)	Warren (2008)
Lorain (2003)	Montgomery (1996)	Wood (2008)
Stark (2009)		

court billings are reimbursed directly from Title IV-E, outside of the ProtectOhio Waiver.

At the end of 2009, 18 of the evaluation counties had a Title IV-E court in place (seven demonstration and ten comparison counties). Establishment of Title IV-E courts during the second waiver grew more rapidly among comparison sites than demonstration counties, going from two to ten comparison counties during 2004-2009, while demonstration county courts only increased from five to seven during the same period. Currently, five demonstration and two comparison PCSAs express interest in establishing a Title IV-E court, but their juvenile courts are not interested. The juvenile court in one additional comparison county is also interested, though the PCSA is not. Several other counties have considered Title IV-E court development but are not pursuing it at this time. Concern regarding workload, and particularly documentation requirements, are most often cited as a reason for lack of interest.

In contrast to county fears of increased workload due to Title IV-E court implementation, those counties with fully implemented Title IV-E courts feel that the arrangement is essential to diverting children from PCSA custody, saving both money and staff time.

Implementing a Title IV-E court has required at least some increased coordination between PCSAs and juvenile courts. Most of the counties with Title IV-E courts in place have divided responsibilities for Title IV-E procedures between the two agencies, resulting in unique arrangements for managing the Title IV-E court. These arrangements are illustrated in Table 2.10. Stark and Morrow, having too recently implemented their Title IV-E courts, are not included in the data.

Table 2.10: Division of Responsibilities for Title IV-E Courts						
Title IV-E Court Responsibility	Demonstration Counties (n=6)			Comparison Counties (n=9)		
	PCSA	Court	Shared	PCSA	Court	Shared
Eligibility determination	4	2	0	6	1	2
Data entry (SACWIS)	6	0	0	9	0	0
Tracking placed children	1	2	3	2	3	3
Case management	0	5	1	0	8	1
Submitting IV-E claims	3	2	1	7	0	2
Paying IV-E match	3	1	0	3	5	0
Other paperwork	0	3	1	1	1	4

Several patterns are evident:

- In general, the PCSA tends to take responsibility for eligibility determination; this is true in two-thirds of each county group (four of six demonstrations and six of nine comparison sites).
- In all counties, the PCSA does data entry for Title IV-E court cases.

- In general, the court tends to handle case management for the Title IV-E court cases – true in five of six demonstration counties and in eight of nine comparison counties.

In addition to these overall patterns, differences are seen between the comparison and demonstration sites with regard to the following:

- Comparison county PCSAs are slightly more likely to take responsibility for submitting Title IV-E claims than are demonstration PCSAs – in seven comparisons but only three demonstration sites.
- Comparison county courts are moderately more likely to pay the Title IV-E match than are demonstration county courts – in five comparison sites but only one demonstration site.

In addition to the shared responsibilities for operating the Title IV-E court, there is also the issue of the sheer cost of administering the program. As noted above, some counties are reluctant to establish a Title IV-E court because of the workload burden. In order to convince the juvenile court to become a Title IV-E court, two PCSAs (one of six demonstration sites and one of nine comparison sites) have agreed to pay the court for its added work: one demonstration county PCSA pays the juvenile court a flat monthly fee, and one comparison county PCSA pays all placement costs for the Title IV-E cases handled by the court. Interestingly, the reverse pattern is more common: in four comparison counties, the juvenile court pays the PCSA for its help with Title IV-E court responsibilities; only one demonstration county court makes such payment to the PCSA.

Having a Title IV-E court clearly has financial benefits for demonstration counties, because any needed placements are paid outside the capped waiver allocation. But it also appears to have some direct benefits for the overall relationship between the court and the PCSA (Table 2.11). Among Title IV-E courts, demonstration county courts are slightly more likely to have a very strong or strong relationship with the PCSA than are comparison county courts (six of six compared to seven of nine). In addition, with regard to U/D referrals from the court to the PCSA, demonstration county PCSAs slightly more often judge the U/D referrals to be appropriate, than do comparison county PCSAs.

