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Engagement of Fathers in the Child Welfare System

By

Julia Hernández

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

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by Julia Hernández

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Social Welfare

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Jill Duerr Berrick, Chair

The child welfare system is designed to protect children from harm and to reduce the risk of future harm by supporting families. However, the manner in which the system currently addresses child maltreatment by primary caregivers may not be sufficiently robust as current research suggests that important members of the family – fathers – may not be fully engaged as agents of change in preventing or responding to maltreatment. Evidence suggests that, until recently, fathers were largely overlooked in child welfare. This is beginning to change as child welfare researchers and practitioners are paying increasing attention to fathers and the role that they do and can play in child welfare cases and case outcomes.

In the past decade, child welfare researchers have begun to explore the engagement of fathers, the factors that contribute to a lack of engagement, and the effects of engaging fathers. This literature asserts that fathers are routinely not engaged by the child welfare system, negatively affecting their children, and suggests that caseworker bias against fathers is largely to blame for this problem. However, the extant literature takes a broad-brush approach to fathers with child welfare-involved children, painting them as a homogenous group and father engagement as invariably beneficial for children. Furthermore, the literature has yet to enumerate how many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at any given time, how many fathers are eligible (i.e. not restricted by factors such as incarceration) for engagement in their children's cases, or among eligible fathers, how many are not being engaged.

Through a review of case records for 507 children from 359 families who entered out-of-home care in one urban county for the first time between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2015, this mixed method exploratory study re-examines father engagement with a more nuanced lens. Data from the case record review was linked with administrative data to: 1) examine the extent and nature of father engagement in an urban county's child welfare system; 2) compare levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement; and 3) examine the association, if any, between father engagement and case outcomes.

In this study father engagement is conceptualized as a gradient that encompasses the various points throughout the beginning of a child welfare case during which a father may be included. The gradient begins with attempting to identify fathers and concludes with considering fathers as

a potential placement for their children. The gradient is progressive such that each of the later stages cannot occur without the earlier stages.

In aggregate, the 359 families included 420 fathers, most of whom were alleged fathers (75%). A majority of all fathers were identified (95%) located (75%), and contacted (63%). When considering only fathers who were contacted, as these are the fathers who can be engaged in the later stages of the gradient, over half of fathers were offered visitation (58%), offered services (56%), included in the case plan (54%), and considered as a potential placement for their children (53%).

Fathers varied in their eligibility for engagement such that 35% of fathers were found to be ineligible for engagement, largely due to a failure to establish presumed father status. Among fathers eligible for engagement, 90% were found to be eligible for full engagement and 10% for restricted engagement. Fathers eligible for engagement were more likely than ineligible fathers to be resident fathers and to have perpetrated the maltreatment that brought the family to the agency's attention than fathers ineligible for engagement.

Among fathers who were eligible for full engagement, 40% were not offered services, included in the case plan, or considered as a potential placement. Among these, half were fathers on cases that were being dismissed or that were being transferred to family maintenance. Another quarter were fathers whose whereabouts were unknown.

In comparing father engagement to that of mothers, significant differences were found. On average, mothers had higher rates of engagement than fathers did. However, this difference was attributable to parent's criminal justice involvement, status as the perpetrator of the maltreatment, and residence in the same home as the child and not to type of parent (i.e. mother vs. father).

In terms of the relationship between levels of father engagement and case outcomes, on average, higher levels of father engagement were associated with decreased case length. However, this difference was attributable to child's type of primary placement and type of permanency outcome, such that when controlling for these variables, level of father engagement is no longer significantly associated with case length. Increased levels of father engagement were, however, associated with increased likelihood of reunification over adoption or remaining in care but not with likelihood of reunification in comparison to legal guardianship.

This study has multiple implications for research, practice, and policy. In research, there is a need for increased specificity around which populations are being studied, as fathers do not represent a homogenous group. Future studies should consider eligibility for engagement and control for factors, namely incarceration and residence in the same home as the child, that are predictive of levels of engagement. Future studies should also further examine the association between levels of engagement and case outcomes and explore best practices for engaging fathers. Turning to practice and policy, there is a need to re-examine policies around paternity and to work to align the various federal, state, and county policies relating to defining and establishing paternity. There is also a need to explore the ways in which the child welfare system can facilitate the continued engagement of parents while they are incarcerated. Lastly, the findings

suggest that there is much nuance to consider when making decisions about if, when, and how to engage fathers, nuance that until now has largely been overlooked.

Dedicated to my cousin, Jorge Luis De La Torre, Jr., a single father whose devotion to his daughter knows no bounds.

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Introduction

The child welfare system is designed to protect children from harm and to reduce the risk of future harm by supporting families. However, the manner in which the system currently addresses child maltreatment by primary caregivers may not be sufficiently robust as current research suggests that important members of the family – fathers – may not be fully engaged as agents of change in preventing or responding to maltreatment. Evidence suggests that, until recently, fathers were largely overlooked in child welfare (Malm, Murray, & Geen, 2006). This is beginning to change as child welfare researchers and practitioners are paying increasing attention to fathers and the role that they do and can play in child welfare cases and case outcomes (Arroyo & Peek, 2015).

In child welfare, engagement of fathers – that is, including fathers as active participants in their children’s cases – can take on a variety of forms, ranging from basic communication about the case to intensive service provision (California Social Work Education Center, 2012). The engagement of fathers in the child welfare system can be understood as a gradient or continuum that begins with identifying fathers and concludes with seeking reunification with the father (see Figure 1). Along the gradient, there are various points at which child welfare workers can engage fathers; these include communicating with fathers about the case opening, involving fathers in case planning, and considering placing children in the care of their fathers. Despite various opportunities for father engagement and recent attention to fathers, including copious research showing the importance of fathers’ involvement to children’s development, it is unclear if and to what degree child welfare agencies have embraced these opportunities and changed practice.

In the past decade, child welfare researchers have begun to explore the engagement of fathers, the factors that contribute to a lack of engagement, and the effects of engaging fathers (Malm et al., 2006; Malm, Zielewski, & Chen, 2008; O’Donnell, Johnson, D’Aunno, & Thornton, 2005). This literature asserts that fathers are routinely not engaged by the child welfare system, negatively affecting their children, and suggests that caseworker bias against fathers is largely to blame for this problem. However, the extant literature takes a broad-brush approach to fathers with child welfare-involved children, painting them as a homogenous group and father engagement as invariably beneficial for children. Furthermore, the literature has yet to enumerate how many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at any given time, how many fathers are eligible (i.e. not restricted by factors such as incarceration) for engagement in their children’s cases, or among eligible fathers, how many are not being engaged.

Current Study

This mixed method exploratory study seeks to re-examine father engagement with a more nuanced lens. Through review of case records for a two-year cohort of all children who entered the child welfare system in one urban county, this study:

1. Examines the extent and nature of father engagement in an urban county’s child welfare system
2. Compares levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement
3. Examines the association, if any, between father engagement and case outcomes

Study Overview

This study is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the existing literature, providing an overview of what is currently known about the extent of father engagement in child welfare and potential barriers to engagement. Chapter 2 examines the ecological context within which engagement occurs in the child welfare system. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the child welfare system and the juvenile dependency court process in California.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the methods employed in this study. It begins with a discussion of the use of clinical data to construct a retrospective clinical dataset that allows for the examination of child welfare practice. This chapter then describes the clinical data sources utilized in this study as well as the process for cleaning and securing the data. Finally, the analytic procedures are outlined.

