

Billy Black

# Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

*The artist is a young person who grew up in care.*

*"The banner shows many pathways through the care system with a carer or caseworker acting as a guide, ultimately leading to independence for every young person. Whether we live with family or strangers, study, work, or just try our best, the paths we choose and are guided through in our youth are what we use to prepare ourselves for the happiest adulthood we can achieve" Billy Black*

## Placement Stability

ACWA Conference 17 August 2016

Dr Fred Wulczyn and Dr Lijun Chen



# Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Aboriginal nations as the first people of Australia and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We remember the Stolen Generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture under past government practices.



# Who is conducting this study?

NSW Department of Family & Community Services with assistance from:

Study design and data analysis commenced in 2010

- Professor Judy Cashmore (University of Sydney)
- Professor Paul Delfabbro (University of Adelaide)
- Professor Ilan Katz (University of NSW)
- Dr Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago
- Australian Institute of Family Studies

Data collection commenced in May 2011

- I-view, experts in social research data collection



# Ethics approval

- Human Research Ethics Committee
  - University of New South Wales HREC (HC10335).
- Aboriginal Ethics Committee
  - Approval from Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of NSW Ethics Committee (766/10).
- NSW Department of Education
  - State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (2012260).
- NSW Population & Health Services Research Ethics Committee
  - Cancer Institute New South Wales (HREC/14/CIPHS/74).



# Pathways of care in context

- Landmark study
  - There are very few large scale longitudinal studies of children in the foster care system that involve interviews with carers, teachers, caseworkers and the children themselves
- Expands the quality & type of evidence available to decision-makers
  - Improve policy and resource allocation using developmental needs as the rationale
  - Improve case-level decision making



## Pathways of care in context

- Deepens our understanding of the impact of placement on children
  - How children develop through time compared to where they were at the beginning of their care episode
  - Design better interventions
  - Cease doing things that don't work
- Enhances the utility of administrative/electronic records (e.g., KiDS)



## Expected impact

- How has longitudinal, developmentally motivated research affected policy and practice?
  - Improved knowledge
  - From child protection to child wellbeing
  - Expectations and monitoring
  - Accelerated interest in evidence-informed interventions
  - Better science all around



# Placement stability

- Research Question
  - Following the Wave I interview, did children change placement settings?
- Rationale
  - Placement moves are thought to have deleterious developmental consequences
- Measurement challenges
  - Movement counts are the usual approach - ave. number of moves per child
    - Not useful for adjusting clinical interventions
    - Not useful for monitoring system performance
    - Not useful for understanding the developmental consequences



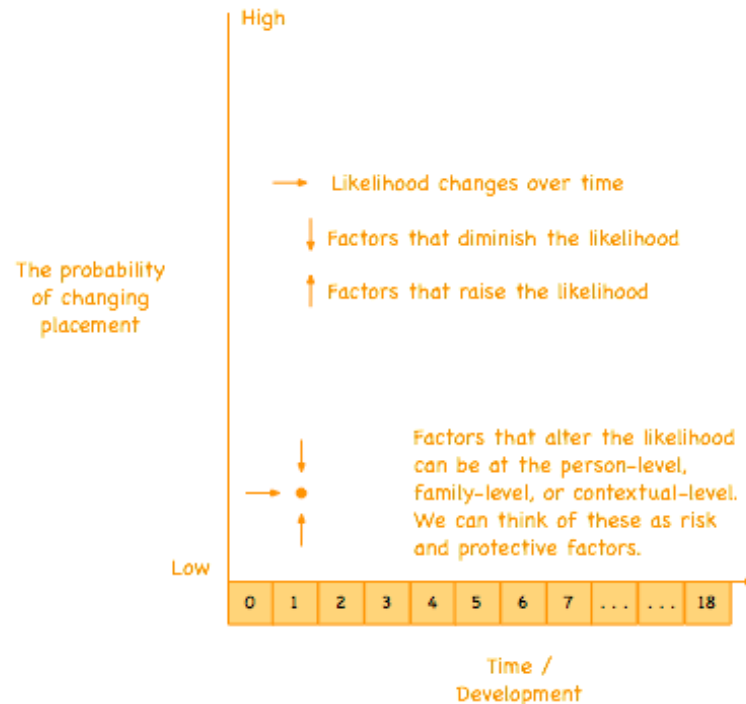


# Placement stability

- What is the problem?
  - Movement - placement changes - are a function of developmental context
    - What has happened and how does what has already happened affect the developmental starting point
- What is the solution?
  - Developmental perspective that takes the timing of placement changes into account and overlays the developmental trajectory onto the placement trajectory

