

F F T A



Foster Family-based Treatment Association

## Annotations of Research in Treatment Foster Care

### Citation

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### Keywords

Economic advantage foster care

### Research Questions

- Is the social rate of return on foster care services greater with public foster care or with private foster care?
- Are the extra costs of private agency programs justified by the additional benefits?

### Method

*Subjects:* Adult foster care alumni were selected from the case files of (1) Casey Family Programs (Casey), with participating offices in Seattle, Tacoma, and Yakima, Washington, and in Portland, Oregon; (2) the Oregon Department of Human Services, with participating offices in Portland; and (3) the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration, Division of Children and Family Services, with participating offices in Seattle, Tacoma, and Yakima. The study used data from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study (NFCAS) to eliminate possible subject selection bias. The final sample comprised 479 foster care alumni.

*Design:* Researchers used a quasi-experimental design that compared data from the case files of foster care alumni of private foster care services to data from case files of public foster care services. The study compared adult outcomes of youths who received enhanced services from a private agency to those of youths who received typical services from state agencies.

*Materials/Measures:* Study participants responded to a variety of financial and mental health outcome questionnaires and were interviewed by the researchers.

*Procedures:* The researchers collected data from a review of case files, from questionnaires, and from interviews. A benefit-cost analysis was conducted.

### Results/Findings

This study indicates that adult outcomes for persons who participated in private (i.e., Casey) foster programs as youths were significantly better than those for persons who participated in public foster care services. The researchers also concluded that substantial long-term cost

savings can be achieved by private foster care services, even though they can be more expensive to operate than public foster care services.

### **Limitations**

A primary limitation is that the study examined only the Casey Family Programs as an exemplar of private service providers. Validity of this study may also be limited by (1) the method for selection of subjects, (2) a small sample size, and (3) a focus on alumni who were in long-term foster care. These limitations, however, do not diminish the remarkable value of this study.

### **Application to Practice**

This study is applicable to policy, not to specific practice. It demonstrates the financial benefits of enhanced foster care services compared to public sector services. The study argues for a strategy to improve adult outcomes by placing greater emphasis on enhanced, albeit more expensive, foster care services that are in accord with the Casey Family Programs model. The study does not provide enough details about this model to inform specific agency practice.

### **Contact Information**

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