Chapter 5 reports the study findings. It examines the extent and nature of father engagement by enumerating the number of fathers represented in child welfare cases and the proportion of those fathers who are eligible for full or partial engagement; examining the characteristics of fathers who are and who are not engaged; looking at reasons for lack of engagement; and comparing levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement. It then explores the association between father engagement and case length and likelihood of permanency outcomes

Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the findings and their implications.

1. Review of the Literature

Over the last decade, child welfare researchers have increasingly turned their focus to fathers and the engagement of fathers in the child welfare system. However, they have done so with the assumption that fathers are routinely not being engaged, without first quantifying levels of engagement to demonstrate that there exists a lack of engagement. Prior studies have largely not compared levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement and thus they have not established that a lack of father engagement in particular and not a lack of parental engagement in general is a concern.

The literature also assumes that the engagement of fathers in the child welfare system is invariably beneficial to children, ignoring instances where engaging a father may be dangerous (e.g., the father has a history of perpetrating maltreatment or domestic violence). In examining potential barriers to engagement, the extant literature emphasizes the role of child welfare worker bias against fathers in preventing engagement, often ignoring or underplaying the role of other barriers.

In the social work literature, both the term “father” and the term “engagement” lack definitional clarity. The term “father” is used to refer to individuals who have various legal and social relationships to their children. The literature has not established a common definition of engagement nor examined variability in eligibility for engagement (i.e. are some fathers restricted in their ability to be engaged?).

Last, the literature has yet to enumerate how many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at any given time. Existing studies largely employ convenience sampling or only include a subsample of fathers (e.g., non-resident fathers).

This chapter summarizes the extant literature, first describing what is known about fathers in child welfare-involved families, the current state of engaging father, and the effects of engaging fathers. It then examines the full range of known barriers to the engagement of fathers and summarizes what remains to be learned.

Definitions

Before delving deeper into the literature, it is helpful to establish some common definitions for father and engagement.

Definition of father. For the purposes of this study, the term “father” will be used to refer to individuals who are or may be the biological parent of the child in question. This definition includes individuals who have established paternity via a DNA test, individuals who are listed as the father on the child’s birth certificate, and individuals who have self-identified as a potential biological parent or whom the mother has identified as a potential biological parent. This definition includes both resident fathers - fathers who reside in the same home as their children – and non-resident fathers – fathers who do not reside in the same home as their children.

Not included in this definition are social fathers – individuals who fulfill some or all the duties of a father in a child’s life but who are not the biological parent of the child (Deslauriers, Devault, Groulx, & Sevigny, 2012) – such as stepfathers, uncles, and mother’s partners.

Definition of engagement. In the literature, the term engagement is used to refer to both the inclusion of fathers in their children’s cases (e.g., Malm et al., 2006; O’Donnell et al., 2005) and the inclusion of fathers in the lives of their children (e.g., Lee, Fagan, & Icard, 2018). Research that utilizes the former definition, often conceptualizes engagement as a dichotomous outcome – fathers are either engaged or they are not (e.g., Coakley, 2013) – or look at one aspect of involvement in a child welfare case (e.g., Burrus, Green, Worcel, Finigan, & Furrer, 2012; Coakley, 2008). A few studies have made efforts to conceptualize engagement as a scale. For example, Malm et al. (2008) classified fathers according to the number of “involvement components” they had participated in and accordingly labeled fathers as not involved, involved, or highly involved. However, no studies to date have conceptualized father engagement as the full range of ways in which fathers can be included in their children’s cases.

The present study does so, conceptualizing the engagement of fathers as a gradient or continuum that encompasses the various points throughout the beginning of a child welfare case during which a father may be included (see Figure 1). The gradient begins with attempting to identify the father and concludes with considering the father as a potential placement for the child. Fathers are considered eligible for *full engagement* if they can participate in every step of the gradient. Fathers are considered eligible for *restricted engagement* if they are eligible to participate in some but not every step. For example, fathers who are incarcerated may not be eligible to participate in visitation and cannot be considered for reunification while incarcerated. Fathers are considered *ineligible* for engagement if they were not legally allowed to participate in the later stages of the gradient. For example, fathers who have not established paternity cannot be offered services. The gradient is progressive such that each of the later stages cannot occur without the earlier stages.

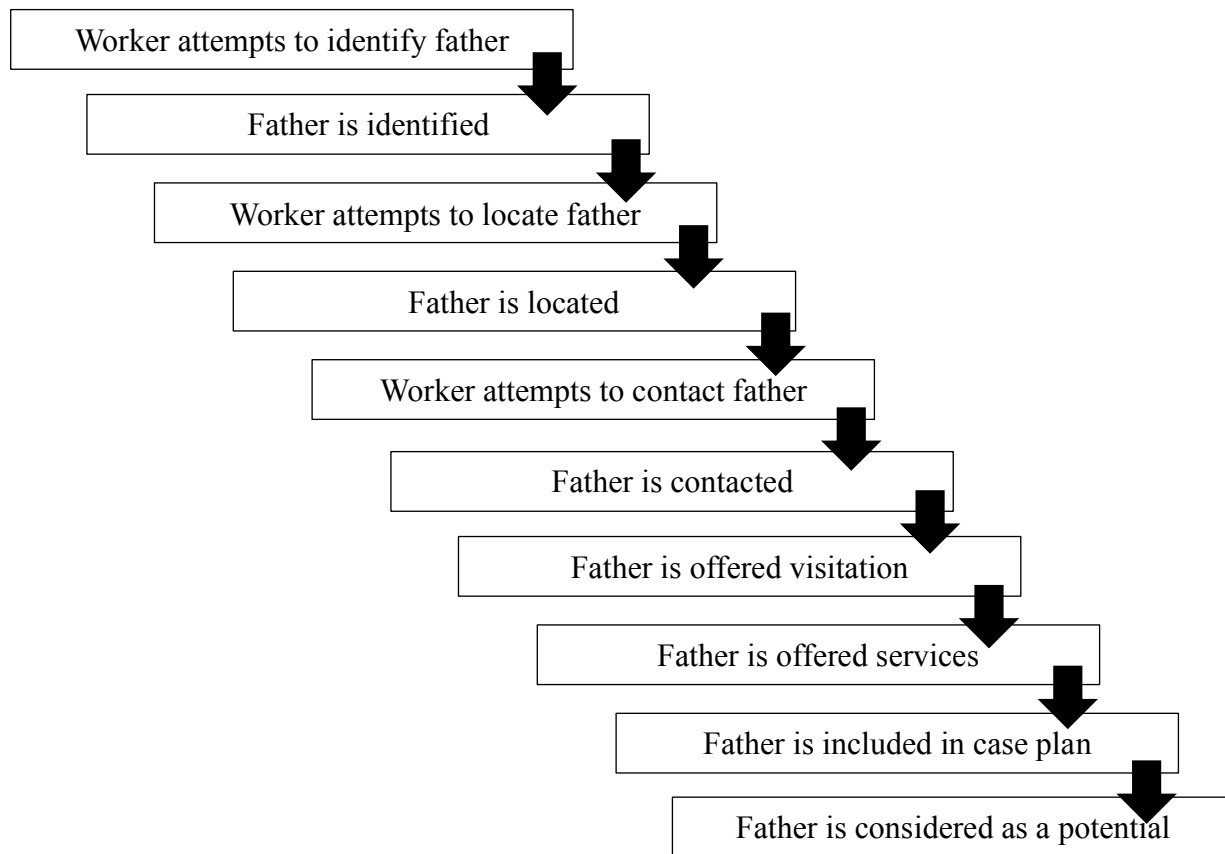


Figure 1. Father engagement gradient

Characteristics of Fathers in Child Welfare

Currently there is very little information about characteristics of fathers – residential and non-residential – of children who are involved with the child welfare system. In fact, research has yet to even enumerate how many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at a given time. What is known comes from two small studies of non-residential fathers of child welfare involved children in Pennsylvania and one large multi-state study. The first study (Lee et al., 2018) surveyed 64 non-residential fathers of children in out-of-home care; the second study (Reynolds, 2011) surveyed 228 fathers of child welfare involved children who signed up for a fatherhood program. The multi-state study (Malm et al., 2006) included a convenience sample of 1,721 non-resident fathers of children who entered the foster care system for the first time.

