SECOND FAMILY PROGRAM FOSTERS AND NURTURES

THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF ADOLESCENT, FOSTER CARE

YOUTH IN ORANGE COUNTY. FOR THE SECOND FAMILY

Second Family Program

PROGRAM,DISCIPLINE IS NOT ABOUT RULES BUT ABOUT

A WAY OF LIFE AND AS SUCH,WE STRIVE TO INCULCATE

"WAYS OF LIFE"APPROPRIATE TO THE GIVING-BACK MESSAGE.

Second Family Program

Thank you for your interest in the Second Family Program. More importantly, thank you for your interest in youth at risk. In each of the last two years, over half a million youth were in foster care in the United States. The majority of these youth have and continue to suffer from severe negative choices and consequences. This pattern continues to strain the youth, their biological families, the social support network, and the taxpayer.

Second Family Foundation hopes to deter negative outcomes in the lives of a few youth. We also hope that what we have learned in developing the Second Family Program will be of use as you decide how you wish to help youth at risk. Our strategy is straight forward in that we attempt to provide what a typical middle class family would provide to its children. On the financial front, support can range from medical/physiological expenditures not covered by Medicaid, to tutors, to coaches, to car insurance. On the personal side, we want to be the voice of support for dreams and we want to provide continuity from age 13-15 to age 21-22. The seven requirements that we ask of the selected youth are: never lie, cheat or steal; be working regularly to better mind, body and spirit; and try always to make life better for others. This last requirement is more a "pay it forward" approach than a charity approach. In other words, we are most interested in how these youth can first develop themselves, and then give back to society. The "heat" that we place on the youth is unique and appropriate to the particular child, their experiences and their capacities.

In 2005, we accelerated our search for the appropriate program by consultation with the University of North Carolina's School of Social Work. Through the Jordan Institute for Families (JIF) and particularly Professor Rick Barth, we evolved our original ideas with a heavy reliance on the academic literature. The first section of this paper is the Jordan Institute's account of our formation and early evolution. All the literature we read is cited for your use. As you will see, we also owe a great debt to the Casey Foundation, the nation's leader in the foster care area.

Following the JIF's report are four narratives from influential partners and stakeholders of Second Family Foundation. These varied perspectives offering important advice and suggestions are from the Orange County Department of Social Services, the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem program, a Christian minister and an Econometrics Professor. While the JIF's report is primarily from an academic social work perspective which is an essential starting point, we feel that practical aspects are as important to program design as sound conceptual base. As we strive to continually improve our efforts, we seek insight from many different areas. In an effort to be as helpful to you as possible, we include the four "comments on" the JIF's report.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has the major ongoing role as they are legally responsible for the youth. We have enjoyed our interactions with Orange County DSS as noted in the JIF's report. Duston Lowell, Program Manager of Orange County DSS, gives his insights into both how our efforts to date have been perceived at DSS and important future considerations from the practicing social service side.

The Guardian ad Litem role is quite different from the DSS role. The Guardian ad Litem staffs, volunteers and attorneys are charged with seeing that the legal rights and best interests of the children are protected. The Guardian ad Litem and DSS may at times have a different perspective and their recommendations to the court may differ. Jane Volland, director of the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program, gives her perspective on our program design.

Spirituality is not as easy to understand as building your body. One cannot simply count the laps run or the push-ups done. As seen in the report, we require that our youth engage in regular spiritual development. However, we are very open to the youth's choices (and changing choices) on how to develop their spiritual side. Attending church youth group is good if taken seriously. Readings in Buddhism are also fine, but again, only if taken seriously. Bob Dunham, senior pastor at the University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill weighs in on important considerations in this aspect of our youth's development. These youth face all the difficult teenage choices that youth living with their

biological parents face. However, the pressures on the consequences of their choices are more extreme. Consequently, we push them to build the spiritual foundation critical to making the right choices.

Finally, we plan to stay involved on the research front. Not only can we continue to learn from the new research around the country, but also we want to regularly examine our own program to see which parts are effective and where we need to make changes. Professor David Guilkey of the University of North Carolina's Economics Department offers several suggestions. Research in the Social Sciences is never easy and foster care is practically difficult given the interconnected physiological problems, educational measurement issues and confidentiality considerations. David offers several suggestions on where to go from here that may be useful to you in your work.

This is an extensive report; however, a quick review is very possible. If you read pages 1-14 of the Jordan Institute report, then the four two-page commentaries, you will have the big picture and can use whatever additional detail is helpful.

Again, thank you for your interest. For questions or to share ideas, please contact Holly Kunkel at 919.967.9823

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Second Family Program

Section I

Jordan Institute Report

Building family beyond the home

Program Report

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"Everyone would like for their kids to have a Second Family."

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PREFACE

Children who enter foster care often have multiple challenges, including overcoming the effects of abuse and neglect and dealing with new—and too often changing—foster families and social workers. Youth in foster care face additional hurdles, as they struggle to learn skills for transitioning to adulthood. These 12 to 18 year olds often have difficulty building the interpersonal and life skills needed for self-sufficiency and lack adequate support from an overburdened and under resourced child welfare system. Among other resources, youth need services that begin early and continue past their emancipation. They also need assistance in identifying appropriate mentors and support networks that can provide ongoing support during adolescence and following their discharge from care. Further, best practices in youth development argue persuasively that youth learn the most when they are engaged in the planning and implementation of their own care and in fulfillment of their goal of becoming successful, integrated members of society.

In July 2005, the Jordan Institute for Families at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill School of Social Work responded to a request by Mike Miles and his family for assistance in compiling and evaluating available research on programs and services for youth in foster care. Subsequently, we participated in the development and evaluation of *Second Family*, a program to support a small group of youth between the ages of 13-15 who are placed in foster care under the auspices of child welfare services (CWS). We offer this report as a chronicle of this three year process.

The report is organized in three parts. Part One presents the history of the development of *Second Family*. Part Two describes the process and outcome evaluation methods and results during the first year of program implementation. Part Three discusses the implications of the evaluation results for ongoing program delivery. The Appendices include reports and papers written during the planning phase

of the program and standardized measures and interview questions used during the program evaluation.

This report is written with high regard for the foresight, commitment, and leadership of Mike and Elston Miles and their children. By establishing their Second Family Foundation, the Miles family affirms the close connection between their own family values and their vision of how *Second Family* can inspire youth to live and be successful. Specifically, they wrote in their establishment of the family foundation:

Why a Family Charity?

    a. To whom much is given (and we have been very very fortunate), much is expected. Or, as the American Indians said "the measure of a person is the amount they give away."

    b. This seems like a good family thing to do. Giving together links the family in a way that provides continuity to the effort over time. Mom and dad see this as our legacy to the trustees and their children.

    c. A smart, focused and team effort provides a greater opportunity for success.

The Jordan Institute for Families has valued the opportunity to serve as partners with the Second Family Foundation for three years in a team effort that has produced a model program of enhanced services for foster youth. We gratefully acknowledge the foundation's generous contributions to our work and support of our involvement in the legacy that is *Second Family*.

Nancy S. Dickinson, Executive Director
Jordan Institute for Families
September 26, 2008

HISTORY

The email of June 21, 2005 stated simply that "my family is interested in setting up a foster care home…we basically want to provide an enhanced opportunity for the few kids who we can afford to help…I'm very interested in using available research to do a better job and avoid pitfalls…we should learn from what has been done in the past." Over coffee three weeks later, faculty from the Jordan Institute at the UNC School of Social Work met with Mike Miles, a local businessman and former UNC faculty member and administrator, to discuss his family's long time interest in developing a program to "help provide what foster children are currently missing." The outcome of that meeting was an agreement on July 26, 2005 that the Jordan Institute would develop concept papers that would summarize salient research on the 7-10 most promising programs and services that provide support to youth in the child welfare system who are between the ages of 12 and 16. The final paper would be delivered by December 15, 2005. We agreed that, based on feedback from the Miles family, one to three implementation ideas would be more fully developed by March 20, 2006 and the selected program would begin the implementation phase by July 1, 2006.

Research Based Reviews

The Miles family was not starting from scratch in their search for ways to help foster youth. Mike and his son, Ed, had written a draft of a proposal, Support for Foster Care, in which they documented the needs among foster children in Massachusetts, where they lived at the time, as well as the pressures that foster parents face and the work overload of child welfare workers and supervisors. The family's original idea was to connect church groups to foster families for respite for foster parents and direct services to foster children. The basic idea of this program became part of the review process for examining promising programs and practices for foster youth.

The planning of services for youth must rest on principles about the needs of adolescents. These commonly identified needs, summarized in Appendix A, became the filter through which program models would be examined. In addition, each review of promising programs and practices included the following sections:

Need for program. Is there epidemiological evidence of a general need for this service or program?

Research support of effectiveness. Is there evidence that this approach has worked before?

Implementation support. Is there an available program model or technology to increase the odds of success?

Correspondence with Miles family vision and objectives. Does this seem to capture some of the family's intent, as expressed in the Support for Foster Care proposal?

The first review that we completed was the **Teaching Family Model** on September 2, 2005. Included in Appendix A, this review highlighted the extensive research that has been done on this program that is more than 30 years old. The second document completed on September 3, 2008 (see Appendix A) reviewed six interventions that had overlapping features with the program identified in the Miles' original concept paper: (1) **Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care**; (2) **Residential Charter Schools**; (3) **Supervised Independent Living Residences**; (4) **The Contact Family Program**; (5) **Mockingbird Society**; and (6) **Foster Family Constellation Program**. The final review document, completed on December 7, 2005, focused on the following two interventions: (1) **Small Group Home Care** and (2) **Rebuilding Lifetime Families for Older Foster Youth**.

Throughout this phase of the project Mike and Elston Miles—and their children through email—were active consumers of the intervention reviews, asking questions, requesting further information and sorting out the implications of the documents for

their particular approach to the project. They met frequently with the Jordan Institute to discuss these three review documents and other information. What follows are some of their opinions and concerns at this point in the process:

Negative contagion. An ongoing concern in looking at best practices was the desire to avoid creating an atmosphere in which troubled youth influence each other negatively, but rather to create positive contagion.

Respect for humanity. If it is true that this value is usually taught in the home by parents, then part of our effort needs to be replacing the missing parents' influence in delivering the message of respect.

Emotional environment. There seemed to be little detailed attention to the emotional environments created in the different approaches to programs for foster youth.

Limitations of group care. The potential for negative contagion, among other concerns, underscored the limitations of group care as a preferred approach for support of foster youth. Rising in importance became the value of connecting youth to families—constructed as well as biological families.

Ongoing support. As Mike Miles put it so succinctly, "In either approach, you can't leave them at 18."

Program Implementation Planning

By December of 2005 we were in the program implementation planning phase of the project, as the Miles family sifted through the intervention reviews and began to prioritize features of specific programs that fit their values, resources and lessons learned from the research. A deliverable at this point was *A Recap of the Proposed Program Design Process* which compared the concepts and vision of the original Miles program with available research and conceptions of best practice. The resulting blended approach was called Miles Teaching Family Home Clusters (or Carolina Family Clusters). The approach used the Teaching Family Model (TFM) as the basis and added the Contact Family Homes and the Hub Home components. Also emphasized were supervised independent living arrangements and a programmatic initiative to build or rebuild lifetime families, which could be future additions to the design. As a result of a meeting with Mike and Elston Miles on December 12, 2005, the program began to be called the Miles Family Carolina Homes Program, and the summary and conceptual map of the program (Appendix A) emphasized the contributions of Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), as well as TFM. We developed a final summary of efforts to translate key concepts and components of the original proposal into programmatic elements of the proposed cluster program. We also assembled a Resources List of Programs for Foster Youth (Appendix A) in order to provide examples of successful programs that could be contacted for visits or consultation.

The first "Trustees meeting" of the Miles Family Foundation occurred over Christmas 2005. The main agenda item was to discuss the potential programs that had evolved over the past five months. The name *Second Family* emerged from this meeting. The minutes from that foundation meeting state: "Second family never replaces the biological first family. The staff is seen as more like aunts and uncles and the other youth as more like cousins. Still, second family is a place to visit (come home to) after turning 18." Other components of the program were identified: "The idea is to have the youth start in the one-on-one care (MTFC), then move to the small group (TFM) home, then be a visitor (post 18). Ideally, kids will see themselves as in an 8-year program (until age 22) even if they periodically rejoin their biological families. Continuity is a key and we want youth to bond with all the staff and the other youth."

Initial Mission Statement, **December 2005**. To make life better for a few youth by supporting them spiritually (values, self image), materially (education of multiple types), and physically (medical care, exercise) in a coordinated/consistent manner.

Implementation Planning Information and Activities

From January 2006 through January 2007, the Jordan Institute continued to work together with the Miles Family to plan the implementation of *Second Family*. The Miles Family Program Summary (Appendix A) describes the program's background and focus as of 2/10/06. At that time, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care had been selected as the intervention model. Also, during the first year it was anticipated that the Miles Family would use a pre-existing 501(c)3 to administer Second Family. Possible local organizations included Concern of Durham (COD) and Youth Quest.

The Miles Family responded to the program summary with these corrections/additions:

1. While starting with the Oregon Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care approach, we want to do a few things quite differently. We want to have more consistency over time, staying with the youth after the first year even if they go back to their biological families, as well as providing material and moral support past age 18.

2. The idea of second family is to give the youth the equivalent of cousins (others in the program) and aunts/uncles (the entire adult team from foster parents to the hub couple). This is supposed to be positive contagion.

3. We also want to push the idea of pay back. This requires effort on their parts now, to stay in the program, and in the future to help others as they were helped.

The Jordan Institute arranged the following meetings and contacts to discuss implementation of *Second Family*.

1. We met with Gail Yasher, director of Concern of Durham, on February 24, 2006. This small agency provides residential treatment group care and has a license to provide treatment foster care. After the meeting, Mike Miles expressed the following concerns and insights. Jordan Institute responses follow in *italics*.

   - Many foster youth are involved in the mental health system, to the extent that as much as 70% of this age foster youth in Orange, Durham and Chatham counties are in mental health levels 2 and 3, indicating more troubled youth with mental health problems. *Mental health is only a part of the picture for older children….many youth do live in level 1 or 2 homes.*

   - The Oregon MTFC program focuses on level 4 youth and is quite expensive. Maybe the program would work with us on level 2 youth. *The Oregon Social Learning Center MTFC approach is not strictly designed for Level 4 children. It is really designed for children now often put in group care even though they would do better in a family. Their work in ways that are based on observation, theory and outcomes creates high start up costs. In San Diego in Project KEEP they are testing a less intensive approach for children who need less intervention and who often reside in level 1 or 2 facilities.*

   - My thought continues to be that we want to focus our program on the earlier levels—1 and 2. Buy in, positive contagion and longer term relationships (all fundamentals of our effort) will be easier the earlier we intervene.

2. In March 2006 we consulted national experts including (a) Betsy Farmer at Duke University, who named two NC agencies that would be able to provide MTFC; (b) John Landsverk who provided helpful information on KEEP in San Diego which he helped to implement; and (c) Patti Chamberlain from the Oregon Social Learning Center who talked about a new project to extend KEEP to adolescents, which could be instructive for *Second Family*.

3. Information from Treatment Foster Care Consulting, the practice and dissemination arm of the Oregon Social Learning Center, showed hefty start up costs. Still we felt that the ongoing costs would be well less than group care and the use of this approach would have an enduring impact.

