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# Factors Affecting Timeliness of Permanency for Children in Out-of-Home Placement

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# Factors Affecting Timeliness of Permanency for Children in Out-of-Home Placement

Michelle C. Holt

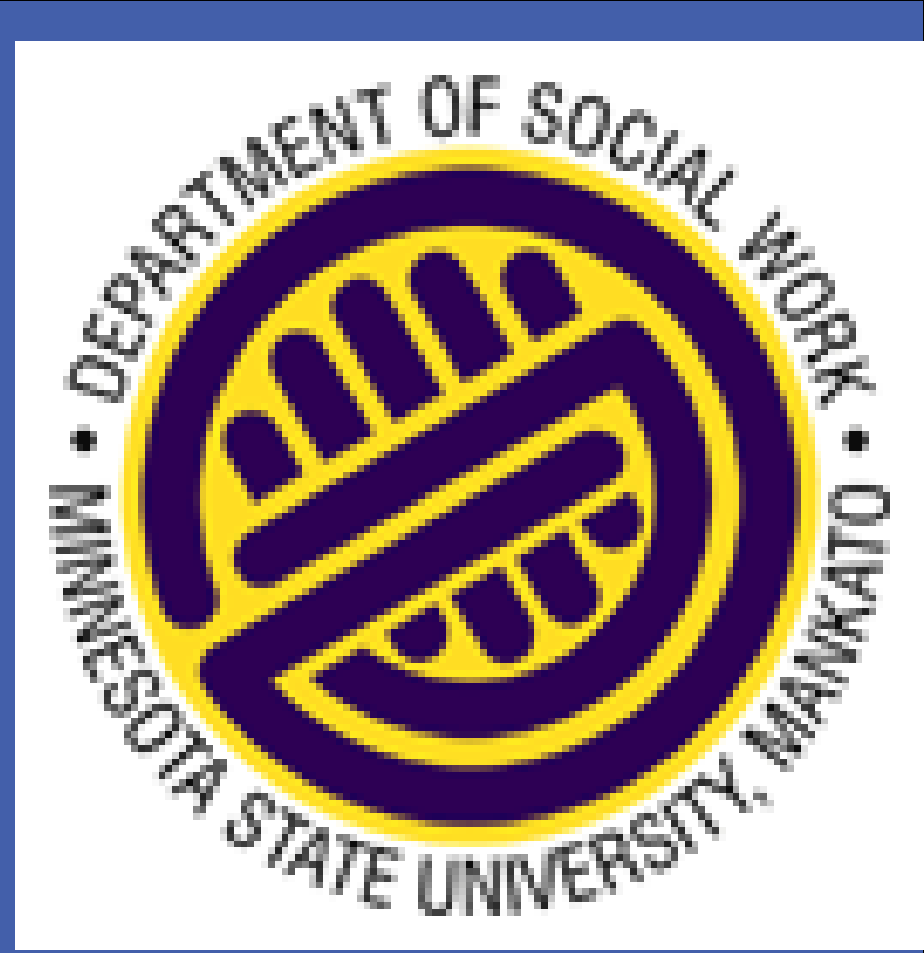
Department of Social Work

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Agency: Blue Earth County Human Services Child Protection

Supervisors: Trish Reedstrom and Emilia Tyminski, MSW

Academic Advisor: Robin R. Wingo, LISW



## BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Achieving timely legal permanency for children placed in out-of-home care due to abuse or neglect is one of the primary goals set forth by the state of Minnesota and the Department of Human Services. In recent years some counties have failed to achieve the percentage of finalized permanency cases at the targeted time intervals required by the state. A comprehensive review of one county was conducted of the 49 cases reaching permanency during 2011 and 2012 to determine if there is a correlation between certain demographic factors and/or key court dates on the length of time to achieve permanency.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do demographics of child or parent play a role in time to permanency?
- Does a change of case manager during course of permanency have an effect?
- Does involvement in Family Drug Court add time to permanency?
- How many times has a family been involved with child protection (screened-in reports)?
- Are Court timeframes being met?
- How does Blue Earth County compare to similar-sized counties?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Age:** Inversely related to time for permanency (Kemp & Bodonyi, 2002; Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002).