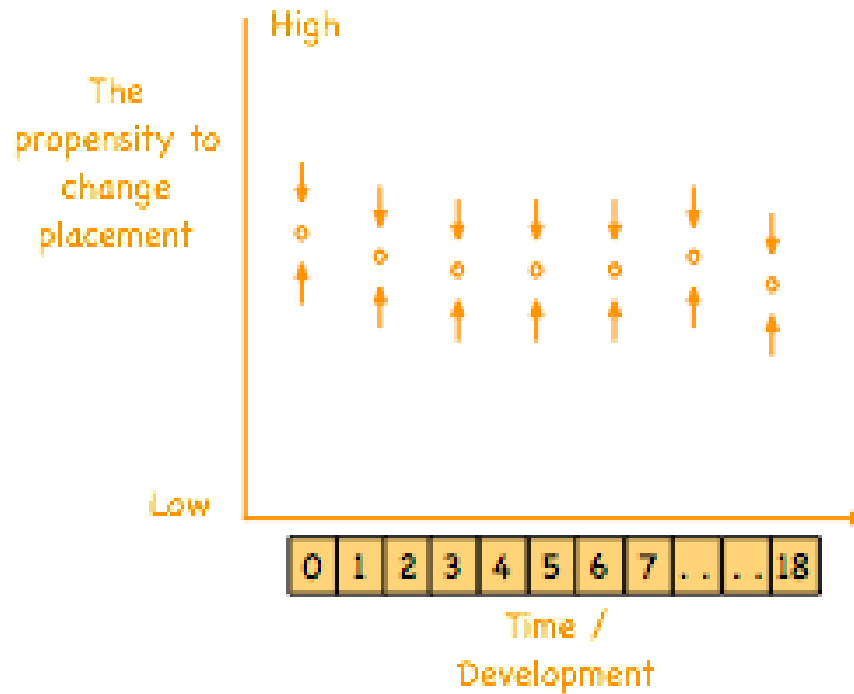


# Conceptual framework for study of placement stability





# Conceptual framework for study of placement stability





# Placement stability in POCLS data

- Present study
  - All children in the POCLS
  - Placement change defined
    - How many placement changes per 10,000 person days of care
      - Adjusts for time in care – total days in care and total number of moves across all children
    - Time to the first move after the Wave I interview
  - What child and carer characteristics are linked to placement change
    - Prior number of moves
    - Caregiver stress
    - Satisfaction of the caregiver



# Placement stability

- A bit of context
  - First wave of analysis building off the longitudinal structure of the study design
  - As we learn about the diverse experiences of children, we will get better at seeing the common threads that come with being in out-of-home care. In turn, we will get better at understanding how we can help make the experience more useful to the young person's development



# Placement stability

- Basic data
  - Conservative count
  - Overall, nearly 18 percent of the children changed placement at least once after the Wave I interview
    - Range: 54% (more than 5 prior changes) to 8.7% (children who were sexually abused)
  - There were 3.9 placement changes per 10,000 person days in care
    - Range: 17.2 and 1.3 (same factors as above)
  - Time to first placement change - quartile duration varies between 201 and 687 (if 25% changed placement)



# Placement stability – number of changes

- Placement changes are more common if:
  - Child is older
  - Child is female
  - Child is non-Aboriginal
  - Placed in non-Aboriginal kin homes
  - Experienced many moves prior to the Wave I interview
- Placement change is not related to:
  - Maltreatment history



# Placement stability – number of changes

- Other factors
  - Caregiver stress - more stress, more placement changes
  - Children placed with caregivers who get help from their caseworkers and report a positive carer experience move less frequently
  - Districts vary with respect to placement changes even after taking child and caregiver differences into account





# Placement stability – Time to first change

- Placement changes happen more quickly if:
  - Child is older
  - Child was placed in non-Aboriginal kin home
  - Experienced many moves prior to the Wave I interview
- Placement change is not related to:
  - Maltreatment history
- Other factors associated with quicker moves
  - Caregiver stress
  - Children placed with caregivers who reported a positive carer experience



# Placement stability – Time to first change

- Districts vary with regard to expressed satisfaction
- Districts vary with respect to when placement changes happen even after taking child and caregiver differences into account
- District variation goes away when caregiver satisfaction is added to the model



## Placement stability - implications

- Strong findings pointing to the importance of providing support to carers
- There is important variation in the extent to which carers express their feelings of support that may be linked to district office practice differences
- Practice implications include a focus on support especially from other foster parents
- Use administrative data to model the risk of placement change within the current population



# Acknowledgements

- **Children and young people** who are participating in the study
- **Carers and birthparents** who are participating in the study
- **FACS district staff, caseworkers, childcare workers and teachers** who assisted with sample recruitment and completed on-line surveys
- **Create Foundation, AbSec and Connecting Carers** for assisting during the study design stage and supporting participants
- **Stakeholders and experts** who have provided support, assistance and advice
- **FACS Analysis and Research** who are funding and leading the Study



## Further information

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Study DVD and Study Brochures