4. On April 11, 2006 we met with Jo Ann Lamm, Director of Child Welfare Services in the NC Division of Social Services, and with Joan MacAllister, Director of LINKS, the state's program of Independent Living Services. They were very supportive of *Second Family* and agreed that a major need in NC is an innovative program of support for youth in foster care.

5. On April 24, 2006 we met with Nancy Coston, Director of the Orange County Department of Social Services. Also attending the meeting were supervisors and managers involved in the agency's foster care and LINKS programs. In addition to sharing information on foster care data and needs in Orange County, Nancy offered the opportunity to work directly with *Second Family* through their county foster care system.

6. On May 19, 2006 a paper was submitted to the *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work* that came out of the Jordan Institute's research reviews for *Second Family* implementation. This paper, entitled Evidence-Based Practice for Youth in Supervised Out-of-Home Care: A Framework for Development, Definition, and Evaluation, was accepted for publication and is included in Appendix C.

7. Meetings and activities continued throughout summer and fall 2006, as the Miles family and the Jordan Institute refined the *Second Family* implementation approach and budget and began preliminary discussions about program evaluation. Contacts were made with Youth Villages and TFC consultants in June to review their MTFC approaches. There were two additional meetings with Concern of Durham and Orange County DSS in July 2006. Mike and Elston Miles visited Casey Family Programs in Seattle and met with Peter Pecora, Director of Research Services on July 6. At the same time, we developed budgets and PERT charts based on various scenarios of *Second Family* implementation.

8. At the request of Orange County DSS (OCDSS), the Miles family and Jordan Institute wrote a memorandum summarizing the approach and responsibilities of *Second Family* implementation under partnership with OCDSS. This process occurred over several months, as we hammered out the details of implementing *Second Family*. The *Second Family* program description, sent out in October 2006, included the following refinements:

- *Second Family* will be an overlay program, not a substitute or replacement for existing services. It will use evidence-based interventions (continuity of care, extensive post-18 services), as well as other programmatic enhancements (subsidizing of normalizing expenses, requiring program youth to "give back") considered essential to helping older foster youth succeed.
- When first admitted to *Second Family,* youth will be 13-15 and in OCDSS custody needing a level of care between 1 and 1.9, but not levels 2-4.
- Since Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care is more appropriate for

youth needing levels of care between 2 and 4, a proposed "Oregon Lite" approach would use twice weekly reporting and include principles such as physical development, spiritual development and giving back.

- After age 18, *Second Family* youth will continue to be considered part of the "family" and will, therefore, receive supplementary support from the Miles family foundation, now called Second Family Foundation, until they reach the age of 21.
- The *Second Family* Program Director will be an employee of the family's foundation, not OCDSS.

From Planning to Implementation

Partnering with OCDSS. OCDSS and the Second Family Foundation agreed to *Second Family* program details and signed MOU's and confidentiality agreements between December 2006 and January 2007.

Hiring *Second Family* Director. Searching for and interviewing candidates took place in December 2006 and January 2007. Holly Kunkel was hired in February and began working on April 2, 2007.

Finalizing *Second Family* Program Description. The Program Director and foundation members wrote the final program description and participant forms.

Admitting youth to *Second Family*. After meetings with OCDSS social workers, referrals for program participation and case reviews to screen referrals, the first two youth were admitted in the *Second Family* program in October 2007.

Evaluation Planning and Implementation

Details of the *Second Family* evaluation process and results are in this report's next section. We briefly describe here some of the evaluation planning activities.

Instrument selection and development took place from November 2006 through February 2007. The design team reviewed instruments used by the Oregon Social Learning Center and Youth Villages, two organizations that had a history of the evaluation of specialty foster care programs. Instruments were identified and selected based on a combination of brevity, informativeness, and rigor. Instruments were reviewed and discussed with the Miles family and with OCDSS before finalization.

Human Subjects application (IRB). After extensive work preparing the application in January and February 2007, the final IRB was completed and submitted for review by UNC's review board. IRB modification requests were submitted in April and October 2007.

Research meetings and discussions. The Jordan Institute, OCDSS and Second Family Foundation members, as well as outside consultants, engaged in many ongoing discussions and negotiations about *Second Family* evaluation designs and research activities between April and October 2007. The final accepted research plan and results are the focus of the next part of this report.

EVALUATION METHOD
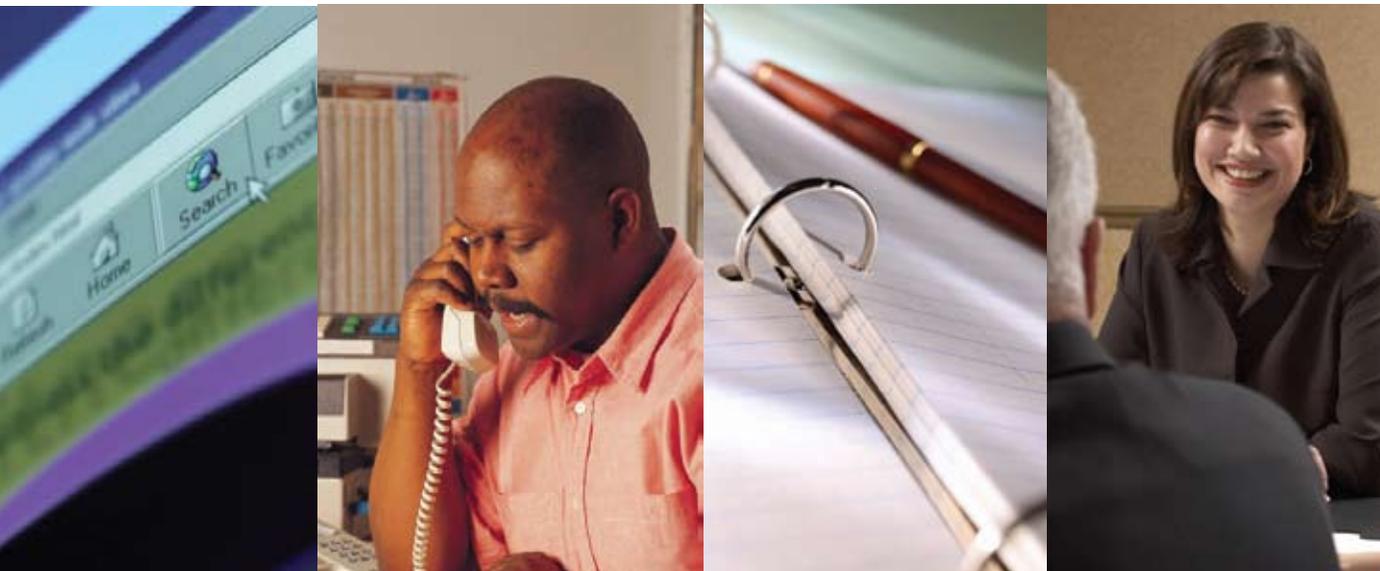
Design

The design and procedures for the process and outcome evaluations of *Second Family* provide information on a range of program-related variables. The general process and evaluation questions addressed over the program's first year of implementation are the following:

1. How is the program implemented? What are the issues and results of implementation?

2. Who does the program serve and how do participants view the program?

3. What are the outcomes and impact of the program for the participants?

4. What emerging data and issues suggest areas for programmatic changes?

Process Evaluation

Process evaluations enhance the understanding of programs in order to provide a context for interpreting outcomes and effects. Process evaluations are also very useful for studying relationships, behaviors, communications, decision-making, and stressors in organizations and programs (Berg, 2001 as cited in Spath & Pine, 2004). The process evaluation for *Second Family* incorporated two major approaches: case study and a quantitative descriptive study. The case study approach enables the evaluator to monitor unfolding of the program and provides a profile of the program including its developmental history, organizational structure, relationships with external organizations, and congruence with the planned program model and "best practices" models contained in the professional literature (Spath & Pine, 2004). One of the central strengths of the case study approach is the triangulation of data that results from the use of multiple methods and data sources to examine one phenomenon (Snow & Anderson, 1991 as cited in Spath & Pine, 2004). Specific questions addressed by the *Second Family* case study are:

1. Is *Second Family* being implemented as intended?

2. What factors facilitate or impede implementation?

3. Have collaborative relationships between program staff and those in external organizations developed as planned?

4. What factors facilitate or impede collaboration?

The quantitative descriptive study provides descriptive and demographic data about the youth served by *Second Family*. Data for the process evaluation include program records, Parent Daily Reports (PDRs), interviews with *Second Family* youth and their caregivers, interviews with the youth's social workers from the Orange County Department of Social Services, a bi-annual program assessment completed with the program director, and a Youth Enrollment Record (YER).

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation is designed to determine if the program has been effective in the following domains: preparation for independent living, child behavior, family functioning, and posttraumatic stress. The outcome evaluation uses a reflexive comparison, a type of quasi-experimental design often used to evaluate a program when no control group is readily available. For *Second Family*, a baseline/follow-up design is used to compare participants before and six months after initial enrollment in *Second Family*. Therefore, participants function as both "treatment" and "control" groups. This type of evaluation design establishes "apparent effectiveness" of an intervention and allows for an initial assessment regarding a program's likely effectiveness. However, it is important to note that changes observed in the situation of participants before and at follow-up may be caused by many reasons independent of *Second Family*. Data for the outcome evaluation include standardized measures of child and family functioning and school reports.

Measures

The evaluation is based on the following six data collection instruments and measures:

1. The Youth Enrollment Record (YER) provides basic demographic information on participants and is used to describe the *Second Family* youth. These data are also analyzed to determine the relationship, if any, between participant characteristics and program outcomes.

2. The four standardized measures of youth and family functioning assess outcomes in preparation for independent living, child behavior, family health, and posttraumatic stress. They are selected based on their pertinence to the

goals of *Second Family*, their relationship to foster care experiences, a review of the professional literature, and expert consultation.

3. School reports are obtained quarterly from the *Second Family* Program director to monitor participants' academic performance. One of the most at-risk populations for educational dropout is foster youth, as they consistently exit the child welfare system without a high school diploma (Cook, 1994; Courtney & Dworsky, 2005; Courtney et al., 2001; McMillen & Tucker, 1999; Reilly, 2003). Therefore, reducing risks associated with academic failure is an objective of *Second Family.*

4. The Continuous Quality Improvement Assessment (CQIA) is a program assessment tool that is based upon program specifications outlined in *Second Family* manual. The CQIA is used to determine the program's progress toward implementation as intended by the *Second Family* Board of Directors and as outlined in the program manual. At times, when programs fail to show significant outcomes, the cause may be related to failure to deliver the intervention as intended.

5. Interview data are collected from three groups of key program stakeholders, the *Second Family* youth, their caregivers (foster parents or house parents), and their Orange County Department of Social Services social workers. Each is individually-interviewed for approximately 45 minutes after three months of program participation, and six months thereafter.

6. Parent Daily Reports (PDR; Chamberlain & Reid, 1987) are collected from each youth's caregiver with the intention of monitoring case progress. The *Second Family* PDR is modeled after the Parent Daily Report Checklist (Chamberlain & Reid, 1987) used in Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) outcome studies to predict placement disruptions (e.g., Kazdin & Wassell, 2000; McClowry et al., 2005). In one study, children with six or fewer behavior problems per day were found to be at low risk for subsequent disruption (Chamberlain et al., 2006). The *Second Family* PDR is a 14-item measure of child behavior problems delivered by telephone to the caregiver once per week. The evaluation coordinator asks the caregiver, "Thinking about (child's name), during the past 24 hours, did any of the following behaviors occur?" Caregivers are asked to recall only the past 24 hours and to respond "yes" or "no" (i.e., the behavior happened at least once or did not occur; Chamberlain et al., 2008). The PDR takes approximately 5 minutes for the caregiver and evaluation coordinator to complete. PDR information provides a thumbnail sketch of the youth's functioning and is used to track progress or to identify problematic patterns of behavior.

Table 1 shows the type and amount of data collected during year one with four youth enrolled.

Table 1. Data collected during year one of *Second Family* (October 2007 – August 2008)

Type of Data	# Collected
Youth Enrollment Record	4
Standardized Measures	36
School Reports	8
Program Assessment	2
Interviews	16
Parent Daily Reports	77

Data Analysis

Participant data are entered in and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 15). Outcome data analysis is performed for participants who have both baseline and follow-up measures available. Interview data are transcribed and analyzed using ATLAS/ti, a qualitative data management program (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2006), to reveal themes and patterns related to implementation of and participation in *Second Family*. Data from the CQIA are noted on the form following a face-to-face interview with the program director. Weekly PDR data are compiled on a form for each call for each youth, and are aggregated for analysis by hand.

PROCESS EVALUATION:RESULTS

The process evaluation addresses the design, implementation, and operation of the *Second Family* program during year one. The process evaluation is designed to answer the following general questions:

1. What are the characteristics of youth in the program? Are sufficient numbers of participants involved to sustain the program?

2. How was the program conducted during the first year? Was *Second Family* implemented as specified by the *Second Family* Board of Directors?

3. Were there any factors that facilitated or impeded implementation of the program during this year? If so, how were these factors addressed?

4. What was the experience of the participants? Did participants find the program useful?

The Participants

The first question in the process evaluation—what are the characteristics of youth in the program?—focuses on demographic characteristics, and referral and enrollment patterns of *Second Family* youth served. Described below are the basic demographic characteristics of the youth enrolled in *Second Family*, their current school and living situations, and number of previous placements and schools. These characteristics are also displayed in Table 2. When available, current national estimates (FY 2006, the latest date for which data are available) of the same data are also provided from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008).

A total of 4 youth were enrolled in *Second Family* during October 2007 to August 2008. The majority of the youth are female, white, and non-Hispanic. Their mean age

(in years) is 13.5. Most of the youth are in 8th grade and live with foster parents who are not related to them. They have lived on average in their current living situations for 1.75 years. The mean number of previous placements and previous schools attended since entering foster care is 2.25 and 6.25, respectively. In North Carolina, most youth in foster care experienced just one placement in 2007–2008 (38.14%). About 26% experienced two placements (Duncan et al., 2008). The *Second Family* youth have been in foster care through Orange County Department of Social Services for an average of 3.37 years. The permanency goal for three of the four youth is guardianship, an option for achieving permanency for a child without requiring the termination of parental rights.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of *Second Family* youth (n=4)

	Second Family (n=4)	AFCARS (n=510,00)
	%/M (SD)	%/M
Gender		
Female	75%	52%
Race/Ethnicity		
White-Non-Hispanic	75%	40%
Age (in years)	13.50 (1.00)	9.8
Grade in School		
7th	25%	
8th	75%	
Current living situation		
With my foster parents who are not related to me	50%	46%
In a group home/residential facility	50%	7%
Time in current living situation (in years)	1.75 (.87)	
# of previous placements	2.25 (1.89)	
# of previous schools	6.25 (4.72)	
Length of stay in foster care (in years)	3.37 (1.07)	2.36
Permanency goal		
Guardianship	75%	4%
Adoption	25%	23%

Program Referral & Enrollment Patterns

Are sufficient numbers of participants involved to sustain the program? To answer this question, we examine program referral and enrollment patterns. Given that this is the first year of program operations, the referral process for *Second Family* is currently under development. Therefore, at present, there is no standardized process in place, and referrals are made by the child welfare program manager of the Orange County Department of Social Services when he receives notice from the program director that *Second Family* is accepting more youth.

