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IV.i.h; 12-10 2009 Excellence in Research Award

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Best regards,

Flavio F. Marsiglia

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A Crisis of Credibility: Professionals' Concerns about the Psychiatric Care Provided to Clients of the Child Welfare System

J. Curtis McMillen · Nicole Fedoravicius ·
Jill Rowe · Bonnie T. Zima · Norma Ware

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Abstract

Objectives This study examined child welfare and mental health professionals' views of the quality of psychiatric services received by consumers of the child welfare system and explored root causes of perceived quality problems.

Methods One hundred and thirty child welfare, mental health and court professionals participated in qualitative interviews individually or in groups. Data analyses identified perceived problems in quality and perceived causes of quality problems. Participants in member checking groups were then asked to comment on and further clarify the results.

Results The participants reported concerns related to overuse of psychotropic medication, overmedicated children, short inpatient stays, and continuity of psychiatric care. Overuse of psychotropic medications and overmedication were perceived to be driven by short

evaluations, liability concerns, short inpatient stays and a lack of clinical feedback to psychiatrists from child welfare partners. Medicaid reimbursement policies were at the heart of several quality concerns. These problems contributed to a distrust of psychiatric practices among child welfare professionals.

Conclusions These findings underscore the adverse effects of modern marketplace medicine coupled with low Medicaid reimbursement rates on quality of care for vulnerable groups. Child welfare and mental health professionals and their associated stakeholders may together possess substantial clout to advocate for a reimbursement system and structure that promotes quality service. The findings also point to a crisis of credibility toward psychiatric practice among social service and other non-psychiatrist mental health professionals. Efforts are needed to increase the capacity for psychiatrists and child welfare professionals to communicate effectively with each other and for psychiatrists to receive the information that they need from their child welfare partners to ensure accurate diagnosis and effective treatment.

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Introduction

Researchers have designated the child welfare system as a defacto mental health service system (Lyons & Rogers,), a gateway to mental health services (Leslie et al.,) and have referred to the foster care system as an open-air mental hospital (Rosenfeld et al.,). This is due to (1) the high rates of mental health service use among child welfare system con-

problems. The problems in quality attributable to these problems and how they affect psychiatric consumers have not yet been well described. A number of key players (psychiatrists, consumers, other mental health and social service professionals) are aware of these problems. Some of these groups, such as child welfare consumers, have little to no voice in the making of policy and no single group likely has sufficient pull to affect change in entrenched social policy. Together, these groups may have substantial clout to advocate for a reimbursement and system structure that promotes quality service.

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Welfare Reform and Family Expenditures: How Are Single Mothers Adapting to the New Welfare and Work Regime?

Neeraj Kaushal
Columbia University

Qin Gao
Fordham University

Jane Waldfogel
Columbia University

This work studies the association between welfare reform, broadly defined to include an array of social policy changes affecting low-income families in the 1990s, and expenditure patterns of poor single-mother families. The findings suggest that welfare reform is not associated with any statistically significant change in total expenditures in families headed by low-educated single mothers. However, patterns of expenditure changed. The reform policy is associated with an increase in spending on transportation and food away from home, as well as on adult clothing and footwear. In contrast, it is not related to changes in expenditures on child care or learning and enrichment activities. The pattern of results suggests that welfare reform has shifted family expenditures toward items that facilitate work outside the home but, at least so far, does not allow low-income families to catch up with more advantaged families in expenditures on learning and enrichment.

A decade-long policy to "end welfare as we know it" (Clinton 1992) has dramatically altered the life circumstances and opportunities of families headed by single mothers in the United States. Approximately 69 percent of single mothers were employed in 2005, up from 61 percent a decade earlier. Further, after falling by half within the first 5 years of the implementation of the 1996 welfare law (Personal Responsibility

Social Service Review (September 2007).
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Table A2 (Continued)

Category	Description of Expenditure
f) Enrichment activities	Musical instruments, supplies, and accessories; membership fees for country clubs, health clubs, swimming pools, tennis clubs, social or other recreational organizations, and civic, service, or fraternal organizations; fees for participant sports, such as golf, tennis, and bowling; management fees for recreational facilities, such as tennis courts and swimming pools in condos and co-ops; admission fees for entertainment activities, including movie, theater, concert, opera, or other musical series (single admissions and season tickets); admission fees to sporting events (single admissions and season tickets); fees for recreational lessons or other instructions; rental and repair of musical instruments, supplies, and accessories; and rental and repair of sports, recreation, and exercise equipment
Child care and babysitting	Babysitting or other child care, whether in one's own home or someone else's home, and tuition and other expenses (other than schoolbooks, supplies, and equipment) for day care and nursery schools

NOTE.—Categories *a* and *b* of learning and enrichment expenditures are the same as the category education (including reading) in table A1, with one exception. In table A1, tuition on day care and nursery schools is included in education. Here, these items are excluded from learning and enrichment and included in child care and babysitting.

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Notes

The authors are grateful to Liz Washbrook and Geng Li for helpful advice. Send correspondence to Neeraj Kaushal, School of Social Work, Columbia University, 1255 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027.

1. Meyer and Sullivan (2006) study trends in shares of expenditures on major items. However, they do not investigate whether these trends are caused by welfare reform or other time-varying contemporaneous factors. They also do not look at the specific expenditure categories examined here.

2. The sample size was increased in 1999. In any single quarter between 1990 and 1998, the IS consisted of about 5,000 units.

3. It is possible that single mothers who started working due to welfare reform may drop out of CESs or answer questions with less care because their work schedules after welfare reform will restrict time for such activities. There is no way to determine whether respondents took less care in answering CESs after welfare reform. According to CES documentation, from 1990 to 2004, there is a steady decline in the response rate. A similar trend is found in response rates in all national surveys during this period (Caban et al. 2005). There is no indication that this trend is more pronounced for the target group than for the comparison groups.

4. Note that this residency requirement was one of the conditions for teenage mothers to stay on welfare (110 *Stat.* 2136 [1996]). The analysis reported here is repeated after excluding teenage mothers. The estimated coefficients (not shown but available on request) are similar to those reported.

5. Certain items in detailed categories overlap with those in major expenditure categories.

6. As a robustness check, the analysis is repeated, and high-educated groups are defined as those with some college or higher education. The estimated coefficients (not shown but available on request) are similar to those reported.

7. There was also a statistically significant 37 percent increase in expenditures in the miscellaneous category.

8. Some of the statistically insignificant DDD results are large but imprecisely estimated due to large standard errors. For example, welfare reform was associated with a 6 percent decline in target group expenditures on housing and utility, as well as with a 13 percent decline in target group expenditures on health and on education.

9. If the low-educated group is redefined as those with a high school degree or less, analyses (not shown but available on request) suggest that the estimated effects are smaller in magnitude for this group. This is expected, as single mothers with a high school degree are less likely to be affected by welfare reform because they have a lower risk of being on welfare than do their counterparts without the degree.

10. The data in CESs treat washer and dryer as a single durable.

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