Child Neglect Risk and Protective Factors: What Do We Really Know?

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Outline of Presentation

- Incidence of neglect
- Three-stages of studying neglect risk and protective factors (funded by Doris Duke Charitable Foundation)
  - Systematic review of the literature
  - Cross-study test of predictors of neglect
  - Development of neglect risk instrument
- Link to prevention
  - What do we know about “what works”?
  - How can we apply this knowledge to our work?
Incidence of Neglect

• Most common form of child maltreatment
• Form of CM most associated with poverty, and most likely to be associated with a CM-related death
• Substantiated child victims:
  ○ 7.5/1,000 (excludes medical neglect and psychological neglect)
  ○ 3/4 of child victims experience neglect
  ○ Caseloads increasingly comprised of “chronic neglect” cases
• Most common among 0-3 age group, declines with age
• National Incidence Study (NIS-4) (2005):
  ○ Harm standard: 10.5/1000
  ○ Endangerment standard: 30.6/1000
  ○ Only form of maltreatment to NOT show a statistically significant decline since NIS-3 (1993), but downward trend for harm standard.
Difficult to Define

- Deals with “omissions” of behavior
- “Phenotypically diverse”
- Particularly sensitive to developmental level & capacities of child
- Not necessarily a discrete event (no clear onset, duration), and tends to recur
- Chronic neglect—conceptually distinct?
- Many state statutes stipulate that “poverty alone” cannot be sufficient evidence of neglect
- Should caregiver (non)behaviors or child harms carry more weight?
Risks as Predictors of Neglect

- Large literature exists on “correlates” of maltreatment
  - Studies that employ cross-sectional designs
- Little known about factors that predict neglect
  - True understanding of risk requires prospective lens (i.e., risks/protective factors measured prior to occurrence of outcome)
- Great variation in measures across studies
  - Leads to difficulty in comparing findings
- Very few studies that incorporate more than one neglect outcome measure
  - Neglect vs. Neglect-related CPS involvement
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- depression/anxiety</td>
<td>- self efficacy/self esteem</td>
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<tr>
<td>- substance abuse</td>
<td>- warmth/empathy toward child</td>
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<tr>
<td>- learning disability</td>
<td>- involvement with child’s activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>- history of child victimization</td>
<td>- parenting (skills, knowledge)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- stress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- parenting (harsh discipline, lack of supervision)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- low birth weight</td>
<td>- good health overall</td>
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<tr>
<td>- difficult temperament</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>FAMILY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- domestic violence</td>
<td>- social support</td>
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<tr>
<td>- unplanned/undesired pregnancy</td>
<td>- employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- economic stress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- public benefit receipt</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- urbanicity, poverty rate</td>
<td>- parent satisfaction with</td>
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Among low-income families with young children (0-5 years)...

- To see what predicts involvement with child protective services (CPS) for reasons of neglect within three separate studies.

- To see whether similar factors within separate studies predict both neglect-related CPS involvement and a validated (parental) self-report measure of child neglect.

- To see whether there are consistencies across studies in the predictors of both neglect outcomes.

(Full paper is published in the Children and Youth Services Review, Slack et al., 2011)
Three Studies

- Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing (FFCW) N=1,820
- Healthy Families New York (HFNY) N=421
- Illinois Families Study-Child Wellbeing (IFS-CWB) N=385

- All involve probabilistic samples (or subsamples) of low-income families with young children
- All involve prospective, longitudinal designs
- All are able to distinguish neglect from other forms of maltreatment, and have two different measures of neglect outcomes
- They share a relatively large set of common/approximate measures
Outcome Measures

• Investigated CPS neglect reports
  ○ HFNY and IFS-CWB have official reports; FFCW has parent self-report measure
  ○ HFNY (53%); IFS-CWB (14%); FFCW (5%)

• Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al., 1998)
  ○ CTSPC neglect subscale involves 5 items that capture caregiver failure to provide for basic developmental needs of child
  ○ Neglect subscale dichotomized to allow for easier comparison to CPS outcome models
  ○ HFNY (17%); IFS-CWB (22%); FFCW (13%)
Risk and Protective Factors (Predictors)

- **Demographic Factors**
  - (e.g., parent age, education level, race/ethnicity, family structure)

- **Economic Factors**
  - (e.g., work status, public benefit receipt, material hardships)

- **Parent and Child Wellbeing Factors**
  - (e.g., child health, parent depression, self-efficacy, social support, domestic violence, substance abuse)

- **Parenting Factors**
  - (e.g., spanking, parenting stress, involvement in child activities)
Statistically Significant Predictors of Neglect