Although the end goal is to have a "steady state" of approximately 20 youth participating in *Second Family* at any one time, to date, approximately 10 eligible youth have been referred to *Second Family* during year one. Of those, four enrolled in the program. The referrals and enrollments took place in September 2007 (n=2) and April 2008 (n=2). There have been no additional referrals or enrollments since April 2008. According to the program director, *Second Family* does not anticipate enrolling additional youth until the end of 2008. To date, all four youth remain in *Second Family*.
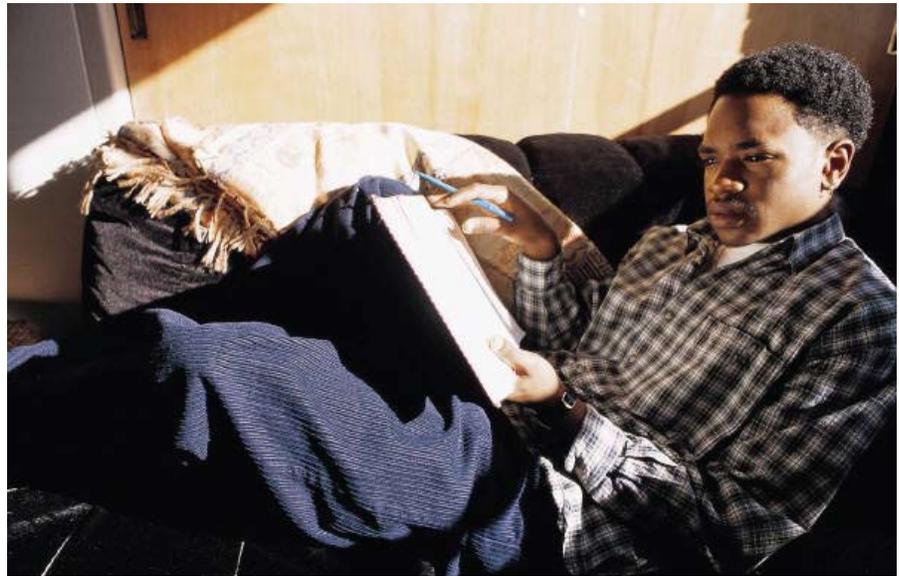
Despite the low number of initial participants in year one, evaluator observations suggest that there are currently enough youth enrolled to sustain program operations. This is due to (a) the number of program staff (only one, the program director), (b) the intensity of her involvement with the *Second Family* youth and their families, and (c) the unanticipated distance that most of the program youth live from Chapel Hill, NC, the location of *Second Family* office. Only one of the four youth live in Orange County, two live in Lee County (56 miles from Orange County), and one lives in Guilford County (46 miles from Orange County).

Program Implementation (Continuous Quality Improvement Assessment)

Was the program implemented as specified by the Second Family Foundation? In this section, we use the Continuous Quality Improvement Assessment (CQIA) to answer this question and to examine the supports and barriers affecting the program's implementation. The CQIA is completed by program staff and the evaluator on a bi-annual basis to track trends in how Second Family implements the requirements set forth by the Second Family Foundation.

The CQIA for *Second Family* was completed approximately four months after program inception, and updated approximately eight months thereafter. The results of the CQIA are below. In this section, each program standard is described, followed by evidence *(in italics)* of how *Second Family* meets or does not meet each standard.

Responses indicate that the program meets many of the requirements set forth by the *Second Family* Board of Directors and written in the program manual. Case plan reviews have not included youth's social workers and revised case plans have been signed inconsistently by youth's social workers. To date, three youth have GALs assigned, but they have not participated in case planning. Face-to-face weekly home visits performed by the program director to each youth did not occur. However, this standard has now been revised to bimonthly to reflect the fact that most of the youth are placed in counties that are 50 to 60 miles away from Chapel Hill, NC.

Second Family Program Standards:

1. Program referral & participation

1.1 Achievement of program participation is carried out in three steps: (1) Orange County Department of Social Services personnel makes a referral to *Second Family* director; (2) A meeting is convened for the purposes of discussing the referral, which includes *Second Family* director, Orange County Department of Social Services staff, birth parent(s) (if available), foster parent(s), and the youth's Guardian ad Litem (GAL) (if assigned); (3) A meeting is convened for the purposes of extending a participation invitation to the youth, which includes the eligible youth, the program director, and *Second Family* Board Members.

At present, the child welfare program manager makes the referrals to Second Family based on program eligibility criteria, which include (a) age (13-15 years old), (b) in custody of Orange County Department of Social Services and placed no higher than

Level I or Level II, (c) enough "mental horsepower" to handle the challenges that are part of the program, (d) enough self-control to express frustration appropriately and safely, and (e) the ability to relate to others as "cousins," within Second Family. Orange County Department of Social Services personnel use the Second Family Youth Referral form to refer eligible youth to Second Family. Following is an example of how the referral and enrollment process was carried out earlier in 2008:

- Eight youth were referred to Second Family by the child welfare program manager.
- Of these 8 youth, 3 were immediately determined to be inappropriate for Second Family by both the program director and a Board Member for several "non-eligibility" reasons. These included: family violence in the home, violent behavior exhibited by the youth, and the youth already receiving mentor services through another program.
- Of the 5 remaining youth, an additional 3 were also considered not appropriate for Second Family upon closer case examination for several more reasons. These included: a pending reunification and the program not being developmentally appropriate despite one youth meeting the age criteria.
- The 2 remaining youth were enrolled in Second Family.

The program director documents the referral and enrollment process for each youth in meeting notes and an ongoing narrative. Both of these comprise all communication that the program director has regarding each youth. The narrative also documents what takes place at the referral and invitation meetings. Following are two examples from one youth's narrative from June and July 2007, respectively:

"Meeting with Orange County Department of Social Services [name of social workers] and Mike Miles at the Second Family Foundation office. [Name of social worker] discussed case history and present situation. [Name of social worker] felt [name of youth] would benefit greatly from involvement with Second Family, as [name of youth] is very much a teen and centered on herself."

"Conference call with Mike Miles and [name of social worker's supervisor] and [name of social worker] to discuss the financial situation of the case. Since [name of youth] will be moved down to a Level I, and will not qualify the [name of foster parents] to
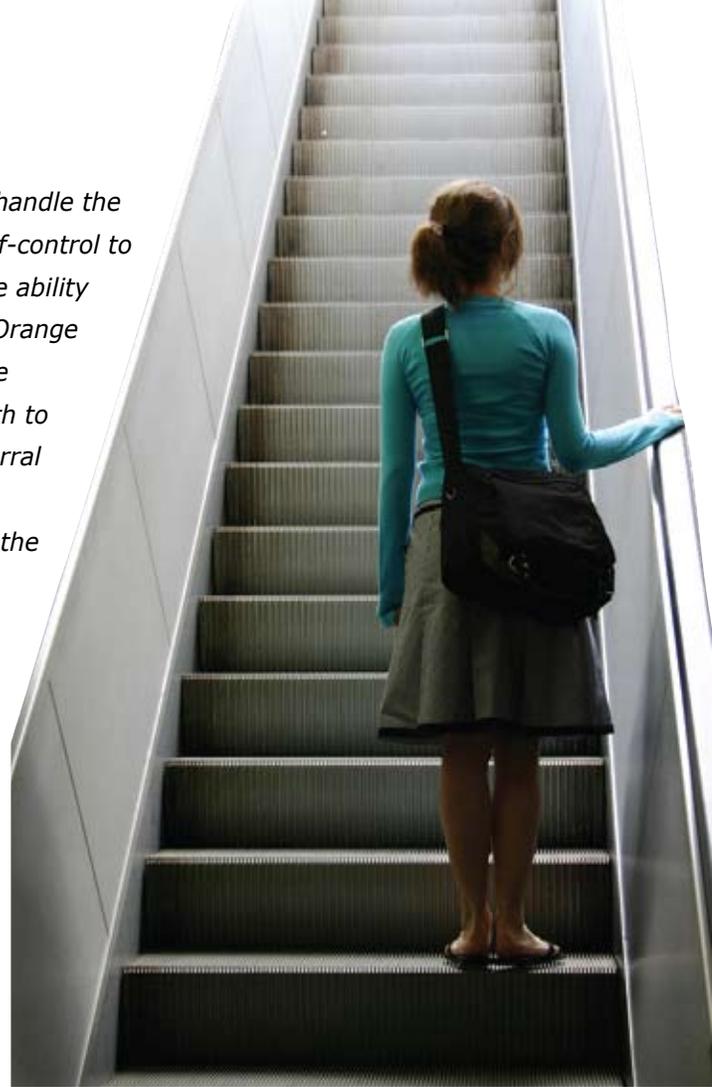
receive payment at her previous Level II placement, Orange County Department of Social Services has been looking for ways to allow [name of youth] to stay in this placement. The county has approved to pay them up to the maximum level—$800/ month. [Name of social worker] researched social security death benefit from [name of youth]'s father."

1.2 Program participation is extended to youth by verbal invitation.

At the third meeting where the youth is present, verbal invitation is extended by the program director. If needed, the youth is given several days to think about his/her decision regarding participation in Second Family.

1.3 Each youth is required to indicate his/her decision regarding program participation by verbally accepting the program director's invitation.

If the youth requests time to think about his/her decision, he/she is instructed to phone the program director once a decision is reached.

1.4 Reasons for program termination are documented by the program director.

Termination is documented in the youth's narrative and case plan. The program director indicated that she also plans to develop a letter of termination that would be sent to the youth for "official" purposes. To date, no youth has been terminated by the program.

2. Case plan development

2.1 An individualized case plan is developed for each *Second Family* youth.

Case plan components include: (a) youth's demographic information/data, (b) Second Family program dimensions (mental, physical, spiritual, make life better for others) and the 3 components of Second Family Foundation tenants (no lying, cheating, or stealing), (c) goals, objectives and strategies for each dimension,(d) timeframe for completion,(e) frequency of activities leading to goal completion, (f) responsible party, (g) outcome/results, and (h) review dates. Review of program files indicated that an individualized case plan has been developed for each youth currently enrolled in the program.

2.2 All parties involved in the original discussion regarding program participation are asked to contribute to the development of the case plan.

Youth's social workers and foster parents have been a part of the case plan development process. Their participation is documented on the case plan with their signatures. For all currently enrolled youth, there are no biological parents involved. Although three of the four youth have GALs, they have not been involved in the development of case plans.

2.3 Although individualized, each youth's case plan includes the following standard dimensions: (1) Mental; (2) Physical; (3) Spiritual; (4) Make life better for others.

Examples of activities for each dimension from one youth's case plan are the following:

    a. *Mental—Learning demonstrated in Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Health, and Technology*

    b. *Physical—Attend and participate in gymnastics class weekly; Do 5 pushups/5x/week*

    c. *Spiritual—Attend church with foster parents weekly; Attend Sunday School; Attend youth group weekly*

    d. *Make Life Better for Others—Clean room weekly by Saturday at 1PM; Clean up personal dishes after each use; Unload dishwasher and perform trash duty as scheduled; Resist making negative comments about others; Feed dogs and help around house and yard as requested; Launder, fold, and put away clothes every Thursday; Conceptualize and carry out a volunteer project (e.g., participated in Share Our Strength's Great American Bake Sale to end childhood hunger, collected canned food for the Ronald McDonald House)*

2.4 To support the execution of the case plan, the following standard components are implemented: (1) Skills trainers (if needed); (2) Normalizing expenses; (3) Foster parent reporting; (4) Involvement of birth parent(s), as appropriate.

    a. *Skills trainers—Skills trainers are individuals who spend time with program youth in after school/recreational activities and practicing pro-social skills. This program component is also modeled after Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care. Three of the four youth were identified as needing skills trainers. For these youth, the skills trainer is their tutor.*

    b. *Normalizing expenses—Second Family has paid for gymnastics classes, dinners/lunches out, Christmas and birthday gifts, tutors, summer camp (basketball and sailing), educational testing, movie outings.*

    c. *Foster parent reporting—The program director calls the foster parents each week and asks a set of standard questions that are recorded on the Second Family Caregiver Reporting Tool. Questions*
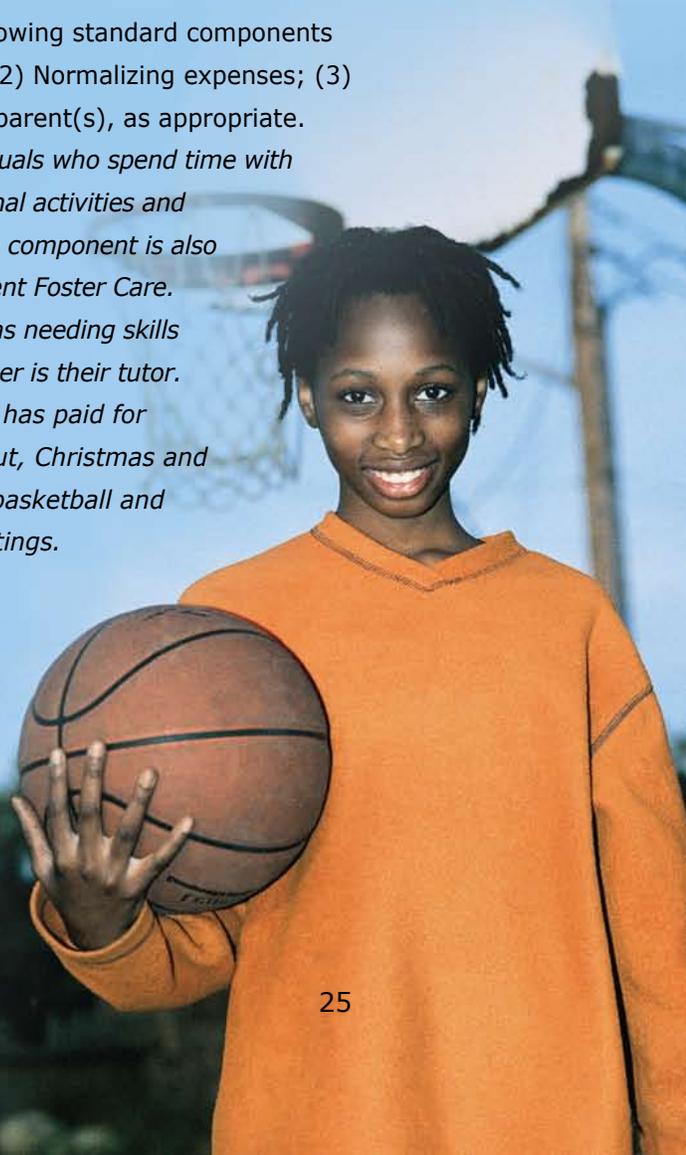
pertain to general program participation (i.e., progress toward case plan goals), and questions about youth behavior (e.g., What has youth excelled and struggled with this week? How does youth respond when questioned about a topic of concern or in need of discussion?)

d. *Involvement of birth parent(s)—For the four youth currently enrolled, it has not been appropriate for birth parents to be involved in the program.*

2.5 Case plans are maintained in a secure location.

Case plans are maintained in a locked file drawer in the program director's locked office. The program director's computer is password protected.

2.6 Case plans are reviewed within at least 90 days of initial development, and every 90 days thereafter.

The case plans are dated with the initial development date, and pre-dated with the subsequent review dates and then checked off when the review is completed. Review of a random sample of case plans indicated that this standard is being met.

2.7 Case plan reviews include the youth, Orange County Department of Social Services, GAL, foster parent(s), and birth parent(s), if appropriate.

Reviews for youth currently enrolled have included the youth and foster parents, but not the social workers from DSS. Birth parents have not been involved. The program director's lack of communication with the social workers about case plan review is the likely reason for their lack of involvement. However, the program director does provide copies of the revised case plans to the youth's social workers following each revision.

2.8 When case plan revisions are made, all parties sign the revised case plan.

Revised case plans were signed by the youth and foster parent(s), but not the social workers.

