

Concurrent Planning: Implementing a Complex Reform for Maximum Benefit

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Concurrent Planning

The goal of concurrent planning is to reduce the time children spend in out-of-home care, and the number of placements they experience in care

- **Concurrent planning “...provides for reunification services while simultaneously developing an alternative plan in case it is needed.” – Katz et al.**
- **Concurrent planning can mean:**
 - **2 social workers per case, or more work for one worker**
 - **Placing a child in a fost-adopt home**
 - **Targeting concurrent planning towards children less likely to reunify**
- **Allowed by ASFA; California law since 1998**
- **Limited evidence of effectiveness exists to date**

Research Questions

- How is concurrent planning being implemented in public agencies?
- What are the experiences of those affected by concurrent planning?
- What is the effect of concurrent planning on child permanency outcomes?

Methods (Quantitative)

- **Design**
 - Longitudinal, quasi-experimental
- **Sampling plan**
 - 6 counties identified in previous study
 - 2 cohorts 93/94 and 98/00, n=1155
 - CWS/CMS data archive for county samples
- **Data collection**
 - Case files / court reports
 - Laptops primary collection device
 - 20 research staff
- **Analysis**
 - Concurrent planning conceptualized as practice elements
 - Different observation time spans=censored data
 - Event history analysis to account for censored data

Sample Demographics

		n	%
Gender	boys	619	53.6
	girls	531	46.0
	missing	5	0.4
		1155	100.0

Ethnicity	african am	258	22.3
	hispanic	266	23.0
	other	91	7.9
	caucasian	486	42.1
	unknown	53	4.6
	missing	1	0.1
	1155	100.0	

Age	infants 0-1	399	34.6
	babies 1-3	262	22.7
	tods 3-5	184	15.9
	school 5-7	137	11.9
	kids 7-10	170	14.7
	missing	3	0.3
		1155	100.1

		n	%
County	1	282	24.4
	2	62	5.4
	3	95	8.2
	4	288	24.9
	5	326	28.2
	6	100	8.7
	missing	2	0.2
	1155	100.0	

Cohort	1	506	43.8
	2	649	56.2
		1155	100.0

Outcome	reunif	538	46.6
	adoption	153	13.2
	guard	77	6.7
	other par	62	5.4
	still in care	306	26.5
	missing	19	1.6
		1155	100.0

Elements of Concurrent Planning Practice by Cohort

(Sample restricted to cases that continued past the jurisdictional hearing; n=885)

	COH 1	COH 2	P-Value Chi-Sq
• Reunification Prognosis Made at JD	14.5%	29.6%	<.0001
• Concurrent Plan Documented at JD	8.8%	54.8%	<.0001
• Consequences of Failure Explained	37.7%	55.7%	<.0001
• Option of Vol. Relinq. Discussed	7.4%	23.5%	<.0001
• Placement in Concurrent Planning Home	2.3%	6.2%	.006
• Second SW for Alt. Plan	13.6%	18.3%	.065
• SW Searched for Alt. Perm. Placement	18.2%	31.6%	<.0001
• SW Explored Pot. Perm. w/Current FP	25.0%	28.6%	.232

Samples of “Concurrent Plans”

Concurrent plans documented in court reports sometimes seemed appropriate or sensible:

- “Referred to Adoptions for possible concurrent home”
- “Concurrent plan not needed”
- “Relative caregivers are willing to adopt”

But sometimes did little more than describe a sequential plan:

- “Adoption would be best if reunification fails”
- “If reunification fails, minor to have adoptability assessment”
- “Explore placement with relative if reunification fails”
- “LTFC if nec., as grandmother not available long term”

Evaluating the effect of concurrent planning

In order to evaluate whether concurrent planning activities affected children's outcomes, we built four multivariate models that included other variables known or likely to affect permanency outcomes of adoption, reunification, guardianship or placement with the non-offending parent. A statistically significant coefficient on the variable representing concurrent planning suggests an association exists between the outcome modeled and concurrent planning services, controlling for the other variables in the model.