The fathers varied in terms of average age – 39.2 years old vs. 28 years old vs. 36 years in Lee et al. (2018), Reynolds (2011), and Malm et al. (2006) respectively. In the Philadelphia studies, fathers were predominantly African-American, while in the larger study fathers were predominantly white. In both the Philadelphia studies, fathers had lower levels of education and low levels of regular employment. Lee et al. (2018) collected additional information about the fathers, finding that a majority, 66%, were low income and a majority, 61%, had been incarcerated at least once.

Current State of Father Engagement

A number of studies have examined the extent of father engagement, finding that fathers are routinely not engaged. However, these studies largely focus on non-resident fathers and thus it is unknown if these findings extend to resident fathers.

Contact. Malm et al., (2006) find that although non-resident fathers are identified in a majority of cases, only half of these fathers are ever contacted by their children's child welfare worker. Similarly, Reynolds (2011) finds that between 27% and 43% of non-resident fathers had not been interviewed by child welfare workers at the time of their child's placement in out-of-home care. In cases where non-resident fathers are contacted, mothers have almost four times as many contacts with child welfare workers as fathers (O'Donnell, 1999). Furthermore, for some fathers, their first contact with child welfare workers occurs after their child has been removed and placed in out-of-home care (Campbell, Howard, Rayford, & Gordon, 2015).

Placement. Malm et al. (2006) report that child welfare workers considering placing children in the care of their non-resident fathers in fewer than half of cases where a father has been contacted, or one-quarter of all cases. In fact, paternal kin – grandmothers, aunts, etc. – are routinely considered as placement resources before non-resident fathers are (Malm et al., 2006). Reynolds (2011) finds that although 85% of fathers express an interest in having their children placed with them, only 57% of fathers are approached by child welfare workers about being a potential placement.

Given the fathers' non-resident status, it is expected that resident mothers who have been the children's primary caregivers would have more contact with child welfare workers. However, residency status alone does not explain why child welfare workers do not consider placing children in the care of their non-resident fathers. This suggests that factors other than identifying fathers influence engagement of eligible non-resident fathers. Research, however, has yet to examine whether these findings also extend to resident fathers.

Services. Child welfare workers and fathers report that fathers receive fewer services than mothers. Mothers participate in twice as many service activities as fathers and are more likely to receive visits with their children (Campbell et al., 2015; O'Donnell, 1999). This differential treatment is even greater when considering only African American non-resident fathers. For example, in two foster care programs in Illinois more than 75% of non-resident fathers had not participated in any services for their children, largely because over half of all identified non-resident fathers had not been contacted (O'Donnell, 1999).

Court case. A survey of child welfare-involved non-resident fathers in Pennsylvania finds that although 62% of fathers are identified, only 31% of fathers are actively involved in their children's court case (Father Engagement Workgroup, 2013). The cause of this difference is, however, unclear; it is unknown if a majority of fathers opted out of participating in the court case or if another barrier prevented their participation.

Comparison to mother engagement. Few studies have compared levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement. As previously noted, those that have do find that mothers receive

more services and are more likely to receive visits with their children (Campbell et al., 2015; O'Donnell, 1999). However, these studies have not examined whether these observed differences are an artifact of other factors such as more mothers being resident parents and mothers not having to establish paternity. Research has yet to examine whether mothers and fathers with similar profiles (e.g., both parents have established paternity) receive differential treatment.

Effects of the Engagement of Fathers

The literature assumes that engaging fathers in child welfare will result in improved child welfare case outcomes and improved child well-being outcomes (Burrus et al., 2012). However, few studies to date have examined the effects of engaging fathers on case or child well-being outcomes. Those that have do find that fathers' engagement has positive impacts.

Simply identifying fathers, the first step in the father engagement gradient, is associated with increased likelihood of reunification with one or both parents (Burrus et al., 2012). Contacting non-resident fathers, in contrast to identifying but not contacting them, is associated with shorter lengths of stay in care (Malm et al., 2008). In addition, simply including fathers, in contrast to including only mothers, in case planning is associated with shorter stays in foster care for their children and increased rates of family reunification or placement with relatives instead of non-relatives (Coakley, 2008, 2013; Malm et al., 2008).

Although these studies suggest that engaging fathers at various points in a case may improve case outcomes, they do not examine if, how, and why the engagement of fathers impacts case outcomes. Thus, it remains unknown whether engaging fathers in itself is beneficial or if other factors associated with engaging fathers (i.e. child welfare worker skill in engaging parents in general or increasing the number of resources available to a family by identifying an additional parent) are driving the observed effects. In addition, the studies cited above focus on non-resident fathers and examine case outcomes but not child well-being outcomes. Last, these studies are correlational and not causal. Thus, more research is needed to determine the impact of engaging fathers on child welfare case outcomes and on child well-being outcomes.

Barriers to Father Engagement

The early literature on father engagement focused heavily on child welfare worker's perceptions of fathers as a barrier to engagement. For example, O'Donnell (1999) and O'Donnell et al. (O'Donnell et al., 2005) interviewed fathers and child welfare workers, concluding that child welfare workers routinely fail to engage fathers and do so because they perceive fathers to be unimportant or violent. More recent work has shifted slightly, examining other barriers to engagement. However, even the literature that acknowledges additional barriers focuses heavily on how those barriers impact child welfare worker perceptions and not on how the barriers themselves directly affect engagement. For example, in a review of the father engagement literature, Maxwell, Scourfield, Featherstone, Holland, and Tolman (2012) note that mothers play a role in facilitating or hindering efforts to identify and engage fathers but dedicate the majority of the review to child welfare workers' perceptions of fathers and preference for mothers. Similarly, Campbell et al. (2015) identify paternal incarceration as a barrier to

engagement but emphasize how parental incarceration impacts child welfare worker’s perceptions of fathers.

Approaching father engagement from a broader, more critical perspective presents a different view of the issues and helps identify a number of challenges to engaging fathers, challenges that are related to characteristics of the fathers themselves but also to the mothers of their children and the child welfare system itself (see Table 1 for a summary of the literature on known barriers). The following sections delve into the literature on each of the listed barriers.