3. Program design

3.1 Face-to-face visitation with each youth is made weekly by the program director.

The weekly standard was not been achieved. This is likely due to the distance between Second Family and the foster homes. The large number of out of county placements was not expected. This standard has been revised to bimonthly due to the unrealistic nature of the prior standard.

3.2 Individualized post-18 services are provided to each *Second Family* youth as they become eligible to receive such services.

This part of the program has not yet been developed. The youth currently enrolled are between the ages of 13 and 16. However, all youth and foster parents are informed of the potential of these services when they enroll in Second Family.

3.3 Each youth is supported by *Second Family* in her/his self-development, which may include: (1) maintaining acceptable grades in school; (2) keeping personal space clean and tidy; (3) development of skills (i.e., sports, music, art); (4) participating in community service; (5) joining a religiously-affiliated youth group.

Self-development efforts are documented in the case plan. Examples of these efforts include community service projects, playing basketball on a team, and attending church and youth group meetings. Second Family assisted with the implementation of the first two examples. For the first, the program director helped the youth generate ideas for projects, and how to get the word out about her efforts for projects that involved members of her community. For the second, the program director attended several of the youth's games and over the summer (2007), helped her develop a training plan to get in shape for her tryouts in the fall.

3.4 The program director monitors each youth's weekly self-development effort.

Self-development is monitored by the program director's weekly phone calls to the caregiver and youth. She uses the Caregiver Reporting Tool and the Youth Reporting Tool for monitoring purposes. She also tracks their progress by entering the information into an Excel task completion database that allows her to "quantify" their efforts by week and calculate a weekly completion rate.

3.5 *Second Family* supports other children (foster and biological) in youth's foster homes, as appropriate.

The program director has included the other children on outings, such as lunch/dinner and movies. Additionally, youth (i.e., siblings, other foster youth) living with several Second Family youth have benefitted from the tutors provided by Second Family. Second Family has also agreed to subsidize the braces of one of the participant's siblings.

4. Research and evaluation

4.1 The program director and Board Members facilitate and cooperate with the independent evaluator in the collection of quantitative and qualitative evaluation data.

The program director has been very cooperative with the collection of evaluation data. Additionally, she and a Board Member emphasized the importance of the comparison group to Orange County Department of Social Services.

Program Supports & Barriers

Were there any factors that facilitated or impeded implementation of *Second Family* this year? How were factors that impeded implementation addressed? Several factors enhanced program implementation this year. These **enhancing factors** are:

Education and prior professional experience of program director. The program director holds a Bachelor's in Social Work and has prior experience working in child welfare in North Carolina. Therefore, she understands very well the demands that are placed on case managers/social workers, and is sensitive to them. This in turn supports development of an effective collaborative relationship with Orange County Department of Social Services. Research suggests that program staff who share the same general philosophy as the program and its stakeholders are most effective, and that program staff who are personable, caring, empathetic, and experienced are better able to form collaborative relationships, which produce better program results (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003). In an interview, one social worker commented on the positive relationship that she has with the program director and how she feels that the program director understands the demands of working in child welfare. She stated,

> *We try to meet once or twice per month to discuss [name of youth]. The reality is, she's been very accommodating. When I'm like, I can't meet with you, we talk on the phone, or just try to reschedule. So, it's an extra meeting, but we do it over breakfast or lunch, so it's always something pleasant.*

Well-defined mission and program components. During program development, the Second Family Foundation Board of Directors put forth much time and effort to carefully define the program's mission and the supporting components, using the expertise of the Jordan Institute for Families of the School of Social Work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to guide the process. As a result, there is a clear vision for the program in terms of why the Second Family Foundation is making the chosen journey. This clear vision contributes to the strength of the Foundation, as the purpose is relevant to the currents needs of the community it serves.

Empowering youth to choose to participate. Part of the *Second Family* model includes empowering eligible youth to choose to become a part of *Second Family*. An invitation to join *Second Family* is extended, and the youth then decides whether s/he wants to join the program, and decides to keep up with the program requirements as time passes. Having the choice to participate in *Second Family* is a much different experience for the youth as compared to the involvement of other programs and services in their lives. The importance of such empowerment is reflected in the following description provided by a youth's social worker:

> *She sees Second Family differently from other things; she sees it as a choice. She has a choice, whereas she doesn't have a choice to have DSS involvement, she doesn't have a choice to have community support involvement, or to see the therapist. These decisions are made for her. The fact that she has the power to make the choice about Second Family has made her see this experience different, which is good.*

The program director. In addition to her education and previous work experience, the program director as an individual is another strength of *Second Family*. The youth, their foster/house parents, and their social workers all commented on how much they like and enjoy the program director, and how helpful and supportive they find her. One foster parent stated,

> *Working with [name of program director] has been the best part of Second Family. She has done wonders with [name of youth]. [Name of youth] enjoys [name of program director] as much as the program. She enjoys the time that she gets with her. I think how she will comment to [name of youth] on certain things that we have made statements to her about has helped. It's like another adult is stepping in and saying the same thing as us, and confirming for [name of youth] that this is something important.*

A *Second Family* youth also commented on the importance of the program director to her. She stated,

> *My favorite part of Second Family is [name of program director]. She's like the nicest person ever. I mean she's strict in a way, but she's really cool to hang out with and she's fun. Every time we go out, we always do fun stuff, like go around the mall. So she's really cool to hang out with.*

Another foster parent also described her own relationship with the program director, how it has developed and grown over the first year, and how she views themselves as "friends" now. She stated,

The conversations that I've had with [name of program director], just having another adult to vent to, to get feedback from, is something that I really enjoy. That's probably the one thing, that I have somebody else other than just a caseworker to talk to; she's more like having a peer to talk to, instead of someone who is just on paperwork saying these are the rules and regulations. [Name of program director] is not all rules and regulations; we're on friend to friend speaking terms. She knows [name of youth] very well now too. So our conversations go quite easily now. They did very well to hire [name of program director]. She's right on track whenever something is brought to her attention. She's very determined about what she is looking for each child to experience through Second Family.

Financial flexibility. One of the greatest assets of *Second Family* is the financial flexibility that the program has. This means that the program director can relatively quickly access needed funds without having to navigate the bureaucratic red tape associated with the child welfare system. This flexibility facilitates the program being able to "fill the gaps" with relative ease and promptness, which enables a proactive approach to problem solving.

The evaluator observed several implementation challenges during this first year. These **challenging factors** are:

Slow program uptake. Evaluator observations suggest that participants experienced a slow program uptake. Many of the youth did not "get" the program until several months following their initial enrollment, and some are still struggling in this area. For example, one youth described how he does not really think *Second Family* is really "doing" anything for him yet. He said,

I don't really think Second Family is making a difference in my life yet, it really can't at my age. There's nothing really to do. They made a difference with tutoring, because I really needed it. There are other things, but they can't really help me with them yet. I mean, I can't get a house yet.

There may be several reasons for slow program uptake. First, one of the social workers discussed the issue of cultural sensitivity. Her comments suggest that the difference in race/ethnicity between the program director and her foster youth may be the reason for this particular youth's slow program uptake. Her comments further suggest that when she (an African American) explained *Second Family* to the youth following the program director's explanation, the youth "got it." She stated,

I really think the reason why [name of youth] didn't get Second Family for so long is that she felt like, I'm operating from over here, I'm from an impoverished community, I'm from the 'hood. I don't know what you guys are even talking about because I haven't experienced it. But when I talked to [name of youth] about Second Family, because Mrs. [name of foster parent] had actually said she wasn't enthusiastic about it, and she was kind of complaining, but when we talked about it, it was like the light bulb went on. I don't think I said anything different to her, but it was like there was a barrier there, a wall that was put up that needed to be broken down.

A second possible explanation for the slow program uptake relates to the histories of multiple losses that foster youth typically experience (e.g., home, family, friends, schools). Youth may have difficulty accepting that the program is making a serious, long-term commitment to them. As a result, they may not have enough trust in the program to fully engage themselves. One foster/house parent alluded to the possibility of youth having difficulty accepting the program's commitment when he commented, "We continually encourage him, saying you've got somebody behind you that's not going to leave you. I think he will realize what he's got one day."

Distance. Another implementation challenge this year was the unexpected distance between the *Second Family* office (in Chapel Hill) and most of the currently enrolled youth. As stated previously, only one of the four youth live in Orange County. The remaining three live between 40 and 60 miles away from Orange County. The consequence of this distance was experienced relatively quickly by the program director. She realized that it was infeasible to make home visits to all the youth every week, which was the original program standard. As a result, the standard was revised to every other week. Because of this, the youth have less face-to-face contact with the program director and are less likely to enjoy activities as "cousins" together with the program director.

Lack of a standardized referral process for DSS case managers/social workers. Presently, there is no standardized referral process for the case managers/social workers to use. As described in the CQIA, upon request from *Second Family* director, the Orange County Department of Social Services child welfare program manager makes referrals to *Second Family* based on program eligibility criteria. The program director and at times a Board Member review the referrals, and then decide whether or not to pursue extending an invitation to the youth. This is a very subjective process, which if maintained will make future effectiveness research very

difficult. Moreover, the current approach is not a streamlined process, which will make "institutionalizing" the program within Orange County Department of Social Services more difficult. When asked about the referral process, the case managers/ social workers commented that to their knowledge there is no structured process in place. They also commented that they would find it very helpful if the process could be standardized, specifically if there were a referral form that they could fax to the program director when they receive a case that meets the basic program eligibility criteria. Several case managers/social workers also mentioned that they did not even know how their youth were selected for *Second Family.*

Other Issues for Consideration

Although not presently an "implementation challenge," the qualitative data from this first year suggest that a current program support may eventually turn into a barrier. That is, the data make very clear that one of the main strengths of *Second Family* is the program director, as an individual person. Given that she is not likely to remain with *Second Family* "forever," the program should consider issues related to termination when down the road it is time for her to leave. Youth who have developed particularly close relationships with her may perceive her leave taking as another loss to add to their histories of losses.

Participant Feedback

What is the experience of the participants? Do participants find the program useful? Reflecting on participant perceptions contributes to a greater understanding of the overall program. During year one, the evaluator conducted a total of 16 individual, face-to-face interviews with *Second Family* youth (n=5), foster/ house parents (n=5), and social workers (n=6). Baseline interviews were completed approximately three months following program enrollment. Follow-up interviews were completed approximately six months later.

Filling the Gaps

One of the most salient themes that emerged from the interview data concerns the way in which *Second Family* "fills the gaps" for participants, helping them to feel more like "normal" kids. This support reflects the program's

commitment to subsidizing expenses that are typically above and beyond what foster care is able to pay for, and yet are usually considered standard expenses for an average American teenager. For example one youth's social worker stated,

> *One of the big challenges with foster care is that there isn't enough money for stuff that we take for granted. You know, African American girls, once they reach a certain age, like to have their hair permed or straightened, or whatever you want to call it. And that's like $60 a pop, and there is no money in foster care for that sort of thing. They only get a couple hundred dollars every six months for clothes.*

When asked to describe *Second Family*, one caregiver stated, "*Second Family* is a group that supports individual kids that need help. They're sort of, for lack of a better word, a second family. I think it's very appropriately named. We weren't able to send [name of youth] to camp, *Second Family* made it happen. It's been a real blessing. They are just super." Another caregiver similarly described, "One of the best parts of *Second Family* is the opportunities they give. The idea that they're willing to step up if there's something [name of youth] is interested in, and say, let's give it a try. She wouldn't have these opportunities without *Second Family*." Another social worker described both the program's financial and emotional commitment as "filling the gaps" for one of her kids. She stated,

> *The best thing about Second Family is the commitment. They are saying we are willing to commit to you, until you're 22 or whatever. For a foster youth to mentally wrap his/her mind around the fact that somebody could actually stick with them until they are through college even, that's a big thing for them, especially for kids that have had a lot of disruptions. That they could actually feel safe in getting connected. The financial backing is a huge piece as well. That extra activity, like gymnastics, that they would not be able to do with it, means a great deal to them. For [name of youth] with her gymnastics, that's just been very important to her and has helped her self-confidence. It's done more than just give her something that she enjoys doing.*

Helping Others to Shine

A second noteworthy theme that emerged from the interview data concerns how *Second Family* has not only supported the youth actually participating in the program, but also helped other youth to shine as well. For example, one social worker described a concerning dynamic that emerged between her *Second Family* youth and the youth's

older sister, who is placed in the same foster home. One could say that *Second Family* "created" the problem between the siblings. However, the social worker describes how such problems are typically very hard to resolve in foster care due to bureaucratic constraints, and that since *Second Family* does not have such constraints, the problem is being sufficiently addressed. She stated,

> *The last time I met with [Second Family program director], we talked about the siblings being jealous of [name of youth] and we tried to strategize ways to find something just for the middle child, [name of youth]. We are figuring out something that would help [name of youth] shine. That would also make [name of youth] happy and proud because she would know her sister is getting something too. And you know, in foster care you can't normally do that, you know, the money is for this person only and you can't blur the lines.*

Three of the *Second Family* youth are receiving at-home tutoring. As a result, youth who live in the same homes, but who are not *Second Family* youth, are being tutored as well. The foster/house parents of both *Second Family* youth reflected on how thankful they are for this opportunity that otherwise would not have been possible. For example, one foster parent related, "Her sister is getting tutored as well. She struggled in the 10th grade, but in the 11th grade, this year, she has done just great. She's been working with the tutor for several months now. If her grades went down even a little, she would always go and bring them back up. She's never done that before." The houseparent of the other tutored *Second Family* youth described how five or six other kids are now being tutored as well, and how grateful they are for this assistance. The houseparent goes on to talk about how important the help has been since they live so far away from the kids' schools. He stated,

> *He is getting tutored through Second Family. Talk about a blessing. Now it's not only helping [name of youth], but five or six other kids too. That's through Second Family. I was telling him the other night, I said, do you realize how many kids are getting helped because of you? I don't know why God picked you to get involved with Second Family, but all these other kids are getting help in English, Social Studies, Math because of you, and that has been, I really don't know of an adjective. But, just unbelievable. One of the problems we have here is that we are so remote. We describe this as the middle of the middle of nowhere. We are 20 miles away from most of the kids' schools, and so for a child to stay after school for tutoring, it would be an hour to and from extra. For Second Family to get involved has really been a godsend as far as everything, the budget, staff out of the house, all that stuff.*

Reach More Kids

A third theme that emerged from the interview data concerns stakeholders' wish that *Second Family* could reach more kids. Several social workers reflected on wanting similar services for all their kids. In particular, they identified both older and more troubled youth as always being the ones who seem to be left out of programs such as *Second Family*. Although they acknowledge that *Second Family* must have some limits, this reality is a source of frustration for them, and is viewed as a double-edged sword in some ways. About her colleagues, one social worker shared, "Social workers who have kids who don't qualify for some reason, it's another frustration for us because there's always like this void, either when the program starts and they're too old, or they're too difficult. There are not enough positive opportunities for the kids with the worst behaviors." This social worker also conveyed that the real need for program innovation, as she sees it, lies with the 18 and up group of youth. She stated,

> *The only thing I would change about Second Family is that I think older teenagers are the lost ones, kids that are turning 18. The cases I have, they don't know anything about living independently. They don't know how to get a job, drive a car, and they don't have insurance. Their only option for services is to stay in a licensed foster home. But, they are 18 and they are not really happy about that, or to just bang around on their own. There is a big batch of kids that there are no services for.*

A second wish for how *Second Family* could reach more kids involves dissemination to other counties. One social worker described the reaction that she has received from professionals outside the Orange County Department of Social Services when she tells them about *Second Family*. She said,

> *Everyone would like for their kids to have a Second Family. It's a great opportunity and I'm thankful for the two girls that I have that are in the program. I just hope it grows and more children can benefit from it. People outside DSS, like other professionals that are involved in the girls' lives, when they are informed that the girls are in the program and the program is explained to them, they are like, "How can I get this in our county? How do we get other kids into it?" They are very excited about the opportunity for the girls and think it sounds just incredible.*

Perceived Positive Program Impacts

The youth, foster/house parents, and case managers/social workers all reflected on the positive program impacts that they have observed during year one of implementation. Five key areas of positive program impacts emerged from the interviews. They are: academic support, conflict at home, social support, the importance of helping others, and responsibility.