**CPS NEGLECT**

**HFNY:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, unemployment, depression, substance use

**IFS-CWB:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, unemployment, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement in child activities, spanking, parenting stress

**FFCW:** material hardships, depression, parent health problems, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement in child activities, parenting stress

**CTSPC NEGLECT**

**HFNY:** public benefit receipt, material hardships, spanking, (low) self efficacy, LBW (-)

**IFS-CWB:** material hardships, (low) self efficacy, (low) involvement with child activities, parenting stress, domestic violence

**FFCW:** material hardships, depression, parent health problems, child health problems, domestic violence, substance use

Black=statistically significant in 1 study; Blue=statistically significant in 2 studies; Red=statistically significant in all 3 studies.
Summary of Findings

- Economic factors are strong predictors of neglect across studies
  - Does not appear to be the sole result of “surveillance” (given similar findings for CTSPC) related to material hardships
  - Surveillance may still play a role with respect to public benefit receipt
  - Economic factors not affected by inclusion of other measures in full models
- Less consistency across studies with respect to parent and child wellbeing factors
- Moderate consistency related to parenting factors
Implications of Findings

- Markers of both poverty and parenting struggles predict both measures of neglect;
- Parenting characteristics do not appear to “explain” the links between poverty and maltreatment;
- Suggests independent effects of poverty and parenting.
- Economic factors may serve as an intervention target in efforts to prevent child maltreatment, rather than exclusive focus on parenting or parent/child wellbeing
Development of Neglect Risk Tool

- Need for easily administered risk assessment tools, particularly for child neglect, and appropriate for voluntary clients in family support services.

- Few existing neglect risk assessment tools are intended for use with voluntary service families outside of the CPS system.

- Many existing tools place heavy emphasis on static or distal factors— not malleable or proximal factors.
Family Support Study (FSS)

- Development of a brief child neglect risk assessment tool intended for use within maltreatment prevention programs.
- Items and subscales from previously validated measures, as well as new items, were self-administered.
- 22 Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program offices from around the State of Wisconsin, and one Home Visiting Program (N=1,086).
- Participants will be tracked with administrative data for approximately 12 months, to identify predictive validity of survey measures.
- Final product: scale useful for identifying families that have a high likelihood of future CPS contact, and for identifying types of family needs with respect to neglect risk.
What Works to Prevent Child Maltreatment?

Prevention Areas

- Center-based Parent Education
- Social Support Interventions
  - (Respite Care, Family Group Conferences, Support Groups)
- Public Awareness Campaigns
- Nurse Home Visiting Programs
- Healthy Families America (HFA) Home Visiting Programs
- School-Based Interventions
- Tertiary prevention areas reviewed:
  - Differential Response CPS Reforms; Interventions with Juvenile Sex Offenders
Criteria for Inclusion in Review

- Studies of primary or secondary prevention programs or initiatives
- Studies with designs that involved comparison groups or pre-post intervention measures
- Studies that measured child maltreatment outcomes with either official records of maltreatment or validated child maltreatment risk scales
Results of Review

Center-based Parent Education
  10 studies; 0 experimental

Social Support
  7 studies; 1 experimental (impact)

Public Awareness
  9 studies; 4 experimental (2 impact)

Nurse Home Visiting
  5 studies; 5 experimental (4 impact)

Healthy Families America Home Visiting
  11 studies; 7 experimental (1 impact)

Differential Response
  7 studies; 1 experimental (impact)
Prevention Activities in Wisconsin

• 2010 “Prevention Scan”
  – Wisconsin Council on Children and Families
  – WI Children’s Trust Fund
  – WI Department of Children and Families
  – UW-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty

• Nature of prevention services by county
• Prevalence of prevention services by county
• Prevention dollars spent per child

Full set of reports can be found at: http://www.wccf.org/what_it_will_take.php
What It Will Take series, 2010

- Child Maltreatment Prevention: Where We Stand and Directions for the Future

- Five background briefs
  - Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention: What Is It and How Do We Know When It Works?
  - Best Practices in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
  - Current Trends in Approaches to Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
  - Risk and Protective Factors Related to Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect in Wisconsin
Risk factors for maltreatment

- Overall Risk
- Family Situations
- Parent Characteristics
- Child Characteristics
- Economic Circumstances
Overall Risk

Snapshot: 2008

5-year average
To Sum Up....

- We have little consistent evidence of “what predicts neglect”
- Studies with similar measures show consistencies, particularly related to economic hardships and (limited) parenting measures
- We need to apply our knowledge of neglect risk and protective factors to program development AND EVALUATION
- Knowledge of risk and protective factors can be used to more effectively target high- and moderate-risk communities and regions.