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The Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) was implemented by a child welfare community-based care lead agency in Florida - Kids Central, Inc. (KCI) in

In February 2018, the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) was passed into law. The main goals of FFPSA are to enhance support services for families so their children remain at home, minimize the need for placement in congregate care, and build the capacity of communities to assist children and families at risk. Under this Act, states can use federal funding for evidence-based programs that provide parent skill-building and mental health and substance abuse services to prevent out-of-home care placements and expedite permanency in the case of child removal (Human Resources Subcommittee Staff, 2016; National Council on State Legislatures, 2022).

As research has indicated, a great majority of factors contributing to placement in out-of-home care were related to parents' behavior, such as neglect (62 percent), parental substance use (36 percent), caregiver inability to cope (14 percent), and physical abuse (10 percent) (USDHHS, 2019). Therefore, implementation of interventions that aim to improve parenting skills is in great public interest as they increase child safety and reduce the risk for child maltreatment (e.g., National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, 2016; Rodriguez, Baumann, & Schwartz, 2011). For example, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for Preschoolers (MTFC-P) program (Fisher, Kim, & Pears, 2009) and the Incredible Years® (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010) have evidence that they improve child-rearing skills for parents involved with child welfare. In addition, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) has been validated as effective with both biological and foster families in the child welfare system (Chaffin et al., 2004; Timmer, Urquiza, & Zebell, 2006).

Florida has elected several programs for implementation aimed at prevention of child abuse and neglect and recurrence of maltreatment (Florida Department of Children and Families, 2021). The state would like to consider adding other interventions if those interventions are able to be reimbursed by FFPSA. One of those interventions is the Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) implemented by Kids Central, Inc. (KCI), the community-based care lead agency for Florida's circuit 5 region. Although NPP has been evaluated several times (Greeno et al., 2021), many studies did not include substantial details about the evaluation or did not use a rigorous quasi-experimental or randomized control study design. For example, Gross, Bhagwat and Cole (2022, page 3) highlighted some of the major NPP evaluation studies that have been conducted:

Brock and colleagues (2013) studied the school-age children program and Greeno and colleagues (2021) examined both age-specific versions. Each study found that caregivers exhibited better parenting attitudes and knowledge after the program than

before it, including greater empathy and increased knowledge of positive discipline techniques (Brock et al. 2013; Greeno et al. 2021).

Some evidence also suggests that program participation is associated with reduced child maltreatment. Greeno and colleagues (2021) also found that among 34 caregivers in a mid-Atlantic state, 29 percent were subject to a child maltreatment investigation and 21 percent were subject to a substantiated investigation in the year before the program; these numbers dropped to just 15 percent and 3 percent in the year after, respectively. Using a larger sample of more than 500 caregivers in Louisiana, Maher and colleagues (2011) found that higher program attendance in the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers program was associated with a reduced likelihood of being reported for child maltreatment. However, because these studies lacked a comparison group, it is possible that the changes in outcomes were not attributable to the program.

Two studies have used experimental or quasi-experimental designs (QEDs) to evaluate Nurturing Parenting Programs, and both found favorable impacts. A randomized controlled trial in Cook County, Illinois, found that families who were offered the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers program after a child was removed from their home spent less time in foster care and had higher rates of family reunification and kinship guardianship (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services 2018). Likewise, an earlier QED study compared families in Florida that participated in (1) the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers program, (2) the school-age children program, and (3) other parent education programs that were not Nurturing Parenting Programs (Weikert et al. 2007). The study found that parents who completed either of the Nurturing Parenting Programs had statistically significantly higher scores on parenting attitudes and practices than the comparison group.

In addition, a study recently completed in Arizona found that children whose families completed NPP were significantly less likely than the comparison group to experience an investigation or substantiated investigation immediately after the program ended. These children were also statistically less likely to experience a removal up to 12 months after the end of the program (Gross et al., 2022).