Academic support. *Second Family* currently provides academic support in two primary ways, through tutoring and encouraging youth to do well in school. An example of the former was described by one of the foster parents of a youth receiving tutoring. She stated,

She has increased her reading. Her tutor is always there for her. She brings her books. [Name of youth] has always liked to read, but she reads even more now. She'll get a book and you won't hear from her for hours. She'll be in her bed, reading. She's become more intellectual in that way.

The same foster parent also commented on the encouragement to do well in school that *Second Family* provides. She described,

Second Family is always encouraging [name of youth] with her grades. [Name of youth] always did enough to get by, but she could be making A's. Sometimes she makes a C, and Second Family says, 'But you can make an A.' So, they really stress the grades. And I'm glad because sometimes she will get off the path. But, if you can make A's, don't you want to make them?

A *Second Family* youth also considered the encouragement that she is experiencing. She described, "*Second Family* is helpful and supportive. It helps me keep my grades up, and gives me goals that I can reach. They want me to go to college. They want me to succeed."

Conflict at home. Both youth and foster parents expressed how conflict at home has lessened since the involvement in *Second Family*. They observe a change in behavior in themselves. One youth related, "Since *Second Family*, I'm not getting in as much trouble as I used to because I know there's things that [program director] can take away, like gymnastics. She could also not take me out to lunch and stuff like that." A foster parent described,

> *[Name of youth] and I talk more and get along better now. She used to be very argumentative. I know sometimes I can be mean and that I can have a real bad day, and I will say something that I shouldn't have, but now [name of youth] won't continue the argument like she used to. To me, Second Family has made her calmer and not so argumentative. She used to be mean sometimes. That has changed. I don't know for what reason, but I know it has since she started Second Family.*

Social support. Social support emerged as a third area where foster parents and social workers have observed *Second Family* making a difference. One social worker stated,

> *I haven't noticed a tremendous difference in her yet, but I'm glad she is participating. That's good for her because she normally doesn't want to participate in things, so I think that's a positive thing in itself. She looks forward to [name of program director]'s phone calls, and that's new for her because she is usually pretty guarded. So that's a good sign that it's a positive connection for her.*

A foster parent commented on how *Second Family* is a source of important support for one youth because her siblings are not very involved with or interested in her or her activities. This foster parent also seems to experience the support of *Second Family* herself, in terms of the program director helping her to better support the youth. She described,

> *Second Family is another support for her, like with basketball. Right now, her sister and brother are not really showing an interest in that part of her life. They don't want to go to her games and stuff. They haven't shown an interest and I think they need to. I went to her game the other day; [name of program director] was there. To me, [name of youth] likes it because when she looks over and sees us there, she grins.*

Importance of helping others. Foster parents have observed changes in their foster youth related to helping others. This observation is consistent with the program's

mission, which includes instilling in youth an ethos related to making lives better for others and is operationalized in the program in several ways, including a requirement to be engaged in community service. One foster parent described a change in her foster youth's overall disposition since her involvement in *Second Family* started. She related,

Since Second Family, her disposition has changed. She still has times when she may get ticked off, but that's going to be your typical teenager. I think she's doing well, she's learning more and more about giving back. I think she learned a lot from this last one, the bake sale. That was one of the better activities she's chosen because baking is something that she really enjoys. That's what we've told her, do things to give back that she enjoys doing. Everyone wants to do something that they enjoy more than something that they don't really care for. So that's something we are still working on, but there's been a great improvement. Before Second Family, her wanting to do things for others wasn't really an issue.

This same foster parent commented also on the impact that the community service component has had on her and her husband, with respect to supporting the foster youth's efforts to carry out service projects. She described,

Second Family has enabled us to teach [name of youth] more about giving back. This has been a real big thing for us, trying to work out different ideas and suggestions. It's opened my eyes to look out for ideas, simple little things that she can do for giving back, along with us helping her figure out these ideas.

Responsibility. The final area of perceived positive program impact that emerged from the interview data is responsibility. Foster parents have observed an increased sense of responsibility in the youth. For example, one foster parent stated, "She's doing better about cleaning her room and doing chores. She's doing better at that without being told." Similarly, a second foster parent stated, "I don't have to talk to her as much as I did on certain things. Trying to get her to do certain things. Before, I had to do it all and now I don't have to tell her as frequently." A social worker commented on the way that the *Second Family* case planning builds in responsibility, and how important of a contribution she thinks this is to the youth's development. She said,

I really love the case planning. I love the way that it is set up and the approach that they come to the child with and they way that it really gives responsibility to the child. It's sort of like, I'm getting a lot and I benefit, but I've got to give back. But it's also, I want to benefit, so I've got to do my part. It gives them responsibility, but also the opportunity to see what it feels like to give to someone else.

Parent Daily Reports

During the first year, a total of 77 PDR phone calls were completed (see Figure 1). Of these 77, only five required a call back (i.e., the foster/house parent was not reached by the first phone call). Calls were completed between October 2007 and July 2008 for the first two youth enrolled, and between April 2008 and July 2008 for the third and fourth youth enrolled. Therefore, the first two youth enrolled received the greatest number of PDR calls during the first year. The majority of calls were completed with the foster/house mother.

**Figure 1. PDR Calls and Call Backs for all Youth (n=4)**
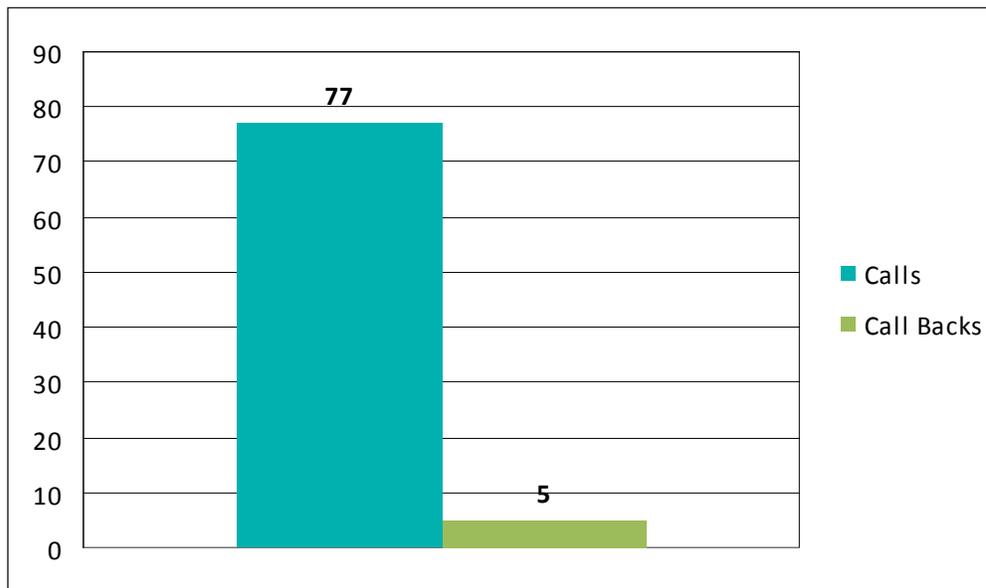
Figure 2 shows the frequency of behavior problems endorsed by the foster/house parents for all youth. Of the 14 possible items, nine were endorsed during year one. The behavior problem most often and consistently endorsed is "Argue with or talk back to an adult." The problems "Act defiant" and "Disobey foster/house parent" were the next most frequently reported. Together, these three most often reported behavior problems suggest that *Second Family* youth struggle with externalizing problems more than internalizing problems. Externalizing problems of youth in child welfare settings are defined as overt and disruptive, and can include the violation of social norms, destruction of property, and harm toward others (Keil & Price, 2006)

Figure 2. Frequency of Behavior Problems for all Youth (n=4)
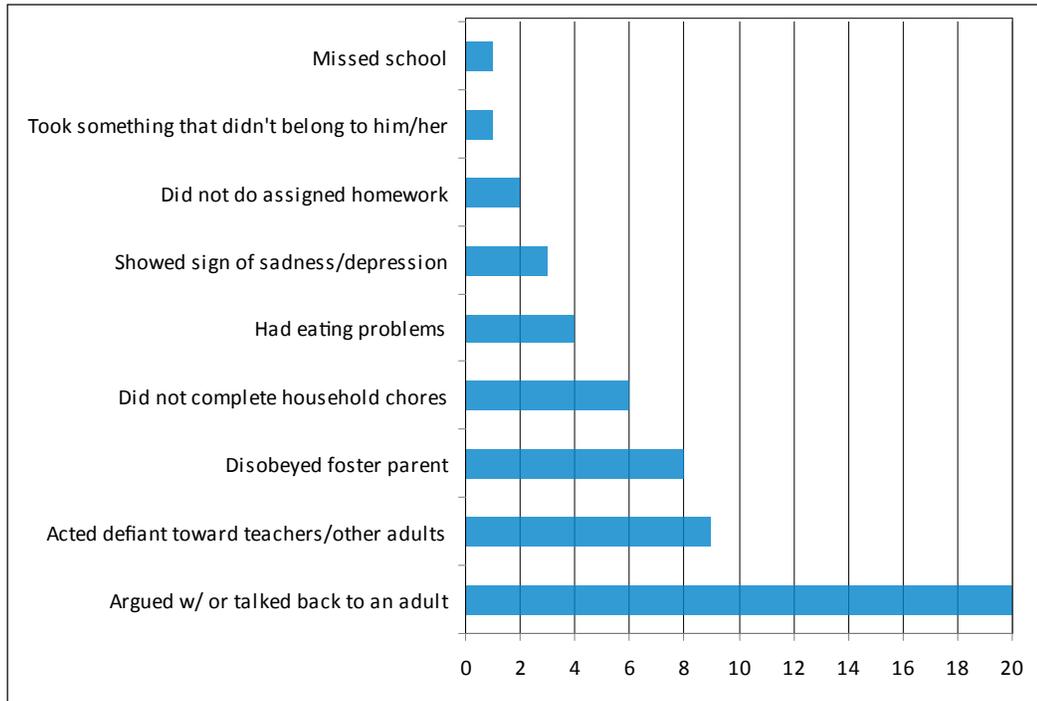
Research suggests that adolescent externalizing problems predict poor long-term outcomes, including addiction, dysfunctional family relationships, and criminal involvement far into adulthood (Brook, Cohen, & Jaeger, 1998; Duncan et al., 1997; Newcomb, Scheier, & Bentler, 1993). Moreover, youth in child welfare settings have been identified as particularly at-risk for physical, developmental, and behavioral problems as compared to any other group of children (Marx, Benoit, & Kamradt, 2003). Pilowsky (1995) identified the rates of externalizing behavior disorders as one of the highest for youth in foster care. Implications for the prevalence of these behavior problems are profound. Foster children with externalizing problems are less likely to achieve reunification within 18 months of entry into care (Landsverk, Davis, Ganger, Newton, & Johnson, 1996), and are more likely to experience placement disruptions (Chamberlain et al., 2006; Newton, Litrownik, & Landsverk, 2000).
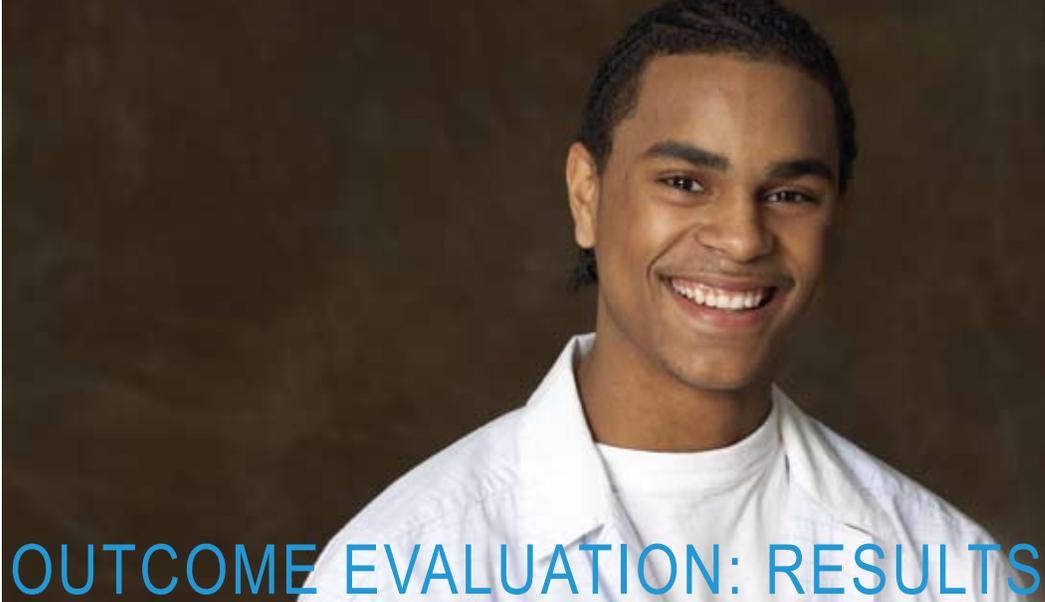
OUTCOME EVALUATION: RESULTS

T he outcome evaluation examines the extent to which youth in *Second Family* experienced positive outcomes. The major outcome areas assessed are based on indicators identified as relevant to successful youth development and include the following: (1) Preparation for independent living, (2) Child behavior, (3) Family health, (4) Posttraumatic stress, and (5) School performance. Individual baseline, follow-up, and change scores are presented. Because only two of the four youth participated in *Second Family* long enough during year one to receive follow-up measures, we are unable to conduct paired-samples t-tests to compare means. Instead, we present change scores for the two youth for whom baseline and follow-up data are available. ***To protect the identity of the youth, random letters and numbers have been used to identify them in the text, tables, and figures***.

Preparation for Independent Living

The Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment (ACLSA; Nollan et al., 1997) is used to evaluate youth independent living skills. The assessment consists of statements about life skills that are considered necessary in order achieve independence in adulthood. The following life skill areas are assessed: (1) Career Planning, (2) Communication, (3) Daily Living, (4) Home Life, (5) Housing and Money Management, (6) Self Care, (7) Social Relationships, (8) Work Life and (9) Work and Study Skills. Two types of scores for the ACLSA are computed, a percentage of mastery score for each life skill domain, and the ACLSA total mastery score. The percentage of mastery score is the percentage of questions answered "very much like me" in each of the domains. The ACLSA total mastery score is the percentage of questions on the entire assessment answered "very much like me." Scores range from 0% (no mastery) to 100% (complete mastery). Therefore, a higher score indicates greater domain mastery. A positive change score indicates domain improvement.