Table 1. Barriers to engagement

Mother-related Barriers	Father-related Barriers	Systemic Barriers
Lack of information about father’s identity or whereabouts Mothers as gatekeepers of information about father’s identity or whereabouts	Paternity Justice involvement Substance use	Inter-institutional collaboration Definitions of father Diffusion of responsibility Lack of father-related policies or practice guidelines Lack of training on working with fathers Lack of research on fathers in child welfare Gendered service sector Child welfare workers’ perceptions

Mother-Related Barriers. *Lack of information about father’s identity or location.* A large contributor to the lack of father engagement is the issue of identifying non-resident fathers (see Figure 1). The identity and location of non-resident fathers is not known at case opening in about 30% of cases (Father Engagement Workgroup, 2013; Malm et al., 2006). In fact, about 23% of children reported for maltreatment do not have a father listed on their birth certificate (Putnam-Hornstein & Needell, 2011). In these cases, mothers are most often the primary source of information about their children’s fathers and can therefore serve as gatekeepers, facilitating or hindering efforts to locate fathers (Campbell et al., 2015). Although child welfare workers report asking mothers to identify fathers in 84% of cases with unidentified fathers, fewer than one third of mothers provide information that would help do so (Malm et al., 2006; Smithgall et al., 2009). Mothers may fail to provide information about fathers for a number of reasons, the first and foremost being that mothers themselves do not have information about fathers (O’Donnell et al., 2005).

Mothers as gatekeepers. Mothers who do have information about the father(s) can serve as gatekeepers, opting not to share this information or requesting that child welfare workers not involve the father(s). In fact, child welfare workers report that a desire to honor mothers’ wishes to not contact the father is a primary reason why they do not engage fathers (Campbell et al., 2015). Mothers may be reluctant to share information or include fathers for a number of reasons, among them a father’s history of child maltreatment, domestic violence, or substance abuse

(Campbell et al., 2015; O'Donnell et al., 2005). Mothers with a history of domestic violence or maltreatment may feel threatened or unsafe around the father, feelings that child welfare workers report influence the likelihood that they seek out and engage fathers (Campbell et al., 2015). A study of child welfare worker perspectives about the inclusion of fathers found that about half of child welfare workers believe that the mother's willingness to include the father is a pre-condition for father engagement (Parent, Saint-Jacques, Beaudry, & Robitaille, 2007).

Mothers may also be reluctant to share information about fathers after fathers enter new relationships. Mothers may be angry with the father for being in a new relationship or may fear that the father and his new partner may gain custody of the children (O'Donnell et al., 2005). Mothers who are in new relationships themselves may also be reluctant to provide information about fathers as re-engaging with fathers may impact their current relationship (Classens, 2009; Tach, Mincy, & Edin, 2010). In a subsample of unmarried couples from the Fragile Family Study, Classens (2009) found that mothers' new partners had a fear that mothers would become sexually re-involved with their children's fathers. A desire to preserve the new relationship may influence a mother's willingness to re-engage with their children's fathers.

Father-Related Barriers. *Paternity.* Once identified and located, fathers sometimes face the obstacle of establishing paternity. Studies have yet to enumerate how many resident fathers have not established paternity but a large multi-state study suggests that in over one-third of cases with identified non-resident fathers, paternity has not been established (Malm & Zielewski, 2009).

The process of establishing paternity can take six to eight months, during which time child welfare workers are not able to involve fathers in case planning (Scalera, 2001). About 35% of all children who enter care exit care in under a year (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015b). In the site of this study, this number is somewhat higher with almost 46% of all children who entered care in 2015 exiting within 12 months (Webster et al., 2017). If paternity is not yet established at the onset of the case, there is not much, if any, opportunity to engage alleged fathers. In addition, although the county in this study covers the cost of paternity tests, many jurisdictions pass the financial burden of establishing paternity onto the fathers, creating yet another barrier to their involvement (Edwards, 2009; Malm et al., 2006).

The process of father identification and establishing paternity is complicated when children from the same family (i.e. children with the same mother) have different fathers. Overall, about 19% of women in the U.S. have had children with multiple partners. This percent is higher for African-American and Latina mothers with 47% and 27%, respectively, having children with multiple partners (Dorius, 2010). These figures may be higher for families that are considered to be at higher risk for child maltreatment. Data from the Fragile Families studies suggest that as many as 59% of families at risk for child maltreatment have multiple fathers (Turney & Carlson, 2011). In fact, having multiple fathers itself is a risk factor for child welfare involvement, with families with multiple fathers being more likely than families with a single father to have contact with child protection services (Berger, Paxson, & Waldfogel, 2009).

Having more than one father in the family requires child welfare workers to put in additional time and effort into locating multiple fathers, a process that decreases child welfare workers'

enthusiasm for pursuing fathers (O'Donnell et al., 2005). Fathers who have more than one child with different women must divide their resources and attention between multiple families and are therefore also less likely to have contact or to be involved with non-resident children than with resident children (Furstenberg, 1997; Juby, Billette, Laplante, & Le Bourdais, 2007).

Furthermore, the legal relationship a father has with his children affects his ability to be engaged in the child welfare system. In California, fathers can be the biological father, the presumed father, or the alleged father (Cal. Family Code § 7600-7606, Cal. Family Code § 7610-7614). Each of these statuses, which will be discussed further in the institutional barrier section, affords fathers different rights in the court and therefore presents different obstacles to overcome in promoting father engagement. For example, in California biological and presumed fathers are legally entitled to custody and visitation rights while alleged fathers are not (Cal. Family Code § 7601; Cal. Family Code § 7611).

Certain non-resident fathers face an additional barrier in establishing paternity. In the county in which the present study was conducted, a written court order is required for paternity tests involving fathers who live out of state or who are incarcerated (Family and Children's Services Handbook, 2012). Thus, in the case of these fathers an additional step must be taken.

Although families with resident fathers do not face the added challenge of identifying and contacting fathers, in California, resident fathers must still establish paternity before being engaged in services and being considered for reunification (Cal. WIC §316.2; Cal. WIC §361.5). In the California Juvenile Dependency Court, the court with jurisdiction over child welfare matters, all fathers are initially assumed to be alleged fathers. Fathers are granted biological or presumed status at the detention court hearing held after a child has been removed from their home (Cal. WIC §316.2). In making this designation, the court considers resident father status along with father's legal relationship to the mother (i.e. are/were they married?), formal and informal acknowledgements of paternity (i.e. declaration of paternity or birth certificate, child support payments, etc.), and the father's record of raising the child as his own (M. Connelly¹, personal communication, April 2, 2019). Within California, some counties, like the one included in this study, present fathers with the additional task of establishing not only biological paternity but also fatherhood. Fathers must demonstrate that they have an existing relationship with the child and that they have a history of raising the child as their own (M. Connelly, personal communication, April 2, 2019).

In summary, one of the main challenges to father engagement lies in the complicated structure of many of the families that come into contact with the child welfare system. These families can contain multiple fathers, resident and non-resident, who have various legal relationships with their children. When considering only families with non-resident fathers, fathers are identified and paternity is established (i.e. the father is the biological or presumed father) in about 50% of all cases (70% of 70%) meaning that in the other 50% of cases fathers are unknown or alleged (see Figure 2; Malm et al., 2006). Thus, in half of all cases with non-resident fathers, child welfare workers are prevented from engaging fathers by the law or by the circumstances of the