Multivariate Survival Analysis: Model Elements

Child Age	Child Special Need	JD continuances
0-<1	Medical	Cohort
1-<3	Emotional	
3-<5	Behavioral	Maltrtmnt Sev (0-25)
5-<7	Dev Delay	
[7-10]	Other	Parent Controls
Child Ethnicity	County	Early incarceration.
African American	1	No early visit
Hispanic	2	Prior removal
Other non-white	3	Current Sub Abuse
Unknown	4	Criminal History
[White]	5	Dev Delay
Gender	[6]	Mental Health Prob
Kin Placement		

Multivariate Survival Analysis: Conceptualizing Concurrent Planning

Concurrent planning measured by counting the number of concurrent planning practice elements known or believed to have occurred early in the case:

- ✓ Reunification Prognosis Made at JD
- ✓ Concurrent Plan Documented at JD
- ✓ Consequences of Failure Explained
- ✓ Option of Vol. Relinq. Discussed
- ✓ **Early** Placement in Concurrent Planning Home

Multivariate Survival Analysis

(All variables indicated earlier remain in each model as controls)

Reunification

Variable	RR	p-value
Afr am	.69	.019
Hisp	.70	.017
Other	.58	.012
MSS	.93	.001
Med issue	.71	.033
JD conts	.93	.018
Cohort	1.30	.043
County 5	.70	.031
County 6	.56	.018
No early visit	.70	.003
Prior rem	.59	<.0001
Cur sub abuse	.70	.003
Dev delay	.43	.006
CCP	.85	.005

Adoption

Variable	RR	p-value
Afr am	.28	<.0001
Infant	5.92	.002
Kin plcmnt	.41	<.0001
Med issue	1.68	.033
JD conts	.93	.018
Cohort	1.73	.024
County 4	.16	.001
Cur sub abuse	1.86	.042
CCP	1.28	.012

Multivariate Survival Analysis

(All variables indicated earlier remain in each model as controls)

Guardianship

Variable	Haz Rt	p-value
Other	2.39	.045
Kin plcmnt	7.31	.001

Other parent

Variable	Haz Rt	p-value
Crim history	2.41	.026

Findings suggest...

- Concurrent planning is associated with a reduced likelihood of reunification, and an increased likelihood of adoption.
- This may be due to other factors associated with receiving concurrent planning services and the outcome, but not included in the model
- Model assumption of independent outcomes still to be tested

Methods (Qualitative)

- Design
 - Case study (across 6 California counties)
- Sampling
 - Purposive (agency & legal personnel, birth and foster/kin caregivers)
- Data collection
 - Semi-structured interviews (in person or telephone) and focus groups; audiotaped and/or with extensive notes
- Analysis
 - Transcribed notes managed in Atlas.ti software; text data coded using systematic, flexible approach by research team; data matrices used for comparison; emerging themes and patterns basis for findings

Qualitative Study Participants

N=336 in 6 California Counties

- Social Workers (n=125)
- Social Work Supervisors (n=38)
- Caregivers (CCP/fost-adopt, “regular” foster parent, relatives) (n=88)
- Birth Parents (reunified, did not reunify, still in care under CCP) (n=67)
- Attorneys (for children, parents, county) (n=13)
- Judges (n=4)
- FFA representatives (n=1)

Status of Implementation

Widespread acceptance for the conceptual underpinnings of concurrent planning

-- however --

The active, early use of concurrent placements occurring only in a very limited way

Use of Concurrent Placements

- Several agencies report using concurrent planning homes for cases in which reunification services are bypassed altogether
- Many workers across most agencies described considering permanent placements once parents were clearly failing reunification (approaching the termination of parental rights hearing)

Qualitative results suggest:

- The implementation of concurrent planning cannot rest on requiring casework activities of individual child welfare workers.
- A variety of system changes are needed for concurrent planning to be effectively implemented.

What is needed?

- Pro-CCP philosophy permeating agency
- Presence of formal systems to support CCP
- Supports for staff to embrace, apply CCP
- Stronger link between child welfare & adoption services
- Availability of adequate # of CCP placements
- Availability of necessary services to birth parents
- Active promotion of CCP in juvenile court

Selected points re: implementation

Examples from qualitative data to illustrate
(next 3 slides)

Example (Formal Systems to Support CCP)

Having a template available that incorporates CCP language may encourage workers to “keep the need for permanent placement in mind,” as said one attorney. However, a template approach is vulnerable to misuse, as reflected in this social worker’s comment:

“... on my court report, I either delete the section or I’ll put the alternative which is just one of the categories. I don’t really have a real plan, I just choose a category like long-term foster care or guardianship and adoption. But I’m not usually taking any steps towards that.”