**Gender:** Males take longer to reach permanency (Kemp & Bodonyi, 2002).

**Race:** African-American children disproportionately represented and 74% less likely to achieve timely permanency (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002).

**Disability or Mental Health:** Children with emotional or behavioral problems were 89% less likely to achieve timely permanency (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002).

**Parents Substance Abuse or Mental Health:** Accounts for majority of child welfare admissions & permanence is 23 times more likely (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002).

**Title IV-E:** Mixed findings for time to permanency.

- Ineligibility due to higher income increases odds for timely placement (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002)
- Increases permanency rates & shorten foster care (MN Permanency Demonstration, 2011)

**Caseworker Consistency:** Each additional caseworker decreased the likelihood of timely permanency by 63% (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002)

**Siblings in Care:** less likely to exit to adoption (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002)

**Court timeframes:** less time between initial filing and adjudication; adjudication to order for treatment increase chance for timely permanency (Potter & Klein-Rothschild, 2002)

## METHODOLOGY

Internal Review Board Approval #435333-1  
 Permanency research and Literature review  
 Review permanency cases for years 2011 and 2012  
 Record demographic data and court action dates for each case into recording tool  
 Transfer individual data to spreadsheet  
 Analyze data  
 Make correlations  
 Limitations  
 Recommendations

## RESULTS

Table 1: Child's Age at CHIPS

Age at CHIPS	#	Percent	Number of Months
Infant	18	30%	15 months
1-4	23	38%	22.4 months
5-8	9	15%	22.4 months
9-12	8	13%	16.2 months
13-15	2	2%	12.8 months
16+	1	2%	3 months
Total	61*	Total is higher due to more than one CHIPS for 12 children	

Table 3: Demographic Results

Demographic Information	Count	Percent	Time in Months	
Race	Caucasian	28	57%	18.2
	Not Caucasian	21	43%	18.8
Sibling Group	Yes	30	61%	19.7
	No	19	39%	16.2
Gender	Male	26	53%	17.4
	Female	23	47%	18
Child Mental Health and/or Physical/Cognitive Disability	Yes	23	47%	22.3
	No	26	53%	13.6
Title IV-E	Yes	32	65%	18.3
	No	17	35%	18.5
Parent Both Substance Abuse and Mental Health	Yes	15	80%	18.8
	Neither	12	20%	20.8
*Parent Just Substance Abuse	Yes	41	67%	18.4
	No	20	33%	17.7
*Parent Just Mental Health	Yes	26	43%	17.8
	No	35	57%	18.5
Family Drug Court Involvement	Yes	9	20%	20.1
	No	40	80%	17.7

\* Number of cases is 61 to reflect the cases with two CHIPS and thus two incidences recorded in months to permanency

Table 2: Court Timelines

CHIPS proceeding events	Standards for time elapsed since child was removed	Average Time	Time Range	Percent of cases under	Number of cases over	Percent of cases over
EPC Hearing	3 days	2.76 days	1 to 15 days	77.60%	11	22.40%
Admit/Deny Hearing	3 to 13 days	12.62 days	3 to 28 days	75.50%	12	24.50%
Permanency Petition	11th month	6.6 months	0 to 16 months	89.80%	5	10.20%
<b>Permanency Filed to Final (Total months CHIPS to Permanency Petition)</b>						
	5 months	14.3 months	0 to 52 months	18.30%	40	81.60%
<b>Permanency Final (Total months CHIPS to Permanency)</b>						
	16 months	18.2 months	0 to 52 months	63.30%	31	36.70%
Review Hearings	Every 90 days	yes in all but 3 cases				