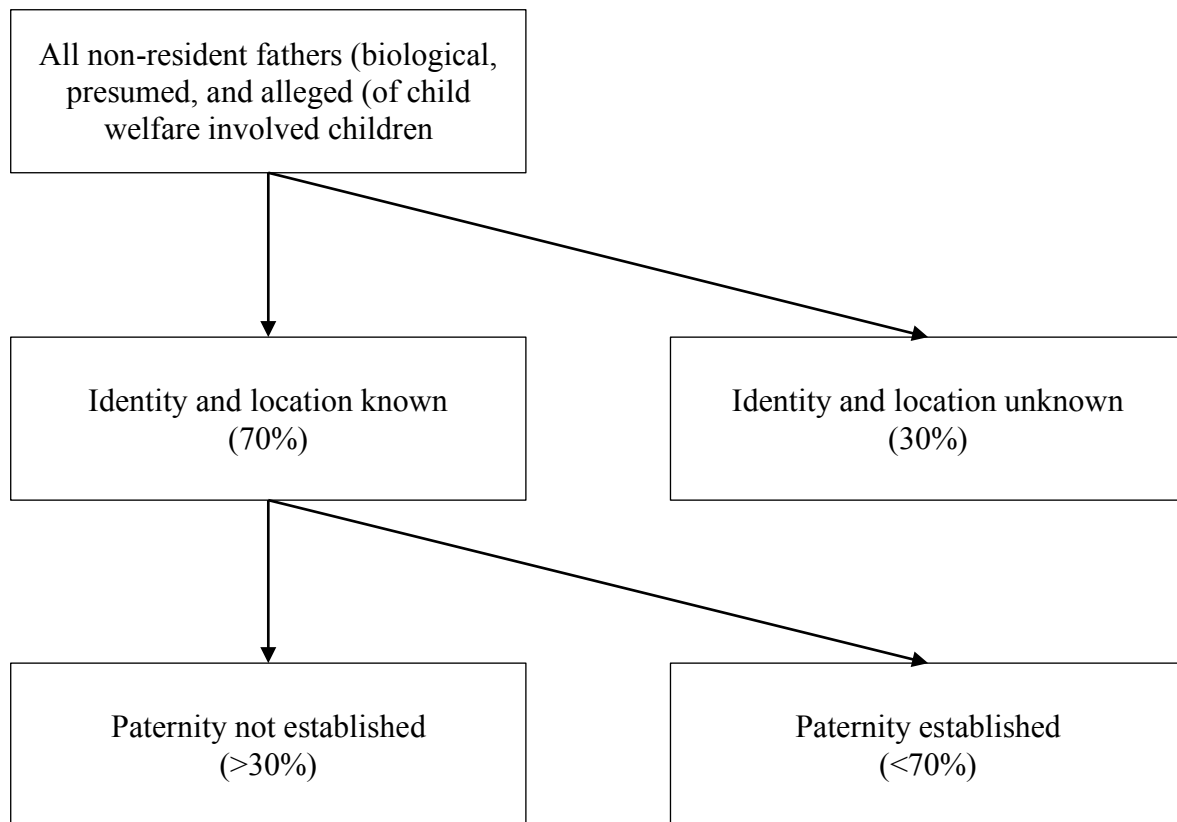
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case. Therefore, although the extant child welfare literature suggests that a large proportion of fathers are not involved in child welfare case planning, these data suggest something more complex and nuanced. If one-third of children with non-resident fathers do not have an identified father, and child welfare workers are prevented from engaging in about one-half of the remaining cases, the population of fathers available for outreach and engagement shrinks markedly. The existing literature has failed to make this distinction.

The circumstances of fathers are still more complicated. Among those cases with biological and presumed fathers, it is unknown how many cases have resident versus non-resident fathers. It is also unknown how many of these fathers are eligible for engagement as a number of factors, including father circumstances, can limit eligibility.

It is unknown how many fathers are in the first box – i.e. all fathers of child welfare involved children. Among these fathers, it is also unknown how many are biological, alleged, or presumed fathers.

Among fathers who have established paternity, other father-related factors, namely incarceration and a history of substance, present additional barriers to engagement.



Created from data presented in Malm et al. (2006)

Figure 2. Percent of cases with identified and established non-resident fathers

Justice Involvement. Criminal justice involvement, such as current incarceration, may prevent certain types of engagement, namely the participation of fathers in some mandated services and the possibility of placing the child in the care of the father. Providing services in corrections environments can be expensive and require extensive travel to and from the jail or prison. In addition, the complex protocols that characterize many corrections environments can complicate services such as visitation (Campbell et al., 2015). However, incarceration alone does not fully disqualify fathers from engagement but rather makes them eligible for restricted forms of engagement. Incarcerated fathers can still be identified, contacted, and informed of the case plan.

There is very little information about the number of child welfare involved children who have fathers who are incarcerated. The information that is available pertains to individual states. In a sample of child welfare involved fathers in Iowa, half of fathers were involved with the criminal justice system (Smithgall et al., 2009). In Wisconsin, between 2004 and 2012, about 11% of children from families investigated for maltreatment had a father who was incarcerated at any point in the year following the maltreatment report; in Milwaukee County, this number was 22% (Berger, Cancian, Cuesta, & Noyes, 2016). In a small sample of fathers with child welfare involved children from Pennsylvania, 61% of fathers reported at least one prior incarceration.

When considering only African-American families, about 18% of children statewide and 40% of children in Milwaukee County had a parent who was incarcerated at any time in the year following the initial maltreatment report (Berger et al., 2016). Although these last figures include both mothers and fathers, among families with child welfare involvement, fathers are disproportionately more likely to be incarcerated than mothers (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015a). These data from Wisconsin suggest that at least in one urban setting, almost a quarter of fathers would be limited in their ability to engage with their child welfare involved children because of incarceration.

The length of incarceration will also affect a father's ability to be engaged. Over a third of all children who enter care are in care for less than one year (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015b). Reunification services are only offered for a limited amount of time (Adoption and Safe Families Act, 1997), restricting opportunities for engagement. In California, parents of children who are aged 3 and older are granted reunification services for 12 months; parents of children under age 3 are granted only 6 months (Cal. WIC §361.5). Fathers who are serving prison or jail sentences longer than one year will be restricted in the extent to which they can engage with their children and may not be eligible for reunification. Legislation passed in California in 2008 acknowledges this challenge and allows for reunification services to be extended up to 24 months for incarcerated parents if there is "substantial probability" that the child will be returned to the custody of their parent(s) (AB 2070 Chapter 482, 2008) but it is unknown how frequently this legislation is invoked. However, California legislation also allows for a "bypass" of reunification services based on an incarcerated parent's length of sentence (Cal. WIC §361.5e1) such that child welfare agencies can deny reunification services to parents with lengthy sentences.

In general, incarcerated parents regardless of length of incarceration are less likely than non-incarcerated parents to reunify and this difference is attributable to the difficulty of accessing services while incarcerated (D'Andrade & Valdez, 2012).

There is no information about the average length of prison or jail sentences for incarcerated fathers of child welfare involved children. Information about lengths of sentences for men in general, however, may be instructive. In 2000, the average length of a felony sentence was 55 months for state prisons and 6 months for state jails (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003). In California in 2011, men convicted of non-violent offenses who were released from prison were incarcerated for less than two years on average. Men convicted of violent crimes who were released were incarcerated for a range of years depending on the crime; men convicted of assault were on average sentenced to 3 years in prison while those convicted of homicide were sentenced to 15 years (Legislative Analyst Office, 2013). These numbers represent conservative estimates as they only include exit cohorts; entry cohorts would provide better estimates of median duration. Nonetheless, even these conservative estimates are longer than the average child welfare case length. Thus, incarceration precludes fathers from certain types of engagement.

Although mothers of child welfare involved children also experience incarceration, fathers are incarcerated at higher rates and for longer durations than mothers (Starr, 2012).

Substance Use. In cases with identified biological or presumed fathers, histories of substance use may restrict the engagement of fathers. Although substance use alone may not disqualify fathers from being engaged, substance use is often co-morbid with other circumstances that limit opportunities for engagement. In the same Iowa sample cited above, more than half struggled with substance abuse (Smithgall et al., 2009). Similarly, one of the Pennsylvania studies cited previously found that 41% of fathers surveyed reported receiving substance abuse treatment at any point in their lives (Reynolds, 2011). Rates of incarceration are especially high among substance using fathers with more than two-thirds of fathers with substance use histories experiencing incarceration related to drug use (see Figure 3; Smithgall et al., 2009).