Tables 3–5 show the baseline, follow-up, and change scores for each domain and the total score. Table 5 indicates that only the Communication domain increased between baseline and follow-up for both youth. The one domain consistently below 50% for all youth at baseline and follow-up is Housing/Money Management. Low mastery scores indicate that this domain needs attention.

Table 3: Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Scores at Baseline (n=4)

	Communication	Daily Living	Housing/ Money Management	Self Care	Social Relationships	Work/ Study Skills	Total Score
Youth							
C	.33	.38	.11	.40	.83	.40	.34
A	.56	100.00	.41	.90	.50	100.00	.55
B	.22	.50	.00	.80	.50	.40	.34
D	.56	.62	.00	.60	.50	.60	.39

Table 4: Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Scores at Follow-Up (n=2)

	Communication	Daily Living	Housing/ Money Management	Self Care	Social Relationships	Work/ Study Skills	Total Score
Youth							
52	.44	.38	.00	.40	.67	.20	.29
29	.78	.62	.00	100.00	.00	100.00	.48

Table 5: Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Percent Change between Baseline & Follow-Up Scores (n=2)

	Communication	Daily Living	Housing/ Money Management	Self Care	Social Relationships	Work/ Study Skills	Total Score
Youth							
36	0.11	0	-0.11	0	-0.16	-0.2	-0.05
45	0.22	-99.38	-0.41	99.1	-0.5	0	-0.07

The Casey Life Skills website (http://www.caseylifeskills.org/index.htm) provides benchmarks for the ACLSA. Benchmarks are average Total Mastery scores, for groups defined by youth age, race/ethnicity, gender, and living situation. The benchmarks are helpful for interpreting ACLSA scores. Average or "mean" scores are typical scores on an assessment. Table 6 provides average Total Mastery scores for seven different groups that are representative of the Second Family youth.

Table 6. Ansell Casey Life Skills Assessment Benchmark Scores by Group (%)

	13 Year-Old Female (n=723)	15 Year-Old Male (n=3,162)	Black Female (n=3,148)	White Female (n=5,542)	White Male (n=5,931)	All Non-Relative Foster Care (n=7,543)	All Group Home/ Residential Facility (n=9,501)
Communication	37.7	36.2	47.4	43.3	38.2	40.8	42.3
Daily Living	58.7	59.2	72.8	68.8	60.0	63.6	68.0
Housing & Money Management	17.9	25.7	37.4	33.1	30.6	28.9	32.7
Self Care	69.9	69.3	82.3	83.1	72.5	76.9	76.3
Social Relationships	51.4	55.9	61.3	61.2	52.6	58.8	55.9
Work & Study Skills	48.9	50.9	57.3	54.4	45.9	50.5	50.9
Mastery Score Total	42.6	51.2	56.4	53.7	47.3	49.5	51.2

Child Behavior

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) is a brief behavioral screening questionnaire that provides balanced coverage of children and youth's behaviors, emotions, and relationships. It consists of 25 items describing positive and negative attributes of youth that can be allocated to five subscales of five items each: (1) emotional symptoms, (2) conduct problems, (3) hyperactivity-inattention, (4) peer problems, and (5) prosocial behavior. Both youth and their caregivers completed the SDQ. Therefore, for each subscale there are youth and caregiver scores. Lower scores on the subscales are better, except for Prosocial Behavior. Therefore, a negative change score represents "improvement," except for Prosocial Behavior, where a positive change score represents "improvement." Table 7 provides the score ranges for classifications of normal, borderline, and abnormal child behavior.

Table 7: Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire Score Classifications

	Normal Range	Borderline Range	Abnormal Range
Total/Overall Stress Score	0-15	16-19	20-40
Emotional Symptoms Score	0-5	6	7-10
Conduct Problems Score	0-3	4	5-10
Hyperactivity Score	0-5	6	7-10
Peer Problems Score	0-3	4-5	6-10
Prosocial Behavior Score	6-10	5	0-4

Tables 8–10 show baseline, follow-up, and change scores for each SDQ subscale. Nearly all scores at both baseline and follow-up indicate child behavior that is in the "normal" range according to the SDQ classification system. The baseline Total/Overall Stress caregiver score for Youth G is 14, which could be considered "high normal." The baseline Prosocial Behavior caregiver scores for Youths F and E are 3 and 4, respectively. These scores are in the "abnormal" range for this subscale. The follow-up Prosocial Behavior caregiver scores for Youth 12 and 63 are 0 and 4, respectively. These scores are also in the "abnormal" range. The Prosocial Behavior subscale assesses youth's kind and helpful behavior. Examples of statements include: "I am considerate of other people's feelings" and "I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset, or feeling ill." The follow-up Peer Problems caregiver scores for both Youth 12 and Youth 63 are 7 and 4, which fall into the "abnormal" and "borderline" ranges, respectively. The Peer Problems subscale assesses youth's peer relationships. Examples of statements include: "I have at least one good friend" and "I am generally liked by other children."

Table 8: Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire Scores at Baseline for Youth & Caregiver (n=4)

	OS (Y)	OS (CA)	ES (Y)	ES (CA)	CP (Y)	CP (CA)	H (Y)	H (CA)	PP (Y)	PP (CA)	PB (Y)	PB (CA)
Youth												
H	5	3	0	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	8	8
F	4	9	1	0	2	5	1	1	0	3	6	3
G	10	14	1	2	1	2	6	8	2	2	6	7
E	3	9	1	1	0	1	2	5	0	2	8	4

Abbreviations: Y—Youth; CA—Caregiver; OS—Overall Stress; ES— Emotional Symptoms; CP—Conduct Problems; H—Hyperactivity; PP—Peer Problems; PB—Prosocial Behavior

Table 9: Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire Scores at Follow-Up for Youth & Caregiver (n=2)

	OS (Y)	OS (CA)	ES (Y)	ES (CA)	CP (Y)	CP (CA)	H (Y)	H (CA)	PP (Y)	PP (CA)	PB (Y)	PB (CA)
Youth												
12	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	7	8	0
63	4	12	0	2	3	3	1	3	0	4	8	4

Abbreviations: Y— Youth; CA—Caregiver; OS—Overall Stress; ES— Emotional Symptoms; CP—Conduct Problems; H—Hyperactivity; PP—Peer Problems; PB—Prosocial Behavior

Change scores between baseline and follow-up for all subscales (Table 10) show there was improvement on the following from the perspective of the youth: Overall Stress, Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, and Hyperactivity. Caregivers perceived improvement on the following: Overall Stress, Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, and Prosocial Behavior.

Table 10: Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire Change Scores Between Baseline & Follow-Up for Youth & Caregiver (n=2)

	OS (Y)	OS (CA)	ES (Y)	ES (CA)	CP (Y)	CP (CA)	H (Y)	H (CA)	PP (Y)	PP (CA)	PB (Y)	PB (CA)
Youth												
16	-2	-1	0	-1	-1	-1	-2	1	1	7	0	-8
78	0	3	-1	2	1	-2	0	2	0	1	2	1

Abbreviations: Y, Youth; CA, Caregiver; OS, Overall Stress; ES, Emotional Symptoms; CP, Conduct Problems; H, Hyperactivity; PP, Peer Problems; PB Prosocial Behavior

Family Health

The FAM-III (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983) is a self-report measure that assesses the strengths and weaknesses within a family. The instrument is based on the Process Model of Family Functioning, which emphasizes dynamics, not family therapy, and family health as well as pathology (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Santa-Barbara, 1983). The FAM-III is appropriate for pre-adolescents, adolescents, and adult family members (ages 10 years to adult).

The 50-item General Scale used in this evaluation examines overall family health. Both youth and their caregivers completed the FAM-III General Scale. Therefore, for

each subscale there are youth and caregiver scores. Scores that are greater than 60 are considered "clinically significant." Clinically significant scores reflect problematic or dysfunctional behavior. The higher an individual's score is elevated above 60, the greater the likelihood of disturbance in that area. Lower scores are better, and a negative change score represents "improvement." A change score of zero indicates "no change" between baseline and follow-up.

Tables 11–13 show baseline, follow-up, and change scores for each FAM-III subscale as well as the total score. Scores on multiple subscales for both youth and caregivers and at both baseline and follow-up are "clinically significant." For the youth at baseline these scores include: Communication (I), Involvement (L), Control (I), and Values/Norms (I). For the caregivers at baseline the only clinically significant score is Values/Norms (I & J). At follow-up, youth's scores that are clinically significant include: Task Accomplishment (21), Communication (21), Involvement (21), Control (21 & 33), Values/Norms (33), and the Total Score (21). There are no clinically significant caregiver scores at follow-up. Table 13 shows the change scores between baseline and follow-up for Youth 94 and Youth 58. Subscales which improved according to the youth are: Communication (58), Affective Expression (58), Involvement (94), Control (58), Values/Norms (58), and the Total Score (58). According to the caregivers, Task Accomplishment (94 & 58), Values/Norms (58), and the Total Score (94 & 58) improved.

Table 11: FAM-III General Scale Assessment Scores at Baseline for Youth & Caregiver (n=4)

	TA (Y)	TA (CA)	RP (Y)	RP (CA)	CO (Y)	CO (CA)	AE (Y)	AE (CA)	I (Y)	I (CA)	C (Y)	C (CA)	VN (Y)	VN (CA)	Total Score (Y)	Total Score (CA)
Youth																
L	48	48	56	52	52	50	60	50	70	54	56	52	54	56	58	52
I	58	54	48	42	62	50	60	50	50	50	68	52	66	70	59	54
J	52	44	56	60	48	50	56	50	54	50	52	56	54	66	53	54
K	52	48	52	52	58	50	52	44	54	54	60	56	58	56	55	50

Abbreviations: Y—Youth; CA—Caregiver; TA—Task Accomplishment; RP—Role Performance; CO—Communication; AE—Affective Expression; I—Involvement; C—Control; VN—Values & Norms

Table 12: FAM-III General Scale Assessment Scores at Follow-Up for Youth & Caregiver (n=2)

	TA (Y)	TA (CA)	RP (Y)	RP (CA)	CO (Y)	CO (CA)	AE (Y)	AE (CA)	I (Y)	I (CA)	C (Y)	C (CA)	VN (Y)	VN (CA)	Total Score (Y)	Total Score (CA)
Youth																
21	62	38	60	56	66	50	60	50	66	54	64	52	58	60	62	51
33	58	44	48	42	58	50	48	50	60	54	64	52	62	52	57	51

Abbreviations: Y—Youth; CA—Caregiver; TA—Task Accomplishment; RP—Role Performance; CO—Communication; AE—Affective Expression; I—Involvement; C—Control; VN—Values & Norms

Table 13: FAM-III General Scale Assessment Change Scores between Baseline & Follow-Up for Youth & Caregiver (n=2)

	TA (Y)	TA (CA)	RP (Y)	RP (CA)	CO (Y)	CO (CA)	AE (Y)	AE (CA)	I (Y)	I (CA)	C (Y)	C (CA)	VN (Y)	VN (CA)	Total Score (Y)	Total Score (CA)
Youth																
94	14	-10	4	4	14	0	0	0	-4	0	8	0	4	4	4	-1
58	0	-10	0	0	-4	0	-12	0	10	4	-4	0	-4	-18	-2	-3

Abbreviations: Y—Youth; CA—Caregiver; TA—Task Accomplishment; RP—Role Performance; CO—Communication; AE—Affective Expression; I—Involvement; C—Control; VN—Values & Norms

Posttraumatic Stress

The Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Children (TSCC; Briere, 1996) is a self-report measure of posttraumatic stress and related psychological symptomatology in children ages 8-16 years who have experienced traumatic events (e.g., maltreatment, major loss, natural disaster, or witness violence). The 54-item TSCC includes six clinical scales: Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Posttraumatic Stress, Dissociation, and Sexual Concerns. Scores at or above 65 are clinically significant, except for Sexual Concerns, for which a score at or above 70 is clinically significant. Therefore, a negative change score indicates "improvement."

Tables 14–16 show the baseline, follow-up, and change scores for each clinical scale of the TSCC. None of the baseline or follow-up scores is clinically significant. Although baseline and follow-up scores are not clinically significant, the following clinical scales "improved" between baseline and follow-up: Anxiety (34), Depression (34), Anger (77 & 34), and Posttraumatic Stress (77 & 34).

Table 14: Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children Scores at Baseline for Youth (n=4)

	Anxiety	Depression	Anger	Posttraumatic Stress	Dissociation	Sexual Concerns
Youth						
M	35	39	42	38	39	41
O	37	39	45	39	41	36
P	37	43	40	36	41	41
N	39	39	41	36	36	38

Table 15: Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children Scores at Follow-Up for Youth (n=2)

	Anxiety	Depression	Anger	Posttraumatic Stress	Dissociation	Sexual Concerns
Youth						
61	35	39	40	35	39	41
49	35	36	38	35	43	41

Table 16: Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children Change Scores for Youth (n=2)

	Anxiety	Depression	Anger	Posttraumatic Stress	Dissociation	Sexual Concerns
Youth						
77	0	0	-2	-3	0	0
34	-2	-3	-7	-4	2	5

School Performance

School performance is evaluated using the youth's quarterly report cards, which are provided by the program director. The report card that is closest to the date of enrollment is used for baseline grades. Baseline and follow-up 1 report cards were collected for three youth; follow-up 2 report cards were collected for 2 youth[1]. The three common subjects among all youth are Language Arts, Mathematics, and History. Therefore, these subjects are used for monitoring school performance. Figure 3 displays the school performance data by time point for all youth for all three subjects. Grades are calculated using the traditional 4.0 grade point scale.

Figure 3. School Performance in 3 Subjects over Time
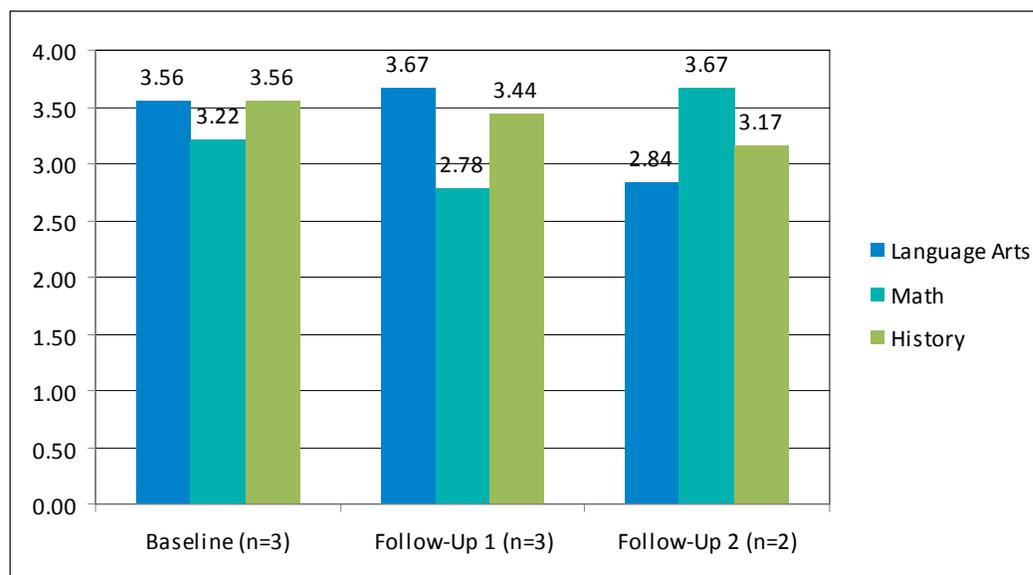
Figure 3 shows an increase in GPA by follow-up 2 in only one subject: math. In both language arts and history, youth's GPAs decreased at follow-up 2. The subject with the poorest performance at follow-up 2 is language arts (GPA=2.84); this is a somewhat surprising result given the improved performance between baseline and follow-up 1. Performance in history between baseline and follow-up 2 gradually decreased over time.

