



Family Preservation Model

An Evaluation Study

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Abstract

Background

The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services (MOLSA) policy regarding children at risk who have been removed from their parents' care champions the rights of every child to a permanent, caring family. Professionals and policymakers agree that it is best for children to grow up in their parents' home and in their care, provided that the parents do not harm them or put them in danger and are capable of providing them with a good, safe environment. Accordingly, before a child is removed from home, it must be ascertained that every effort and resource have been invested in rehabilitating the parents within a given time.

Family Preservation Model is the flagship program of MOLSA's Division for Personal and Social Services. Its goal is to strengthen and rehabilitate families with children at high risk – whether they are living in the community or in an out-of-home placement – and to guarantee that the children have a permanent, caring family. The program does so by providing intensive care and support in the time allocated to the family members. The program was introduced as a pilot program in five local authorities in 2017.

Study Goal

The study goal was to examine the implementation process, outcomes, and implications of the Family Preservation Model pilot program and the stability of the outcomes six months after the program had ended.

Study Method

The study included qualitative and quantitative methods using a randomized controlled trial among 224 families to analyze the outcomes.

Selected Findings

- **Characteristics of the families who joined the program:** The families who joined the program had difficulties in multiple areas. In the professionals' opinions, the most suitable families for participation in the program are those that are motivated to change and are capable of accepting help. The professionals estimate that the parents in only two-thirds (67%) of the families selected for the program had the motivation to change.

- **Work practices:**

- The program social workers worked intensively with the families and their relationship was perceived to be characterized by trust, intimacy and warmth. At the same time, the program social workers found the role more challenging and less rewarding than that of departmental family social worker.
- Every family in the program received a large number of varied interventions (for the family, for the children, and for all family members as a single unit) and a flexible package of interventions that could be adjusted to meet the specific needs of each family was used.

- **Duration of the program:** The parents and professionals claimed that the duration of the parents' participation in the program (two years) was not long enough and, in their opinion, it should last three years.

- **Outcomes:** The program improved the status and functioning of the families and children. In most of the measures examined, the improvement in the status of the families and children in the experimental group was greater than the improvement in the status of those in the control group. Moreover, among the families and children in the control group, there was greater deterioration in most of the measures examined and the differences between the two groups were statistically significant. The findings regarding the prevention of out-of-home placements showed that although most of the children (84%) in the experimental group remained in the community, 79% of the children in the control group also remained in the community and the differences between the groups were not statistically significant.