In summary, father substance use and incarceration restrict the types of engagement for which identified biological and presumed fathers are eligible. Because it is not known how many fathers with child welfare involved children struggle with each of these issues, it is also unknown how many fathers are eligible for only restricted forms of engagement. If this proportion is small, that leaves a larger proportion of fathers who are eligible for full engagement but who are not being engaged. If this proportion is large and the proportion of eligible fathers small, current levels of engagement may be appropriate.

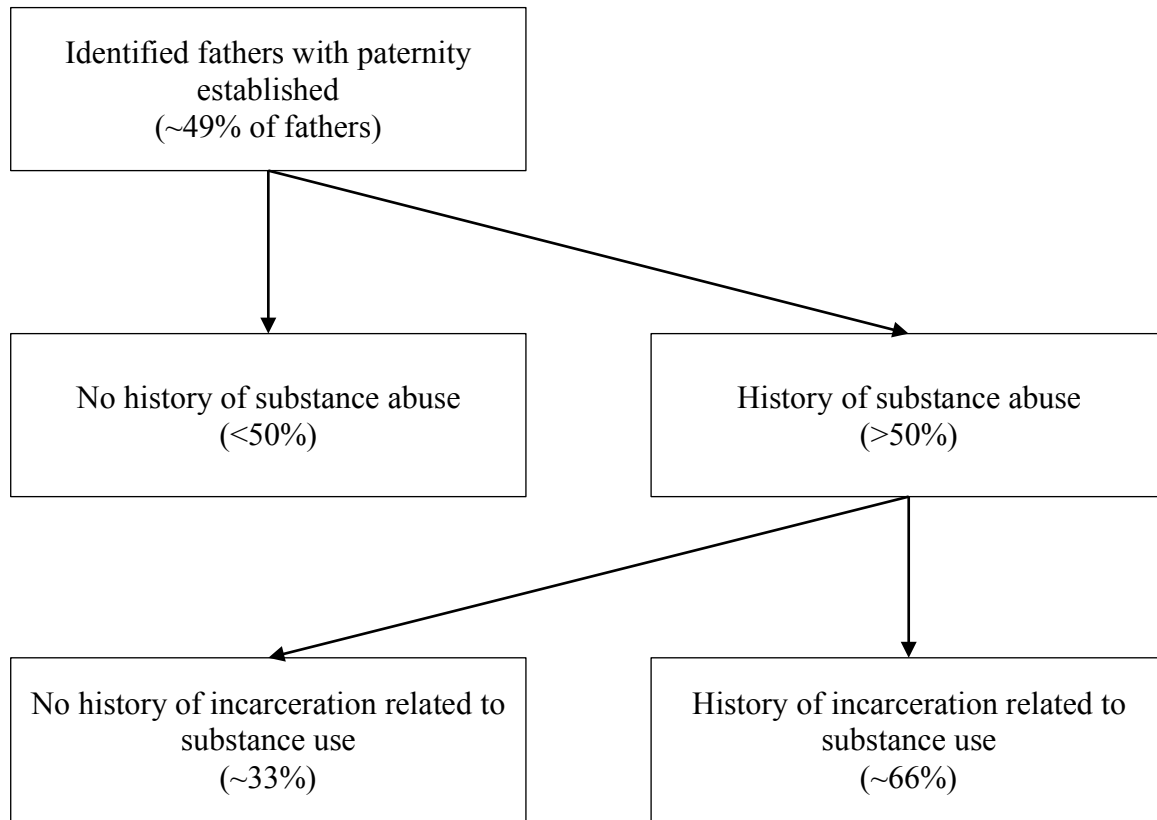


Figure 3. Percent of fathers with histories of substance abuse and incarceration due to substance abuse

Institutional Barriers. At the institutional level, there are barriers to engagement relating to inter-institutional collaboration, policy, practice, and research in addition to barriers related to child welfare worker bias.

Inter-institutional Collaboration. As the father-related barriers cited above imply, families who come to the attention of the child welfare system often have multiple needs that require the involvement of multiple institutions and systems (Ogbonnaya & Keeney, 2018). For example, a family that includes a parent who struggles with substance abuse may also be involved with mental health systems, drug courts, and rehabilitation centers. The manner in which these other systems and institutions do and do not effectively communicate with the child welfare system impacts fathers’ ability to engage in their children’s cases.

The various systems and institutions with which child welfare families may interact often operate under different mandates and policies (Cooper, Evans, & Pybis, 2016). Typically, they have different understandings of the primary issues, different perceptions of who is the client, different priorities, and different definitions of success (Weinberg & Smith, 2019). Furthermore, institutions often have siloed approaches to addressing problems, approaches that likely will not fully address the complex needs of child welfare involved families. Institutions also have different policies and norms around confidentiality and may therefore be reluctant to share sensitive information about clients (Cooper et al., 2016; Langenderfer-Magruder, Olson, Wilke,

& Alven, 2019; Weinberg & Smith, 2019). These factors and others can impede inter-agency communication and collaboration, presenting an additional barrier to engaging fathers who are tasked with navigating these various institutions often with little to no guidance.

Child welfare agencies and other providers of services for children and families are increasingly moving towards an integrated system of care – a coordinated approach to service delivery that builds a network of services – which addresses many of the barriers that arise in inter-institutional collaboration (Ogbonnaya & Keeney, 2018; Stroul, Blau, & Friedman, 2010). However, system of care has predominantly been employed in addressing substance use, domestic violence, and mental health concerns (Ogbonnaya & Keeney, 2018) and not in facilitating service provision to families with other needs, such as justice-involved families.

Definitions of fatherhood. An additional institutional challenge to father engagement is that of defining father and fatherhood. As conceptualized in this paper, identifying fathers represents a first step in the engagement process. However, definitions of fatherhood and who qualifies as a father vary at the federal and state level (see Table 2). This can present a problem for child welfare workers who are required to interpret and implement these policies, often without clear guidelines on how to resolve contradictions within policies at various levels.

Table 2. Policies defining fatherhood

Federal	
Statute	Summary
Social Security Act, Title IV-E	“any relation by blood, marriage or adoption who is within the fifth degree of kinship to the dependent child” and with whom the child was living at the time of their removal from the home
Title IV-B CFSR Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions	“the parents/caregivers from whom the child was removed and with whom the agency is working toward reunification”
State - California Family Codes	
Statute	Summary
§ 7555	A person is a genetic father if they have established their biological paternity through a DNA test
§ 7611	A person is a presumed father if they were married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth or they sign a declaration of paternity such as a birth certificate
§ 7630	A person is an alleged father if they have not established paternity through a DNA test and have not achieved presumed father status
Juvenile Dependency Court	
Statute²	Summary
--	A person is a biological father if they have established biological paternity through a DNA test
--	A person is a presumed father if the court determines the father has an established relationship with the child and has demonstrated a record of raising the child as their own
--	A person is an alleged father if they have not established paternity through a DNA test and they have been granted presumed father status by the court

Federal. Although the federal government has no standalone policies defining “father” within the child welfare context, such definitions are embedded within Title IV of the Social Security Act, in particular titles IV-B and IV-E, which clarify federal definitions of family and father for the purpose of child welfare system assessments. According to Title IV-E, a child’s eligibility for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is dependent on whether or not they were removed from the home of a “specified relative.” A specified relative is defined as “any relation by blood, marriage or adoption who is within the fifth degree of kinship to the dependent child” and with whom the child was living at the time of their removal from the home (Social Security Act, 1996). Thus, according to this metric, father is defined both by biology and residence (i.e. the child was living with the father at the time of removal).