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[1]All *Second Family* youth were enrolled within the time period to have received both baseline and follow-up 1 report cards. These report cards were available for only 3 of the 4 youth. Only 2 *Second Family* youth were enrolled within the time period to have received follow-up 2 report cards.

DISCUSSION

The Jordan Institute for Families chose to use specific evaluation tools and approaches in the first year of evaluation for several reasons: to test the feasibility of the measures for this particular program, to learn about *Second Family* implementation and impact, and to make recommendations about the ongoing *Second Family* program evaluation. For these reasons, helping *Second Family* program staff better understand the research was an important goal of the evaluation project. Shemmings and Shemmings (2003 as cited in Spath & Pine, 2004) call this research-mindedness, defined as "a spirit of inquiry about research through the deployment of critical and analytical skills" and as a "necessary precursor to establishing evidence-based practice" (p. 11). This section of the evaluation report focuses on the "lessons learned" during this first year of program implementation with respect to the research process undertaken by the evaluator and possibilities for future evaluation of *Second Family.*

The type of research employed in this evaluation is vital to the ongoing development and success of this innovative program. For this reason, **our first critical recommendation is that both the process and outcome evaluations should continue**, because they provide important data that will enable *Second Family* to critically reflect on the first year of operations, make needed adjustments, and continue to assist Orange County and the foster youth they protect and serve. For example, scores generated from the assessment tools enable the identification of potential problems in child and family functioning and point to areas for potential program development, such as life skills associated with housing and money management. Furthermore, continued use of such assessment tools will help clarify mechanisms that account for positive outcomes when youth transition to adulthood and identify how participation in *Second Family* may alter the life trajectories of at-risk youth.

Process evaluation data describe program implementation, particularly factors that supported and impeded successful implementation. For example, current *Second Family* youth experienced difficulty with "getting" the program. This suggests that more attention needs to be paid to how the program is initially introduced to potential participants and how participants understand the program after initial enrollment. This might be achieved by increased involvement of the youth's social workers in describing and explaining *Second Family*, particularly when the opportunity is initially introduced.

Evaluation Limitations

In addition to program implementation barriers, the evaluator experienced several limitations that affected the results and that have important implications for the continued utility of this approach. First, despite the planned design in which a comparison group was a key element, no comparison group was ever established. Evaluations which use a comparison group can test more effectively the effects of program participation on outcomes. The absence of a comparison group greatly reduces the likelihood that participant outcomes can be attributed to the results of *Second Family.*

The evaluator observed several factors that contributed to the lack of a comparison group. The process employed to establish a comparison group may not have been the most effective. Instead of being involved in all meetings with OCDSS staff to establish the validity of the research effort, the evaluator relied on the *Second Family* program director to inform us of eligible youth ruled-out from participating in *Second Family*, who may have been appropriate for comparison purposes. This type of a comparison group is commonly referred to as eligible non-participants in the same community. The process did initially yield several potential comparison youth. However, for most of these youth, when the evaluator interviewed their social workers regarding the youth's possible participation, s/he decided that participation was not in the best interest of the youth at the time. Also, making initial contact with the social workers regarding the comparison group youth was prolonged and inefficient. Multiple phone calls and emails had little impact on social workers' responsiveness. This time lapse may have contributed to youth moving from at first being appropriate for the comparison group to no longer being appropriate since many of their cases changed day to day. This also suggests that the criteria for the comparison group should have been relaxed to include once-eligible youth, even after their status changed. **For future research, a more streamlined and standardized approach for identifying, recruiting, and enrolling youth into a comparison group will be required**.

A second evaluation limitation concerns the **logistics**. Just as the program director struggled with program delivery because most of the *Second Family* youth live outside of Orange County, the evaluation was similarly affected. The unanticipated distance between the Jordan Institute at UNC-CH and the location of the youth's foster/group homes meant that data collection was less efficient than originally anticipated. For each piece of data collected from the youth and their foster/house parents (excluding PDRs and school reports), individual visits to the foster/group homes were required. When originally considering the design of the evaluation, the evaluator assumed that youth would reside in Orange or Durham County and anticipated being able to use the offices of the Orange County Department of Social Services as a "hub" for recruitment and data collection purposes. Moreover, the evaluator also anticipated recruiting, obtaining consent/assent, and collecting some quantitative data in a group format. None of this was possible due to the distance between the evaluator and the youth.

A third evaluation limitation concerns the program's exclusion criteria. Youth with significant mental health problems and behavior problems, mild developmental delays, and those placed in restrictive placements are excluded from participation in *Second Family*, and yet they could benefit significantly from *Second Family.* These criteria greatly restrict the number of eligible foster youth available for program participation, which in turn decreases the number of referrals made to *Second Family.* The significance of these exclusion criteria is profound. That is, these findings—as well as future results—are most directly generalizeable to study-eligible participants who could have enrolled in *Second Family*. However, there are few of these youth in foster care. Although a balance between inclusion and exclusion must be struck, the current exclusion criteria mean that *Second Family* youth differ considerably from the overall population of foster youth. As a result, the criteria diminish the overall value of the program. If program participants do not represent typical foster youth, future dissemination and influence of *Second Family* may also be weakened.

Recommendations

Following are important recommendations for *Second Family* to consider as the program continues to develop and grow over the years to come:

1. **Increase the number** of youth referred to and accepted in *Second Family*.

2. **Re-consider program eligibility criteria**. At present, *Second Family* denies those youth most in need or highly at risk the opportunities to participate in a program that may make more significant differences to them than to youth less needy (Rossi & Freeman, 1993). Moreover, *Second Family* risks the loss of community support due to underinclusion since the program is one valued by

all community members. One potential way to expand inclusion would be to **extend *Second Family* to 16 and 17 year-olds**. This change would not only increase the pool of potential participants, it would also help fill a serious hole in the current social service system with respect to those most at need and highly at risk. As one social worker stated,

> *The only thing I would change about Second Family is that I think older teenagers are the lost ones. Kids that are turning 18, the cases I just got, they don't know anything about living independently. They don't know how to get a job, drive a car, and they don't have insurance. Their only option for services is to stay in a licensed foster home, but, they are 18 and are not really happy about that, or they just bang around on their own. There is a big batch of kids that there are no services for.*

3. **Hire additional staff** in order to accommodate more participants and support the role of the program director as administrator. The program director should be responsible for program development, not social work services to youth. Therefore, we recommend that *Second Family* hire one social worker for every 4 program participants. This change would give the program director the needed time to build relationships with key stakeholder groups during this critical developmental phase of the program and in times of future expansion. The program director should also work on operational issues, such as how referrals are made and how to involve other key stakeholders in the program, such as GALs and biological families. By hiring additional social workers, *Second Family* would be able to accommodate the increase in participants.

4. **Proactively include the biological family in the programming**, unless such involvement is prohibited by the court. As stated in the minutes from one of the trustees meetings, "*Second Family* never replaces the biological first family." Participation by the biological "first" family is part of the *Second Family* mission and should be treated as such. Including biological parents in youth's case planning is also part of *Second Family's* program standards. *Second Family* should re-visit how to approach and meet this goal.

5. **Continue to work with an external evaluator** to assess *Second Family's* implementation and outcomes. As the number of youth increases, consider using a full-time evaluation team. The recommended evaluation plan is labor intensive, but it is a critical ingredient for *Second Family's* success. *Second Family* is a new program taking an innovative approach to meet the needs of older youth in foster care. As such, the only way for it to become well managed and responsive to the needs of clients and the community is through evaluation results.

6. **Continue to use the current range of evaluation measurements**. One intent of this evaluation was to test the feasibility of the evaluation instruments (Appendix B). These measures were not only informative, they were also feasible. Foster parents, youth and social workers alike willingly completed the assessments and interviews. While youth complained about participating more than others, they completed all the assessments and interviews in order to receive the promised gift cards. Two of the instruments can be completed online, and this may be an attractive alternative for the youth.

7. **Increase efforts to recruit a comparison group of youth who are similar to Second Family youth but not part of the program**. This is the best way to document that the results of *Second Family* participation are due to program effects and not to random occurrences.

In sum, *Second Family* is an innovative program of resources to help foster youth develop their full potential mentally, physically and spiritually. This program report verifies that *Second Family* is on its way to accomplishing its objectives. For a full measure of its impact, however, *Second Family* should serve more youth—both those who are at higher levels of need and older youth facing self-sufficiency alone—and compare their outcomes to similar youth who are not part of *Second Family*. Collecting longitudinal information will document changes and effects over time and shape program implementation changes necessary to improve services to this important population of foster youth.

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Section II

Second Family Program

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The Department of Social Services Perspective

Second Family Foundation began in 2005 when Mike Miles, a local businessman and former UNC faculty, began to develop a program to "help provide what foster children are currently missing." From that point on Mike and Elston Miles and their children actively pursued information about the best approach to take in beginning this endeavor. As the Program Manager for Orange County Department of Social Services (OCDSS) it has been a pleasure to participate in the planning and implementation of the Second Family Foundation.

Nationwide children aging out of foster care experience very poor outcomes. This is an effort to significantly improve those chances for foster care youth. OCDSS welcomes any additional support to achieve better success for foster care youth when they become independent.

From its beginnings in 2005 to the present, Second Family Foundation has clarified its mission and program components. A program director was hired and guidelines set up to determine which youth in foster care will benefit most from the Second Family Foundation's philosophy and program. As the program report states, five key areas are addressed: academic support, conflict at home, social support, the importance of helping others, and responsibility. It has been my experience that social workers for OCDSS report positive progress in these domains during the first years of the programs implementation.

Nationwide children aging out of foster care experience very poor outcomes. This is an effort to significantly improve those chances for foster care youth. OCDSS welcomes any additional support to achieve better success for foster care youth when they become independent. The Second Family has developed along with DSS a process by which they can interview and screen

youth that are interested in joining the program. In order to support this goal, the Second Family Foundation program conducts on-going assessment to monitor progress in life skill areas. The following areas are assessed: career planning; communication; daily living; home life; housing and money management; self care; social relationships; work life; and work and study skills. The program currently has four youth that are participating and receiving a variety of supports. The program provides additional financial support to the foster parents or caregivers due to the expectation that they are active participants in supporting and communicating with the Second Family Program Director related to the youths goals and tasks. Current youth are receiving assistance such as: tutoring; educational assessments; and financial support for participation in athletics or other extra curricular classes. Second Family recognizes that although the identified youth is their primary focus if there are other siblings in the home they will assist them at times so there is not an inequality created by their involvement with just one youth in the home. This facilitates support for everyone in the home. Second Family has also been able to provide financial assistance for youth that may not have been accepted into the program but identified needs were discovered within the screening process. An example of this was a youth who was in need of uncovered dental work. Second Family chose to commit getting the dental work done despite the youth never entering the program. It is clear that Second Family is committed to assisting youth and DSS regarding these youth whenever necessary. Additional analysis is conducted in behavioral areas, in family functioning, psychological assessment, and school performance. Second Family Foundation is conducting on-going research to monitor the progress and success of this work.

In its third year, in 2008, Second Family Foundation continued to monitor its program and progress as well as to consider recommendations for continued growth and development. Future Second Family Foundation planning includes consideration of the following: to increase the number of youth referred to and accepted into the program; hire additional staff; proactively include the biological family in the programming when possible; continue to work with an external evaluator; continue to use the current evaluation measurements; and try to develop a research plan using a comparison group.

As Mike Miles stated in 2005, the mission statement of the Second Family Foundation is "To make life better for a few youth by supporting them spiritually (values, self image), materially

(education of multiple types), and physically (medical care, exercise) in a coordinated and consistent manner." The Miles Family provides the funding to support this mission.

As the Program Manager of OCDSS it has been professionally and personally rewarding for me to be a part of the Second Family Foundation program development and growth. The partnership with OCDSS offers a rare opportunity to use a private citizen's philanthropic effort to better the lives of foster youth. In the development of the program, careful consideration has been given to the areas most needed to successfully support the youth in foster care and how to implement services that will make a difference. Much professional responsibility is put on the Program Director. Her ability to engage, support, counsel, and develop a meaningful relationship with each youth is essential.

The relationship that is established by the Second Family in the first four years is critical to the philosophy of remaining involved with the youth well beyond their 18th birthday.

The relationship that is established by the Second Family in the first four years is critical to the philosophy of remaining involved with the youth well beyond their eighteenth birthday. Second Family hopes to be apart of the youth as they enter into the adult world, continuing to support them financially and emotionally in achieving success as they pursue future goals of school and vocational training. This means that the communication/collaboration between the Program Director and OCDSS social workers, the DSS LINKS Coordinator and staff is very important to maintain continuity and consistency. The Program Director has maintained close communication with the DSS social workers by meeting with them every month. This allows for regular updates and input about how the youth are doing within the program. I have been able to meet monthly with Mike Miles and the Program Director to assess and evaluate progress of the youth from an administrative perspective and to ensure consistency and continuity of established goals and objectives for each youth and program outcomes.

OCDSS remains committed to continue this partnership with the Second Family Foundation in the years ahead in order to improve the lives of our foster youth in this county.

Duston Lowell
Orange County Department of Social Services
Children's Services Program Manager
919.968.2000

The Guardian ad Litem Perspective

I want to commend the Miles family for their thoughtful concern and the actions they have taken to address the challenges faced by children and youth in foster care. This Program Report summarizes the research the family reviewed, and the strategies they adopted in establishing the Second Family Foundation. The report should be useful in providing information that can encourage others to respond to the needs of abused and neglected youth in their communities. It is a blueprint for action that is needed.

Today approximately 25% of the children in North Carolina and in many other states live in poverty. Too many of these children live in homes where a parent is missing or parents are facing the pressures of unemployment coupled with low education and a lack of job skills. These risk factors are often correlated with domestic violence and substance abuse, and the majority of the children who come to the attention of the court system come from such family backgrounds. The plight of abused and neglected children is too often invisible to other members of their community. And the needs of these children are not a high priority for many political leaders. The Second Family Foundation focuses on teens in foster care and the particular challenges they face and their need for critical support and assistance.

> As a former Guardian ad Litem child client said: *Youth aging out of foster care face many risks. We need resources, programs and a support system. My Guardian ad Litem was always there to make sure my voice was heard. I will never forget what she did for me and what she stood for.*

The older teens in foster care face particular challenges. The Second Family Foundation recognizes that as youth "age out" at eighteen years from the social welfare system to independent living they have critical needs for support. The youth may need assistance in finding housing, medical attention, employment, educational or vocational programs. And many of these youth who have been abandoned, neglected or abused have critical needs for emotional support. They need to know that adults care for them and believe in them. If these

needs are not addressed, some of these youth will transition not to "independence" but to homelessness, substance abuse, or even the adult criminal justice system. And, how many of us were prepared to be "independent" at age eighteen? The Second Family Foundation addresses this issue and promotes a strategy of supporting youth and continuing care until the age of twenty-one or twenty-two years.

Jane Volland
Administrator
Guardian ad Litem Program

The North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program

The establishment of the Second Family Foundation and the results of the program's first year of implementation offer insights and strategies that others can utilize. It should be noted, that the financial assistance that the foundation provides is essential, but individuals who don't have the means to contribute monetary support can contribute their time, talents, and their concern for youth in other effective and needed ways. The statewide North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program (GAL) is an example of an opportunity to contribute such service. This program is a division within the North Carolina Judicial Department and the Administrative Office of the Courts. There are approximately 950 GAL and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs throughout the country, and the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program is a member of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association.