Figure 1: Cumulative Percentage of Cases Reaching Permanency

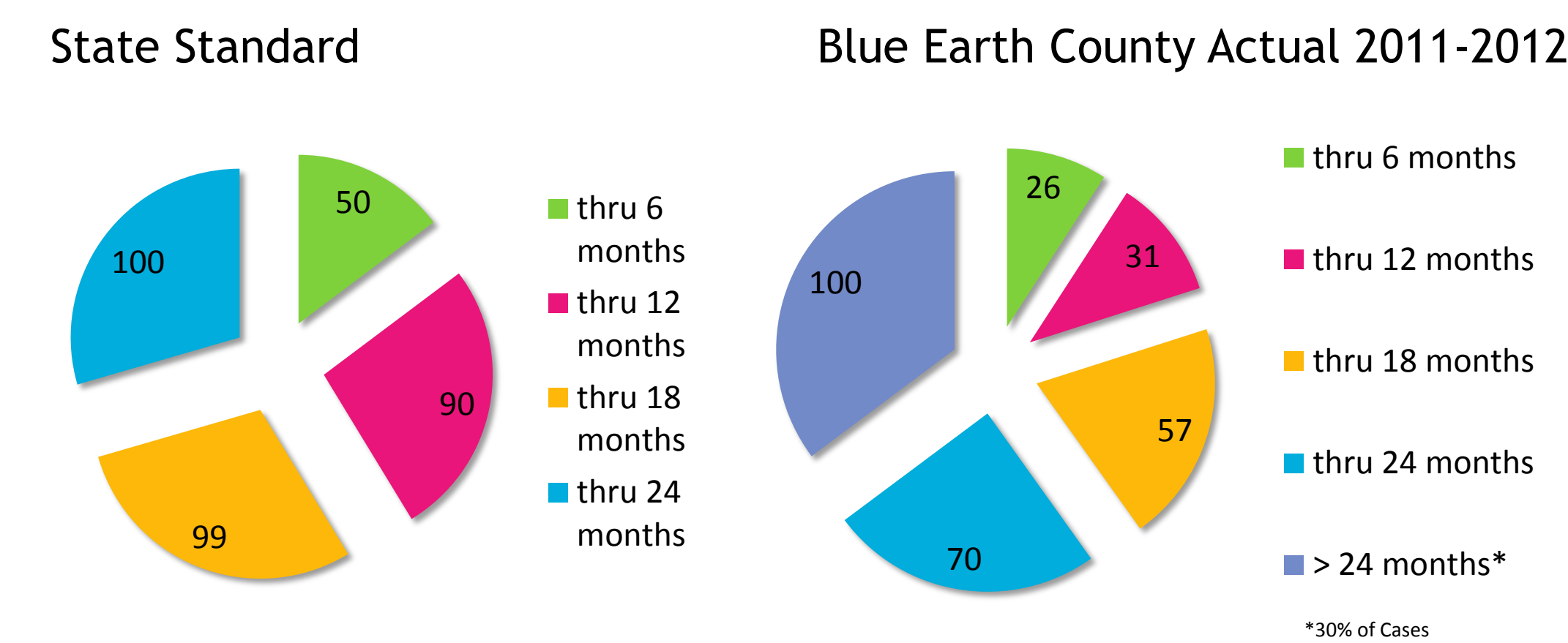


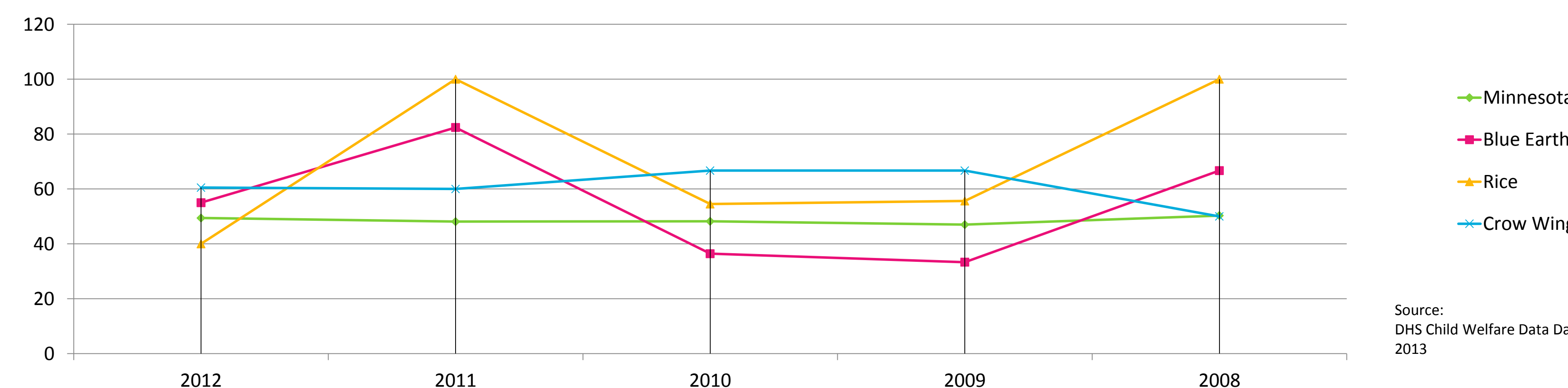
Table 4

Type of Permanency	How many Cases?
Reunification	11
Terminate Parent Rights	43
Transfer to Relative	6
Long-Term Foster Care	1

Table 5

Family CP involvement (assessments) prior to CHIPS	
Average 2.86	Range 1-7
1 time	9
2 times	17
3 times	10
4 times	7
5 times	0
6 times	3
7 times	3

Figure 2: Blue Earth County Adoption within 24 months from their most recent entry into Foster Care Compared to Two Equivalent-Sized Counties



Source: DHS Child Welfare Data Dashboard, 2013

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

All data were from cases achieving permanency in 2011 & 2012. Data analyzed was from the child protection case files that were in permanency during 2011-2012. Data were put into an Excel Spreadsheet and analyzed.

## FINDINGS

**Findings in time to permanency (See results)**

**Race**

- African American/2+ race are over represented in CP cases
- there is no significant difference in timeliness

**Gender**

- no significant difference between males and females

**Age**

- through age 8 incremental increase in time to permanency
- after 8 decrease in time to permanency

**Child Disability/Mental Health**

- average 8 months longer to permanency

**Sibling group**

- average 3 1/2 months longer to permanency

**Parent Substance Abuse and Mental Health**

- average 2.4 months less time to permanency with both SA and MH than those with neither
- no significant difference in time to permanency with either SA or MH when analyzed separately

**Drug Court involvement**

- average 2.4 months longer to permanency compared to those with SA but not in Drug Court

**Title IV-E**

- no significant difference between Title IV-E & no Title IV-E

**Case manager**

- records indicated the most common reason for a change in CM was to finalize adoptions

## LIMITATIONS

**Lack of Time**

- For more data recording and comparisons
  - Impact of Family Group Decision Making
  - Number of placements for child

- To explore case managers styles and client interactions

**Possible Human Error**

- Entering data into SSIS
- Researcher transferring data to spreadsheet

**Different terminology used for same type of permanency**

**Hard to Decipher or Make Correlations with some data**

- Family structure
- Caseworker Consistency

**Incomplete Data**

- Court dates: couldn't break down the timelines further to include pre-trial hearings and trials; SSIS data record is confusing
- SSIS does not capture Family Drug Court involvement

**Unusual Circumstances with some cases**

- Transfer of venue, parent absconded with child, deaths of both parents, pre-adoptive placement disruption

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Accurate data entry
- Consistent use of terminology when recording data
- Review practices surrounding number of assessments allowed
- Earlier intervention may prevent subsequent screened-in reports
- Explore other intervention methodologies for evidence-based practices

REFERENCES cited available upon request

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