Title IV-B, which outlines and provides funds for federal reviews of state child welfare systems (Child and Family Service Reviews or CFSRs), presents conflicting definitions of father. In the CFSR Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions, the document used to conduct reviews, father

² These definitions are not listed in specific statutes but represent guidelines outlined by the Juvenile Dependency Court (see Judicial Council of California, 2019).

is defined narrowly for the purposes of determining if efforts should be made to support and maintain the relationship between a child and their caregivers through visitation. Father includes only those individuals from whom a child was removed and with whom the agency is seeking to reunify the child. It does not include “a parent who did not have a relationship with the child prior to the child’s entry in foster care, even if the goal is to reunify with that parent” (Children’s Bureau, 2016). Father in this instance, is defined exclusively in terms of cohabitation and reunification. In contrast, father is defined more broadly when assessing the needs of and service provision to children and caregivers. In this assessment, father may include biological parents with whom the child was not residing but who indicate an interest in being involved and who it is in the best interest of the child to involve (Children’s Bureau, 2016). The cohabitation requirement is removed but an additional requirement – biological relation and “best interest of the child” – are introduced. However, this policy does not define biological parent or best interest of the child.

Taken together, these policies indicate that the federal definitions of father are contingent on biological relation, cohabitation, or the best interest of the child, with no clarification as to how biological relation or best interest of the child should be determined.

State. In California, fatherhood is explicitly defined in the Family Code and by the Juvenile Dependency Court. According to California Family Code, fathers are classified as having one of three legal relationships to their children – genetic, alleged, or presumed (Cal. Family Code § 7555, Cal. Family Code § 7610-7630). Genetic fathers are those who have established paternity via a DNA test (Cal. Family Code § 7555). Presumed father refers to the person whom the law considers to be the legal father of the child unless proven otherwise (Cal. Family Code § 7611). Fathers who were married to the mother at the time of the child’s birth and/or who are named on the birth certificate but who have not had a DNA test to establish their paternity are presumed fathers. Alleged fathers are those who have not had paternity established via a DNA test and do not meet the criteria for presumed father (Cal. Family Code § 7630). Genetic and presumed fathers are granted parental rights while alleged fathers are not. Thus, in the California Family Code, father is defined in terms of a biological relation or a legal relationship established through marriage or a birth certificate.

Juvenile Dependency Court. In contrast to the Family Code definition, the Juvenile Dependency Court definition of father represents a legal designation granted by the court. The Juvenile Dependency Court uses the similar terminology – biological, presumed, and alleged – but has different standards for and different rights associated with each designation (Judicial Council of California, 2019). All fathers in dependency cases are initially considered to be alleged fathers. This includes fathers who have declared to the social worker that they are the father and fathers whom the mother has declared are the father. A biological father designation is granted when a DNA test establishes paternity. A presumed father designation is granted when a father has a demonstrated record of having raised the child as their own (Judicial Council of California, 2019). In contrast to the Family Code, the Juvenile Dependency Court does not automatically assign presumed father status to fathers listed on a child’s birth certificate or fathers who have established biological paternity through a DNA test. Instead, presumed status must be established by the court and is granted only in instances where the father can show that he has held the child as his own. In this manner, the Juvenile Dependency Court makes a distinction between paternity

and fatherhood. Paternity, in the Juvenile Dependency Court context, refers strictly to biological paternity and does not in itself elevate a father to presumed father status. Instead, fatherhood, having a demonstrated relationship with the child and holding the child out as his own, determines presumed father status (M. Connelly, personal communication, April 2, 2019). Presumed fathers are entitled to child welfare services, biological fathers may receive limited services if deemed in the best interest of the child, and alleged fathers are not entitled to or offered services (Cal. WIC §361.5).

Summary. Both federal and state policies emphasize the role of biological relation in determining who qualifies as a father for the purposes of child welfare system involvement. However, federal policies also underscore the importance of co-residence with the child and “best interest of the child” while state policies focus on the legal relationship between a child and father. In contrast, the Juvenile Dependency Court emphasizes the relationship between the father and child and the father’s history of caring for the child.

Diffusion of Responsibility. In addition to multiple definitions of “father”, it is unclear whether the responsibility for identifying fathers lies solely with the child welfare workers. For example, California family law specifies that there is “a compelling state interest in establishing paternity for all children” but does not specify who is responsible for identifying the father or for establishing paternity (Cal. Family Code § 7570). Federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) assess conformity to federal child welfare standards and indicate that child welfare workers are expected to make efforts to locate both parents, suggesting that identifying fathers is within the scope of child welfare workers’ practice. However, CFSRs also place responsibility on the courts to ensure that agencies meet these standards (Edwards, 2009), implying that the court has some, albeit limited, responsibility in identifying fathers.

It may be that some child welfare workers do not perceive identifying fathers to be their responsibility. Studies of child welfare worker perspectives, however, have not specifically examined this issue. The initial investigation narrative and detention reports from counties such as San Francisco and Los Angeles imply that some of the responsibility may lie with the worker. These reports explicitly inquire about father’s identity and state that workers must complete all sections of the forms. The forms instruct workers to detail their efforts to obtain any information that is unknown. It is unknown though, how strictly these instructions are enforced.

Policies, Practices, and Research. Policies and Practice. Father engagement is further impeded by a lack of strong policies and practices in regard to engaging fathers (English, Brummel, & Martens, 2009). In a series of focus groups, child welfare workers reported that their agencies either do not have father-related policies or practice guidelines or that they are unaware of their agency’s policies or procedures in regard to fathers (Campbell et al., 2015; Scalera, 2001). In the past few years, in California, the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) has developed and piloted a toolkit and guidelines on engaging fathers in child welfare (California Social Work Education Center, 2012). However, the toolkit has only been implemented in 11 of the state’s 58 counties (California Social Work Education Center, 2012).

Research. A lack of policies is complicated by a dearth of research on how to develop and support such policies and practices. Existing social work research rarely includes fathers. A

review of six social work journals found that only 24% of articles focused on families included father variables, compared to 53% that included mother variables (Shapiro & Krysik, 2010). In the child welfare literature, when fathers are mentioned, the focus is often on their limitations, namely on their criminal behavior or relationship difficulties (Brewsaugh & Strozier, 2016; Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009; Clapton, 2009). Furthermore, studies that included the terms “family” or “parents” often do so without including fathers in the research (Strega et al., 2008).

A lack of policies contributes to a lack of knowledge and skill among workers in regard to engaging fathers. In general, university social work programs do not prioritize the skills and knowledge needed to engage men in child welfare and agency training programs do not include information on involving fathers. An examination of common social work teaching and training materials shows that fathers are either demonized or not referenced (Brewsaugh & Strozier, 2016; Clapton, 2009). Texts that reference parents do so even when no fathers are included (Brewsaugh & Strozier, 2016). When fathers are referenced specifically, they are often depicted as either absent or abusive (Clapton, 2009). A systematic review of common child welfare textbooks found that men are depicted as perpetrators of violence in over half of all vignettes included while women are portrayed as the caregiver responsible for protecting the child from maltreatment in these same vignettes (Brewsaugh & Strozier, 2016). This biased portrayal is likely to promote stereotypes about fathers.