		Demonstration			Comparison		
		IV-E Court (n=6)	Non IV-E Court (n=12)	Total (n=18)	IV-E Court (n=9)	Non IV-E Court (n=8)	Total (n=17)
Overall Relationship ¹⁰	Very Strong/Strong	6	10	16	7	4	11
	Neutral/Weak	0	2	2	1	4	5
U/D Referral Appropriateness	Always	1	4	5	4	2	6
	Mixed	4	6	10	3	4	7
Communication	Strong	4	4	8	2	2	4
	Good/Mixed	1	6	7	6	3	9

¹⁰ Overall relationship categories were developed using answers provided by the PCSA managers and juvenile court management staff during 2009 site visit interviews, though historical relationship information (see Interim Evaluation Report, 2007) was also taken into consideration when available.

In short, the relationship between PCSAs and their juvenile courts is not strongly associated with either waiver participation or with the existence of a Title IV-E court. The dynamics of the relationship are far more complex, and they change over time. Indeed, during the second waiver, 19 of the 34 counties (nine demonstration and 10 comparison) reported a change in court leadership. The PCSA in three counties (two demonstration, one comparison) reported that this change was for the better, and four (two demonstration, two comparison) for the worse. In some ways, demonstration county PCSAs experience better interactions with the court than do comparison sites, but these differences tend to be slight; and in many other areas no such difference is present. So much rests on the particular personality of the court and PCSA leaders, and on the historical roles of the two agencies in each county. Because the waiver does not directly affect juvenile court operations, it is not surprising that it has little systematic impact on PCSA-court relationships.

Summary: Demonstration counties report slightly stronger communication between the PCSAs and juvenile courts, have a slightly larger array of program and staffing options to serve unruly/delinquent youth, and feel slightly better able to serve those youth who are referred to the PCSAs. Ten ProtectOhio counties have established Title IV-E court arrangements since the Interim Evaluation Report, eight comparison counties and two demonstration counties. However, the relationship between PCSAs and their juvenile courts is not strongly associated with either waiver participation or with the existence of a Title IV-E court; the dynamics are far more complex, and change over time.

2.6 PERSPECTIVES ON WAIVER SUSTAINABILITY

An important aspect of how the demonstration sites have used the waiver can be seen in their plans for sustaining the changes that the waiver has brought to PCSA operations. In the management survey conducted in 2009 (Appendix B.1), when PCSAs were facing the impending end of the waiver (and the Consortium and ODJFS submitted a formal request to the US Children’s Bureau for an extension of ProtectOhio), they responded strongly and eloquently to questions regarding their next steps. Table 2.12 shows how PCSA managers answered questions regarding the likelihood of a number of possible impacts of the waiver’s end. The answers and comments in this section re-emphasize many of the agencies’ statements with regard to waiver impact on case processes and services and supports described in Section 2.4.

Table 2.12: Likelihood of Changes if Waiver Ends (n=18)			
	Not Likely	Likely	Definitely
Elimination of some caseworker positions	8	7	3
Elimination of some specialized positions	9	3	6
Reduction or elimination of FTM independent facilitator positions	12	4	2
Elimination of specific PCSA services	9	6	3
Restructuring/ internal staffing	8	5	1
Elimination of special PCSA initiatives/ programs	7	9	2
Reduction in ability to support children without open PCSA cases	8	6	4
Reduction in ability to provide collaborative efforts in the community	7	7	4
Reduction in financial and other supports to kinship caregivers	11	3	4
Reduction in financial supports for adoptive families	12	4	2