In North Carolina the General Assembly established the Guardian ad Litem Program in 1983 and mandated by statute that the program would provide legal advocacy for abused and neglected children in court proceedings. When the Department of Social Services files a petition alleging neglect or abuse, the Guardian ad Litem Program is appointed to protect and promote the best interest of the child. A team of a trained GAL community volunteer and an attorney provide this advocacy. The GAL conducts an independent investigation to determine the facts, needs of the child, and the resources appropriate to meet those needs. The GAL submits a court report focusing on the best interests of the child, and the GAL also informs the court of the child's wishes or expressed preferences. The latter is particularly important for the older youth in foster care. The GAL advocates for a safe and permanent home in a timely manner. The majority of children are reunited with their families or relatives. In some cases, however, the court may determine that it is in the best interests of the child to terminate the rights of the parents in order that the child may be adopted by a loving

This program is a division within the North Carolina Judicial Department and the Administrative Office of the Courts.

The GAL conducts an independent investigation to determine the facts, needs of the child, and the resources appropriate to meet those needs.

and caring family. Without the GAL advocacy there is an increased likelihood that abused and neglected children would spend more time in the limbo of foster care.

In 2008 the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program represented more than 17,000 children in over 38,000 court hearings, and the 4,767 trained GAL volunteers gave the state 915,264 hours of service in training and casework (valued at more than $17.8 million). Far more important than the monetary value, however, is the significance of this service for the child. The GAL volunteer gives a voice of hope to a child. The child knows that the volunteer is not a paid worker, but a person who is giving their time because the GAL cares and believes in the potential of the child.

The GAL volunteers are a diverse group of individuals who come from various educational, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Some are retired and some are employed full time – the key is that they find the time, energy and commitment to make a difference in the life of a child. They enjoy the personal satisfaction of knowing that a child is not forgotten and has a voice in court. As one GAL volunteer explained:

Without the GAL advocacy there is an increased likelihood that abused and neglected children would spend more time in the limbo of foster care.

Rewards often come in small packages – a call from an excited teen finally receiving much-needed braces, a student attending her first prom with a dream dress, and most of all, helping a child be adopted by loving parents.

Whether you have the financial means to create a foundation as the Miles family has, or whether as an individual you wish to volunteer as a GAL or as a CASA, this report highlights the needs of foster children in our nation. The report also provides a review of best practices and promising approaches that have been adopted. It is my hope that the work of the Second Family Foundation will inspire others to recognize and respond to the needs of abused and neglected children in their communities. If you are interested in learning more about the North Carolina Guardian ad Litem Program, you can contact me at jane.volland@nccourts.org or the program's website at http://ncgal.org. For more information on becoming a GAL or CASA volunteer in other states, visit the National CASA Association at http://nationalcasa.org.

Comments on Spiritual Needs

Having been party to conversations that led to the Miles family's substantial commitment to enhancing the experience of selected foster care children, I am pleased both to see the Second Family Program at this stage of development and to lend a few observations as it moves ahead. I have been asked to address the spiritual dimensions of the program.

Admittedly, "spiritual dimensions" can encompass a broad spectrum of options within a young person's development. The program asks of its participating youth that they "regularly be working to better [their] mind, body and spirit." The "body" and "mind" parts are clearly more tangibly measurable, as the Introduction acknowledges, but I think the program is wise to speak to "spirit" as well. Nonetheless, it is fair to ask the question of meaning and intention behind such a request.

Spiritual development in an adolescent's life is both important and tricky. It is important because it helps establish a ground of meaning beyond oneself – a cosmology and a theology that lend meaning and purpose to life, hopes larger than one can muster on one's own, a sense of structure and discipline that help function like guardrails on a bridge to keep one safe and on level ground.

Spiritual development in an adolescent's life is both important and tricky. It is important because it helps establish a ground of meaning beyond oneself – a cosmology and a theology that lend meaning and purpose to life, hopes larger than one can muster on one's own, a sense of structure and discipline that help function like guardrails on a bridge to keep one safe and on level ground. Across the years developmental scholars and theologians have noted that youth often struggle with a spiritual emptiness they are unable to name, yet seek many ways to fulfill. Other disciplines cite the same needs as developmental issues, but they clearly have a spiritual dimension. The needs are in the areas of identity, intimacy, vocation, healing, mentoring, nurture and courage. Every major religion seeks to address such needs; indeed, every person, whether religious or non-religious, in one way or another looks to meet such needs as ways of answering some major questions about himself or herself.

IDENTITY *Who am I and whose am I? There are many voices, from the marketers to the entertainment industry, offering answers, yet at its heart, the question is a spiritual question.*

INTIMACY *This need is larger than simply coming to terms with one's emergent sexuality, which is, of course, no simple matter in itself. What many young people yearn for is not sex, but intimacy…they long to be loved; they long for deep relationship and acceptance. Such a yearning is as much spiritual as it is physical. Tending to one's spirituality allows one to focus on the relational nature of personal belief in the quest for a deep relationship with the divine.*

VOCATION *What is my purpose? Why am I here? What am I meant to do and be? What are my deepest passions, and how do they intersect with the needs of others around me? Any spiritual component in work with youth must help them address such questions.*

HEALING *Given the brokenness that accompanies most every person accepted into the program, one of the deeply spiritual questions each of them seeks to answer is, where will I find healing? It is essential to the spiritual development of program participants that the adults working with them offer guidance and/or resources to help them discover answers to that question.*

MENTORING *It goes without saying that this need is at the heart of what the Second Family Program seeks to offer. I would simply note that there is a spiritual component to this need, because part of the help a young person needs in navigating the path from adolescence to adulthood is the counsel of one who has made the journey successfully, those who can be spiritually generative and supportive with them.*

If the Second Family Program seeks a spiritual component in its covenants with the young people it serves, it will need to acknowledge and be comfortable with helping its participants to name such a yearning.

NURTURE *Adolescents also yearn to be nurtured and supported in such a journey. Part of that need is a spiritual need: for a faith community that will attend to faith formation and help young people to grow toward a mature faith.*

COURAGE *One of the hardest things for a young person to do is to stand alone in the midst of a crowd and make wise decisions for herself or himself. To do so takes confidence and courage. It is not a natural tendency of adolescents to be different; many want the acceptance and approbation of the crowd. Most faith traditions ask their adherents to live profoundly counter-cultural lives; to do so requires spiritual courage*

In many ways, the spiritual dimension of such yearnings and needs are components of a named or unnamed yearning for God. If the Second Family Program seeks a spiritual component in its covenants with the young people it serves, it will need to acknowledge and be comfortable with helping its participants to name such a yearning. Furthermore, it will need to be able to equip its partner foster families to provide safe and supportive environments where such spiritual needs can be explored and met.

But adolescent spiritual development is also tricky, to be sure, because the ways such yearnings play out in any individual's life are markedly idiosyncratic, and because in so many households, spirituality is not always a matter of the adolescents' choice. In foster families, as in birth families, the choices parents make about spiritual matters have a strong and, often, determinative effect on the developing spirituality of the children and young adults in the family. If the foster family is actively engaged in a particular faith community, it is likely that the family will want the foster child to be engaged there as well. Indeed, it can be quite healthy for an adolescent to be exposed to healthy patterns of nurture and practice. What is equally important, however, is the provision of space for youth to explore their own questions, doubts and alternative perspectives, in healthy dialogue with their foster parents and siblings. The best mentors are often those who encourage and support and respond patiently and kindly to such explorations.

What is equally important, however, is the provision of space for youth to explore their own questions, doubts and alternative perspectives, in healthy dialogue with their foster parents and siblings.

I applaud the Second Family Program for incorporating the spiritual aspects of development along with the academic, the physical and the social. I celebrate with them their solid beginning, and I look forward to the developments yet to come.
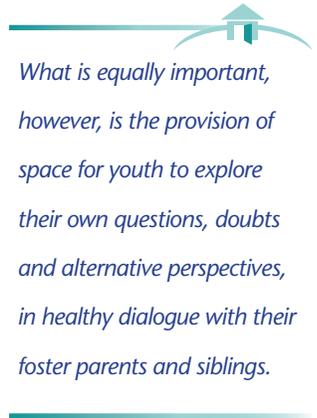
Bob Dunham
Pastor
University Presbyterian Church

The Ongoing Research Agenda

The Second Family Foundation (SFF) program provides enhancements to basic foster care for a small number of children chosen from the rolls of the Orange Country Department of Social Services (OCDSS). Details about the program and its evolution can be found in a report prepared by the Jordan Family Institute in the School of Social Work at UNC-CH entitled "Building Family Beyond the Home."[1]

The purpose of this note is to provide some guidance on appropriate methods that can be used to evaluate the program to see if it significantly improves outcomes for this select group of children relative to children in more standard foster care arrangements.[2]

In order to evaluate the program, it is important to understand the criteria that are used to select children for the SFF program. Referrals are made to SFF from OCDSS based on the following program eligibility criteria:

- *Children must be between the ages of 13 and 15 in OCDSS.*

- *The level of care must be in the range of 1 to 2.*

- *The children must have the mental capacity to do the extra work required by the program.*

- *The children must exhibit self control.*

- *The children must be able to relate to others.*

After the referral is made, the child is interviewed by the SFF program director and a final selection decision is made. Of the eight children initially referred by OCDSS, four were selected for the program with the other four dropped due to concerns about family or youth violent behavior, pending reunification, or the program was not developmentally appropriate for the child.

The main limitations to a rigorous statistical analysis of the program are the very limited sample size and the lack of a comparison group. The sample size problem will improve as more

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1. *Program Report for July 2005 – August 2008.*

2. *The outcomes of interest are 1) Preparation for independent living 2) Child Behavior 3) Family function and 4) Posttraumatic stress.*

children are added to the program which will allow more sophisticated statistical analyses in the future. However, it is very important that high quality and consistent data be collected even in this start up phase of the program so that all data from the early years of the program will be usable in later years.

The methods that we lay out below could be used for continuous outcomes such as scores on life assessment skills tests or they could be used for the type of measures that may be available for a larger set of children from survey data such as school achievement or the presence of a criminal record.

The purpose of this note is to provide some guidance on appropriate methods that can be used to evaluate the program to see if it significantly improves outcomes for this select group of children relative to children in more standard foster care arrangements.

1. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN *The gold standard for evaluation is a randomized trial with a treatment (enrollment in SFF) and control group. This would be achieved going all the way through the selection process to get a set of children that are completely acceptable for enrollment in the program and then flipping a coin to determine who is in the treatment group and who is in the control group. Both the treatment and control group would be followed through time. In this experimental setting, evaluation is simple – one simply tests for the difference in means for any outcome between treatment and control group. There is no need to control for other factors since they will be randomly distributed across the two groups by design.*

Unfortunately, an experimental design was not a practical option for evaluating the SFF program due to ethical considerations where children would be rejected in a random manner.

2. PRETEST – POSTTEST DESIGN *In this design, the treatment group essentially acts as their own control group. After individuals are selected, a baseline assessment is made. Then all children are enrolled in the program and further assessments are made at later points in time. Again, simple differences in means between the baseline measures and the measures a later time points can be used. The problem with this method is that in the absence of a control group, other factors may explain change in the outcome variables in addition to the SFF Program and the*

farther out in time you follow the children, the more likely such intervening variables may interfere.

However, it is still possible to make valid inferences but regression based methods are typically used to

control for the intervening factors. More will be said on this below in the discussion of the longitudinal

survey design.

3. LONGITUDINAL SURVEY DESIGN *Longitudinal data involves surveys of the same*

individuals at multiple points in time. Longitudinal survey methods are frequently used when

experimental methods are not possible. A well known Princeton economist, Angus Deaton, makes

a very succinct case for longitudinal or panel data: "When our data contain repeated observations

on each individual, the resulting panel data open up a number of possibilities that are not available

in the single cross section. In particular, the opportunity to compare the same individual under

different circumstances permits the possibility of using that individual as his or her own control, so

that we can come closer to the ideal experimental situation." [3]

To get a clearer understanding of the usefulness of longitudinal data in a regression context,

consider the following model:

$$Y_{ti} = X_{ti}\beta + SFF_{ti}\alpha + Z_i\delta + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{ti}$$

Where Y_{ti} is some outcome measure for individual i at time t, X_{ti} are time varying control

variables such as characteristics of the school that the child is attending at time t or other activities

that the child is involved in at time t, and Z_i represent time invariant variables such as the

child's race. SFF_{ti} is a time varying variable that indicates enrollment in the SFF program (1 if

enrolled and 0 if not enrolled). At t=1, no child is enrolled. For t>1, some children will be enrolled

and some will not. The children not enrolled at t>1 will be chosen from DSS records to mirror the

types of children likely to be chosen for enrollment in DSS using the selection criteria listed above

as a guide. The X's and the Z's will include characteristics that will control for differences which

is necessary in this non-experimental situation. Finally, μ_i and ε_{ti} represent time invariant and

time varying unobservable variables that can affect the outcome. An example of a time invariant

3. Deaton, A. (1998). *The Analysis of Household Surveys: A Microeconometric Approach to Development Policy* The World Bank: Washington D.C.

outcome could be the child's level of motivation. Examples of time varying factors could be unobservable characteristics of the child's school or community.

The above formulation makes it easy to see the problems with a simple pretest/posttest design. Suppose that, as is currently the case, we only have data on children pre and post enrollment at t=1 and t=2 and all children are enrolled at t=2. If we take the above equation and difference it, we get:

$$Y_{2i} - Y_{1i} = (X_{2i} - X_{1i)}\beta + SFF_{2i}\alpha_i + \varepsilon_{2i} - \varepsilon_{1i}$$

The impact of SFF is measured by α. We can obtain a statistically correct estimate for α using regression methods that also control for other factors that changed between the two points in time (the X's). If we ignore the change in the X's and use a test of simple differences to measure program impact, the resulting estimates will be biased unless there is no correlation between the program and the X's, an unlikely possibility.

The equation in differences also helps explain why longitudinal methods are very useful in non-experimental settings – differencing eliminates unobserved, fixed characteristics (level of motivation, for example) that could confound the analysis. In a randomized experiment, such variables would be randomly spread across treatment and control groups but this would not be the case with either the pretest/posttest design or with survey data methods.

Of course, what is crucial for the implementation of the multivariate evaluation is data not only on children who are enrolled in SFF but also information on similar children who are not enrolled. It will be important that the database contain as much information as possible about family and individual background for children in the control sample so that these variables can be used in the above regression model as control variables (X and Z variables in the notation of the model). This will hopefully allow a valid comparison since, as is laid out above, the criteria for entry into the SFF program are at least partly subjective.

Fortunately, the UNC School of Social Work has developed a database from the North Carolina Department of Social Services (see http://ssw.unc.edu/cw/) that contains a wealth of information about children in the North Carolina foster care system. In addition, it is possible to obtain data on criminal records from the Department of Justice and data on school achievement

from the Department of Public Instruction as long as strict confidentiality rules are followed and data sharing is approved. Another possible source of data for a comparison group is the Add Health data set gathered at the Carolina Population Center which is a large national representative data set that follows children from the age of 13 to 14 through early adulthood that has information about family background, foster care, educational achievement, and criminal activities (see http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth).

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Appendices

Available upon request from the University of North Carolina's Jordan Institute for Families

• Project Reports

• Standards Measures and Interview Questions

• Journal Article

Second FAMILY

F O U N D A T I O N