The State of Florida, Department of Children and Families (DCF) in partnership with KCI, and Casey Family Programs, are committed to ensuring children and families involved in the child welfare system receive effective evidence-based practices. An evaluation of the KCI NPP



Prevention Services Clearinghouse but could be re-rated by the Clearinghouse because of the Arizona study and this study.

1. What is the proportion of child maltreatment re-reports within six months of the initial report and within six months of the NPP completion during a specific fiscal year for the individuals who received NPP intervention and those who were in the comparison group?
2. What is the proportion of child maltreatment re-reports within 12 months of the initial report and within 12 months of the NPP completion during a specific fiscal year for the individuals who received NPP intervention and those who were in the comparison group?
3. What is the number and proportion of children that experienced verified maltreatment within six months of a child's first report of child maltreatment and within six months of NPP completion if maltreatment was verified?
4. What is the number and proportion of children that experienced verified maltreatment within 12 months of a child's first report of child maltreatment and within 12 months of NPP completion if maltreatment was verified?
- 5.





The two primary sources of data were the

**Parental History of Substance Abuse Problems.** A dichotomized variable was constructed to indicate whether the child's parent(s) had substance abuse problems (1 = yes) or not (0 = no).

**Domestic Violence in the Family.** A dichotomized variable was constructed to indicate the presence of domestic problems in the family (1 = yes) or not (0 = no).

**Completion of NPP Status.** Only participants who completed the program were included in the analyses.

Several safety and permanency indicators were calculated and examined, including rates of repeated child maltreatment reports, rates of recurrence of verified maltreatment, permanency, and reunification rates. Timeframes for child safety and permanency outcomes were selected and based on the CFSR national data indicators (U.S. DHHS, 2022).

abuse, neglect, or threatened harm) were included in the analysis. The first and second episodes of maltreatment were selected based on the dates the reports of child maltreatment were received.

***Recurrence of verified child maltreatment within 12 months*** This indicator was based on entry cohorts, that is, all parents who were reported, subsequently investigated for alleged child maltreatment, and as a result of the child protection investigation, child maltreatment was found verified. For the NPP group, recurrence of maltreatment was defined as a subsequent verified child maltreatment report within 12 months after completion of the NPP program. For the comparison group, recurrence of maltreatment was defined as a second incident of verified maltreatment within 12 months of a child's first verified maltreatment incident. Only children with "verified" maltreatment (i.e., when the protective investigation resulted in a verified finding of abuse, neglect, or threatened harm) were included in the analysis. The first and second episodes of maltreatment were selected based on the dates the reports of child maltreatment were received.

***Permanency.*** The number and proportion of all children exiting out-of-home care for permanency reasons within 12 months of the latest removal. This measure is based on an entry cohort, that is, all children who were placed in out-of-home care during a specific fiscal year as indicated by the "removal date" in FSFN. Children were followed for 12 months from the date of removal from home to determine whether they were discharged from out-of-home care as indicated by *Discharge Date* in FSFN and achieved permanency. Permanency is defined as discharge from out-of-home care to a permanent home for the following reasons as indicated in FSFN: (a) reunification, that is, the return of a child who has been removed to the removal parent or other primary caretaker, (b) permanent guardianship (i.e., long-term custody or guardianship) with a relative or non-relative, and (c) adoption finalized, that is, when the Court enters the verbal order finalizing the adoption.

***Reunification with Original Caregivers.*** This measure is based on entry cohort. An entry cohort is defined as all children who were placed in out-of-home care during a given fiscal year and it is based on the date the child was removed from his/her home as indicated by a *Removal Date* in FSFN. Children were followed for 12 months from the date of removal from home to determine whether they were discharged from out-of-home care as indicated by *Discharge Date* in FSFN and achieved reunification, that is, the return of a child who has been removed to the removal parent or other primary caretaker. Reunification is identified based on one of the reasons for discharge as indicated in FSFN.

Several analytical techniques were used. First, descriptive statistics were used to detect data input errors, outliers, missing data patterns, and to describe the distribution for each

parents who were investigated by the child protection system for neglect. Approximately 36 percent of the parents/guardians in each group had a history of domestic violence. Smaller proportions of parents/guardians were investigated for sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or threatened harm.

