

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

Improving the outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care



BACKGROUND

Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)

POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia.

POCLS is the first study to link data on children's child protection backgrounds, OOHC experiences, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it to survey data collected from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers.

The POCLS database will allow researchers to track children's experiences and outcomes from birth.

The NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is funding and leading the POCLS.

What are the study objectives?

To inform policy and practice to strengthen the OOHC service system in NSW to improve the outcomes for children in OOHC and their families.

To describe the safety, health, socio-emotional well-being and cognitive ability of children in OOHC.

To describe the services, interventions and pathways for children in OOHC.

To describe children's experiences in OOHC and developmental outcomes.

To understand the factors that influence the developmental outcomes of children in long-term OOHC, returned home or adopted, and on leaving care at 18 years.

What are the study timelines?

- 2009-2010** Study design
- 2010-2011** Sample drawn & recruited
- 2011-2020** Data collection:
 - Wave 1 (2011-2013)
 - Wave 2 (2013-2015)
 - Wave 3 (2014-2016)
 - Wave 4 (2017-2018)
 - Wave 5 (2019-2020)
- 2015 +** Analyses & knowledge translation

Where do I find information about the study?

Web: www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways
 Email: Pathways@facs.nsw.gov.au
 Phone: 1800 997 960 (free call)



DESIGN

What is the study's sample?

A census of all children and young people who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 (18 months) (n=4,126) and received final Children's Court orders by April 2013 (n=2,828).

What are the data sources?

- In-depth interviews with children, young people and their caregivers including standardised measures.
- On-line surveys of caseworkers, childcare and school teachers.
- Record linkage to client data held by:
 - NSW FACS
 - NSW Ministry of Health
 - NSW Department of Education
 - Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research
 - Commonwealth Australian Early Development Census.
- NSW Health Blue Book.

How are caregivers involved?

An in-depth face-to-face interview (with a self complete section for the more sensitive questions) is conducted with the child's current caregiver including:

- Relative and kinship carers
- Foster carers
- Residential care workers
- Birth parents (if restored).

If a child changes placement or is restored, the new carer(s) or parent(s) will be invited to participate in subsequent interviews.

METHODS

What do children & young people take part in?



Language development

Ages 3-17 years

Standardised measure: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV).



Non-verbal reasoning

Ages 6-16 years
 Standardised measure: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) Matrix Reasoning Test.



Felt security

Ages 7-17 years
 Activity to show who they feel close to (*adapted from the Kvebaek Family Sculpture Technique*).



Face-to-face interview

Ages 7-11 years
 Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).



Self-complete interview

Ages 12-17 years
 Audio Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing (ACASI) on an iPad, audio by a young person.

Data Modules to Measure the Factors Influencing Child Outcomes in OOHC

Data Modules	Data Items
Birth Parent Characteristics	Demographics, grew-up in OOHC, no. of children, physical health, risk factors: domestic violence, substance misuse, mental health, intellectual disability
Child Characteristics	Demographics, temperament, exposure to risk of significant harm (type/ chronicity/ severity), age at entry to OOHC
OOHC Services & Support	Assessment of child's needs, provision of services, casework support, case planning, family contact, carer training & support, caseworkers relationship with child & family, advocacy, restoration, adoption, leaving care at 18 years
OOHC Placement Characteristics	Type, duration, stability, placed with siblings, culturally matched, physical environment, location, neighbourhood
Caregiver Characteristics	Demographics, family composition, health & wellbeing, carer experience & training, relationship with child, facilitate family contact, parenting style, activities with child, informal support network, satisfaction being a carer
Child Experience in OOHC	Safety, permanency, identity, felt security, peer relationships, childcare/school/work, self efficacy, participation in decision making
Child Outcomes	Safety, physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive ability