Examples re: Supports for Staff

Dual worker roles in CCP were described as “a conflict,” “fractured,” and “schizophrenic” by some workers in several counties. In some agencies this problem was addressed through the use of two active workers on a case. Typical comments about this approach:

- “Two people can work together to make the decisions. It is a very big decision to make. We have our workers come to an agreement about their recommendations prior to going to Court so that we don't give mixed messages to the judge about our recommendation.” (Supervisor)
- “The benefit of the 2-worker model is that there would be no way to do it on your own – it's just too much work.” (Worker)

Example re: Adequate CCP Placements

It is apparent that special screening, training and ongoing support is needed to assist caregivers in providing concurrent placements. As one said,

“The whole time, you're living a double life - not knowing what's going to happen.... I would NEVER do concurrent planning again. If anyone ever asked me about it (because they were interested in doing it) - I would caution them severely.” (Concurrent Placement Caregiver)

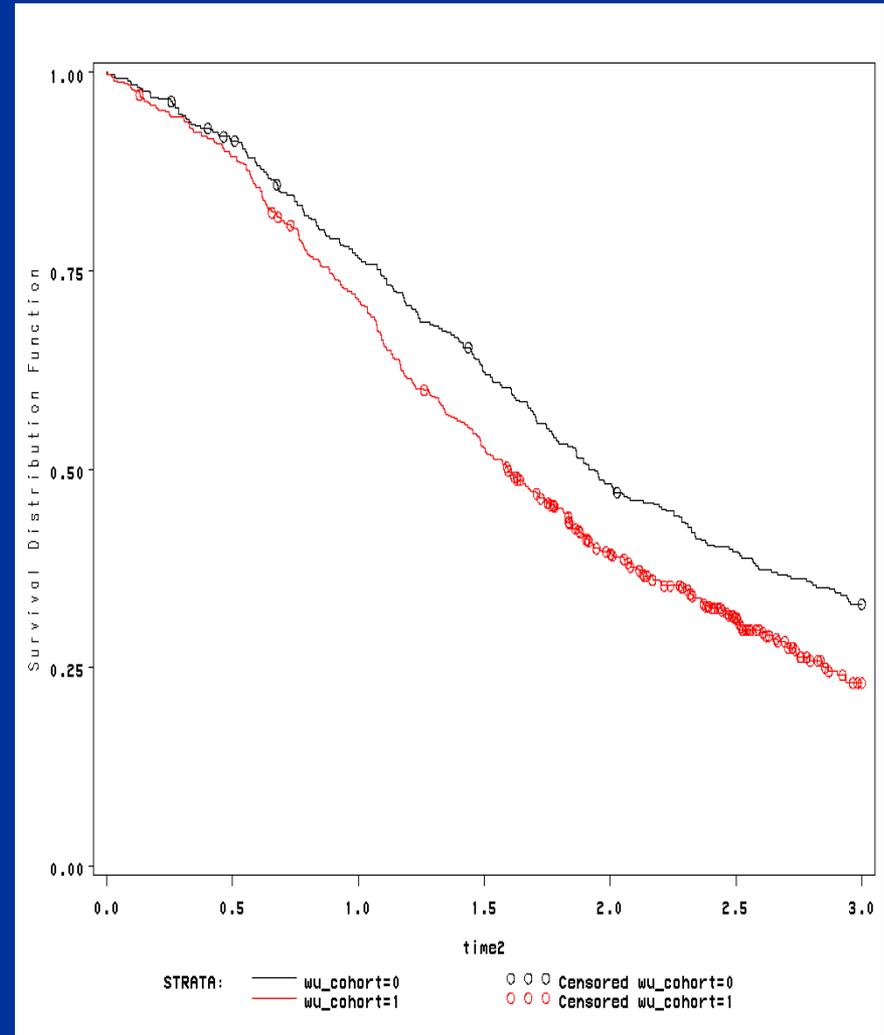
Examples of Progress in Some Agencies:

- Strong leadership and promotion of CCP philosophy
- Development of systems to ensure early resolution of questions regarding paternity, relatives, and ICWA
- Team models of sharing casework, decision-making responsibilities among workers
- Efforts to carefully screen, train, support CCP caregivers

The Push to Permanency

Although concurrent planning implementation appears limited, the increased emphasis on attaining permanency for children in care may be having positive effects

Permanency outcomes more likely in **second cohort**



Summary of Findings

- Quantitative
 - Minimal but increased use of CCP elements
 - Concurrent planning positively associated with adoption, and negatively associated with reunification in multi-variate model
- Qualitative
 - Believe in CCP concept
 - Limited use of early CCP placement
 - Very difficult to implement in child welfare system

Some Conclusions about Implementation of CCP

- Requires wholesale shift in thinking, commitment of resources (not just a new “practice method”)
- Intensity and complexity of child welfare work under concurrent planning has been inadequately addressed, to date. Need smaller caseloads, more comprehensive systems to support CCP

Some Conclusions

- Some true implementation efforts occurring
- Much appears pro forma
- Potential detriment from limited efforts
- True implementation means restructuring

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