*Descriptive Statistics for NPP and Comparison Samples at Baseline* ( ) T D . 0 0 1 T M C I D 3 B D C 5 T T 0

*Descriptive Statistics for NPP*

= 0.38  $p < .01$ ) less likely to be reported a second time within six months after completing the NPP program.

***Child maltreatment re-reports within 12 months*** Approximately 17 percent of parents/guardians in the NPP intervention group were reported for alleged child maltreatment for the second time within 12 months after the completion of the NPP program. For those parents/guardians in the comparison group, approximately 42 percent were reported for alleged child maltreatment for the second time within 12 months of the initial child maltreatment report (see Table 3). Cox regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of receiving NPP services on the rates of child maltreatment re-reports within 12 months of completing the NPP program. The results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference (see Table A.2). Parents/guardians who received the NPP intervention were significantly less likely to have a subsequent child maltreatment report compared to their counterparts in the comparison group. In particular, parents/guardians who received NPP services were almost three times (OR = 0.34  $p < .01$ ) less likely to be reported a second time within 12 months after completing the NPP program.

*Rates of Child Maltreatment Re-reports within 6 and 12 Months for NPP and Comparison Group Children*

Measure

recurrence of verified child maltreatment within six months after the completion of the NPP intervention compared to their counterparts who did not receive NPP services.

***Recurrence of verified child maltreatment within 12 months*** Approximately 8 percent of parents/guardians in the NPP intervention group experienced recurrence of verified child maltreatment within 12 months after completion of the NPP intervention. For those parents/guardians in the comparison group, approximately 18 percent experienced recurrence of verified child maltreatment within 12 months of the initial child incident (see Table 4). When the effect of receiving NPP services on recurrence of verified maltreatment within 12 months was examined, the results of the Cox regression analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups (see Table A.4). Specifically, participants who received NPP services were almost three times less likely (OR = 0.35,  $p = < .01$ ) to experience recurrence of verified child maltreatment within 12 months after the t



children in the comparison group (39.5 percent; n = 389). The results of the chi-square analysis indicated that this is a statistically significant difference,  $\chi^2(1, N = 527) = 163.90, p < .01$ .

*Proportion of Children Who Achieved Permanency for NPP and Comparison Group of Children within 12 Months*

Measure	NPP		Comparison Group	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Exit from out-of-home care for permanency reasons	30	21.7	97	24.6

*Note.* NPP (*n* = 138); Comparison group (*n* = 389).

**Reunification with original caregiver** When the proportions of reunified children between the NPP group and the comparison group were compared, no significant difference was observed. There was 13.1 percent of children who achieved timely reunification whose parents/guardians completed the NPP intervention. There was a slightly higher proportion (16.7 percent) of children who achieved timely reunification whose parents/guardians did not receive such intervention (see Table 6), but the difference was not statistically significant. Results of Cox regression analyses demonstrated that there was no significant effect of NPP services on



Overall, this study provides strong support for the effectiveness of the NPP program to improve child safety outcomes for families involved in the child welfare system, including preventing children from entering out-of-home care.



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*Cox Regression Results. The Effect of Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) on Child Maltreatment Re-Reports Within 6 Months*

Risk Factor	Cox Regression Model Parameters				
		Wald $\chi^2$ (1)	OR	95% CI	
				LL	UL
NPP	-.97	71.75*	.38	.30	.47

*Note.* LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

\* $p < .05$ .

*Cox Regression Results. The Effect of Nurturing Parenting Program W .05.*

*Cox Regression Results. The Effect of Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) on Recurrence of Verified Child Maltreatment Within 12 Months*

Risk Factor	Cox Regression Model Parameters				
		Wald $\chi^2$ (1)	OR	95% CI	
				LL	UL
NPP	-1.05	57.42*	.35	.27	.46

Note. LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

\* $p < .05$ .

*Cox Regression Results. The Effect of Nurturing Parenting Program (NPP) on Permanency Outcomes Within 12 months of the Latest Removal*

Risk uaoval