Three patterns stand out in this table. First, the demonstration county PCSAs are not very inclined to make any of the changes asked about in the survey: seven or more PCSAs say each of the changes is unlikely. Second, in three areas change is very unlikely to occur: 11 or 12 PCSAs say they are not planning to reduce FTM facilitator positions, reduce supports to kinship caregivers, or reduce financial support to adoptive families. Third, in only one area, elimination of specialized positions, do more than four PCSAs express definite plans to make such a change. Overall, the PCSAs intend to maintain the programmatic improvements put in place under the waiver. However, their determination to continue doing things that have made them feel successful under the waiver does not mean they are confident that they will prevail in the face of the fiscal downturn. In truth, the PCSA managers express many deep concerns about the future of child welfare practice in their counties, should the waiver end:

- Five counties speak of concerns about loss of funding which could result in a *loss of staff*, especially disconcerting given the many cuts counties have experienced in the last few years:
 - “We are down to minimum staff in child welfare...It would be very negative for us to have to go back to ‘the old way’ of obtaining custody to serve a child and family. This is not best for children and it has been shown that good outcomes can be obtained without pursuing custody.”
 - “The agency will not be able to sustain current staffing levels which will ultimately contribute to higher caseloads and less individual attention given to children and families. Cessation of the waiver will be disastrous for the agency.”

- Ten counties state that the loss of flexible funding would cause a *loss of services* (or decrease in current level of services):
 - “Should the waiver end, the loss of flexible funding and the ability to focus on prevention will cause a dramatic disruption to the array of service that we believe to be best practice for children and families.”
 - “The waiver gives this county flexibility on spending that helps us to create more preventive programs for the community which has begun to build strong relationships with the court, counseling centers, and now the schools. If the waiver ends this county will feel negative effects.”
 - “The waiver allows flexibility for the PCSA to adjust to ever-changing family needs. Losing this flexibility directly affects service provision for families.”
- Eight counties describe concerns about *movement away from best practice*, that it would be difficult to return to the ‘old way’ of doing things with regard to family-centered practice and funding:
 - “I have almost 34 years in child welfare and the last 12 years have been the most exciting, inspiring years of my career. I do not believe I can go back to doing business in a way that I know now is not in the best interest of families and children”.
 - “The waiver’s conclusion would signify the end of a well-thought-out, innovative, and cutting edge strategy that addressed the needs of children and families involved in the child welfare system. It feels like we step back a couple of decades in removing flexibility and rewarding removals. A practice that seems to fly in the face of all federal, state, and local child welfare principles and practices.”
 - “The waiver has been completely successful in our county; providing the flexible funding has clearly significantly reduced the number of children in care and prevented that number from going back up. Child welfare has moved far in terms of providing effective up-front services. If we were to lose that capacity, to suddenly be faced with a tremendous loss of revenue, and only reimbursed under the former model, it would be likely that foster care rates would start to creep back up.”
- Some counties are more upbeat about their intentions to sustain waiver efforts:
 - “As a result of participation in the waiver, we have significantly changed our philosophy and practice to focus on prevention rather than reacting to incidents of abuse and neglect, as well as the use of kinship families in preventing custody and in early termination of custody. We will not discontinue the kinship program or FTM.”
 - “Restructuring may include role changes. Our goal is to provide families with necessary services and supports. We will make needed changes after an intensive assessment of the availability of resources, funding, etc.”

2.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter the study team presented the following main findings:

- According to experienced demonstration county PCSA managers, the waiver has positively impacted ongoing, placement, and permanency case processes as well as improvement in agency philosophy or culture. Out-of-home placement options and expedited reunification are the most common types of services or supports attributed to the waiver.
- Demonstration county PCSAs and juvenile courts communicate better, have a larger array of program and staffing options to serve unruly/delinquent youth, and feel slightly better able to serve those youth. Ten ProtectOhio counties have established Title IV-E court arrangements since the Interim Evaluation Report, eight comparison counties and two demonstration counties. However, relationships between the juvenile courts and PCSAs are not strongly associated with waiver participation or existence of Title IVE courts.
- Despite anticipated negative impacts of the possible end of the waiver, including loss of staff and services, and reverting back to old ways of operating, most counties report the intent to sustain the preventive and innovative efforts established under the waiver; particularly family team meetings and financial supports for kinship caregivers and adoptive families.