A lack of education around fathers results in a lack of skills around engaging fathers (Acevedo-Polakovich, Spring, Stacy, Nordquist, & Normand, 2017). Female workers report more frustration and more awkwardness in working with fathers over mothers (O'Donnell et al., 2005) and workers in general rate themselves as less competent in working with fathers than mothers (Duggan et al., 2004). This can present a considerable obstacle to father engagement as almost 84% of social workers and 84% of social work masters students in the U.S. are female (Counsel of Social Work Education, 2015; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

It is important to note that the child welfare system privileges fathers in one way. In cases where the mother is the perpetrator of the maltreatment, California policy requires that noncustodial fathers who petition the court be given custody (Cal. Family Code § 3010-3012). So long as the father's biological paternity is established and he is deemed “safe”, he is granted custody. Current research, however, has not documented the frequency with which this occurs.

Changes in Policy, Practice, and Research. Although the challenges cited above relating to policy, practice, and research continue to characterize the child welfare field as a whole, child welfare researchers, policy makers, and practitioners are increasingly turning their attention to father engagement. There is a growing literature on promoting father engagement in the field (see Gordon, Oliveros, Hawes, Iwamoto, & Rayford, 2012; Graham, Yaros, Lowe, & McDaniel, 2017; Guterman, Bellamy, & Banman, 2018) and on the potential benefits of engaging fathers on case outcomes (see Coakley, 2013; D'Andrade, 2017; Leon, Bai, & Fuller, 2016).

Gendered Service Sector and Data Systems. The child welfare service sector itself presents a barrier to father engagement in that many services are geared towards mothers and not fathers (Alaggia, Gadalla, Shlonsky, Jenney, & Daciuk, 2015). In a survey of Pennsylvania counties,

researchers found that 63% of counties did not have services specifically geared towards fathers (Father Engagement Workgroup, 2013). Municipalities routinely have services geared towards subgroups of mother – teen mothers for example – but lack comparable services for fathers (Campbell et al., 2015). Even in instances where the father is the perpetrator of the maltreatment and could benefit from services, services are focused on the mother (Alaggia et al., 2015). For example, domestic violence services often focus on counseling for women and less so on addressing the behavior of men who perpetrate the violence. However, having services geared towards fathers specifically may not be feasible in some settings, such as rural communities where services are limited in general. In addition, there is not enough research on father-focused services to establish that if available, fathers would utilize these services and that these services would provide benefits above and beyond what existing services do.

The data systems and procedures many agencies use for tracking and collecting information about families are gendered. In California, cases are identified in the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the state’s case management system, using the identification numbers assigned to family members at the initiation of the case. By default the number used for a case is the mother’s identification number. In reviewing cases for the present study, the author found that the mother’s identification number was used even in instances where the mother was not living in the household when the children were removed and when the mother was deceased.

The process for assigning family members identification numbers also places non-resident fathers at a disadvantage. Identification numbers are assigned when a case is opened meaning that fathers who are not identified at case opening do not receive an identification number and are not included in the family’s profile in CWS/CMS. Fathers who are identified after case opening must be added to the case manually, a process that requires child welfare workers to seek assistance from a supervisor (M. Connelly, personal communication, April 2, 2019). Other municipalities report similar issues. For example, in Connecticut, the case management system groups families by household and allows for services to be assigned to active household members (Campbell et al., 2015). Thus, non-resident fathers are not included on the main family screen and are therefore not accessible in the system when developing the family’s case plan.

Child Welfare Worker Perceptions. The father engagement literature routinely cites child welfare worker bias against fathers and in favor of mothers as the primary barrier to the engagement of fathers in child welfare.

Child welfare workers report perceiving resident and non-resident fathers, including those without criminal records, as a threat or peripheral to the system (O’Donnell et al., 2005). Perceptions of danger can decrease the likelihood of engagement. For example, workers report that they are less likely to seek out and engage fathers who have current or past involvement with the criminal justice system (Campbell et al., 2015).

Additionally non-resident fathers’ cases also receive more scrutiny than those of mothers or other female relatives and they have to demonstrate their commitment to their children in ways that mothers and female relatives do not (Franck, 2001; O’Donnell et al., 2005). For example, non-resident fathers are sometimes required to submit to drug testing even when no allegations of substance abuse have been made and no history of substance use is evident (Kendall & Pilnik,

2011). Similarly, non-resident fathers who had regular and unsupervised visits with their children before child welfare became involved are sometimes only allowed supervised visits despite no indication that previous unsupervised visits were unsafe (Kendall & Pilnik, 2011).

Being distant or peripheral opens fathers to stereotyping as child welfare workers begin to form opinions and attitudes about men they have never met (Arroyo & Peek, 2015). These perceptions may be driven in part by abuse statistics, which show that men are more likely than women to perpetrate abuse. Although the majority of neglect is perpetrated by women, males are more likely than females to be perpetrators of physical abuse and considerably more likely to perpetrate sexual abuse (Sedlak et al., 2010). However, children abused by adults other than their biological parents, for example by a parent's partner, drive this trend. When considering only children abused by a biological parent, fathers and mothers are almost equally likely to be perpetrators (Sedlak et al., 2010). Nonetheless, in aggregate, men are more likely to be perpetrators of abuse, which in turn likely influences child welfare workers' perceptions of fathers as dangerous or unsafe to the child.

Child welfare workers may not perceive their lack of father engagement to be a problem (O'Donnell, 1999). According to one study, child welfare workers feel that they treat fathers and mothers equally (O'Donnell et al., 2005). They acknowledge that the court system is biased against fathers but indicate that they themselves have the same expectations for fathers and mothers. Workers do, however, perceive that fathers will be harder to engage and therefore anticipate "that their 'investment' in working with birthmothers would yield a better 'return' than working with fathers" (Franck, 2001, pp. 393). However, a more recent study found that 87% of workers reported being moderately to extremely concerned about father engagement in child welfare. These workers reported feeling that father engagement positively impacted their children (Malette, Furtis, & Schramm, 2018).

It should be noted that the seemingly biased treatment of fathers cited in the literature is mediated by child welfare worker's previous experiences with fathers. Child welfare workers who have had previous negative professional and personal experiences with fathers report that they were less likely to seek to include fathers in subsequent cases (Campbell et al., 2015). However, the converse is also true. Workers who report positive past experiences with fathers are more likely to engage fathers (Campbell et al., 2015). These workers report seeing value in including fathers and report spending more time seeking out information about the father.

Summary of Challenges to Engaging Fathers. Father engagement in the child welfare system begins with identifying and locating fathers. Fathers who are located then face the challenge of establishing paternity. Findings from one large, well-respected study – Malm et al. (2006) – suggest that among non-resident fathers, when considering only identified fathers who have established paternity, as these men represent those fathers whom child welfare workers can legally engage in their children's cases, this group represents roughly 49% of all non-resident fathers of child welfare involved children. Therefore, only half of all non-resident fathers are eligible for any form of engagement. Research has yet to examine rates of paternity among resident fathers and thus it remains unknown how many resident fathers are eligible for engagement.

Among fathers who have established paternity, some are only eligible for restricted forms of engagement due to substance use, incarceration, and potentially other issues. Without information about how many fathers struggle with those issues, it is not known how many identified biological and presumed fathers are eligible for full engagement (see Figure 4). Thus, although the literature suggests that child welfare workers present as the principal barrier to engagement of fathers, a more careful review of the literature suggests that fathers are faced with a number of other institutional barriers, including challenges associated with inter-institution non-collaboration, a lack of policies, research, and training for staff, and a gendered service sector, that restrict engagement.

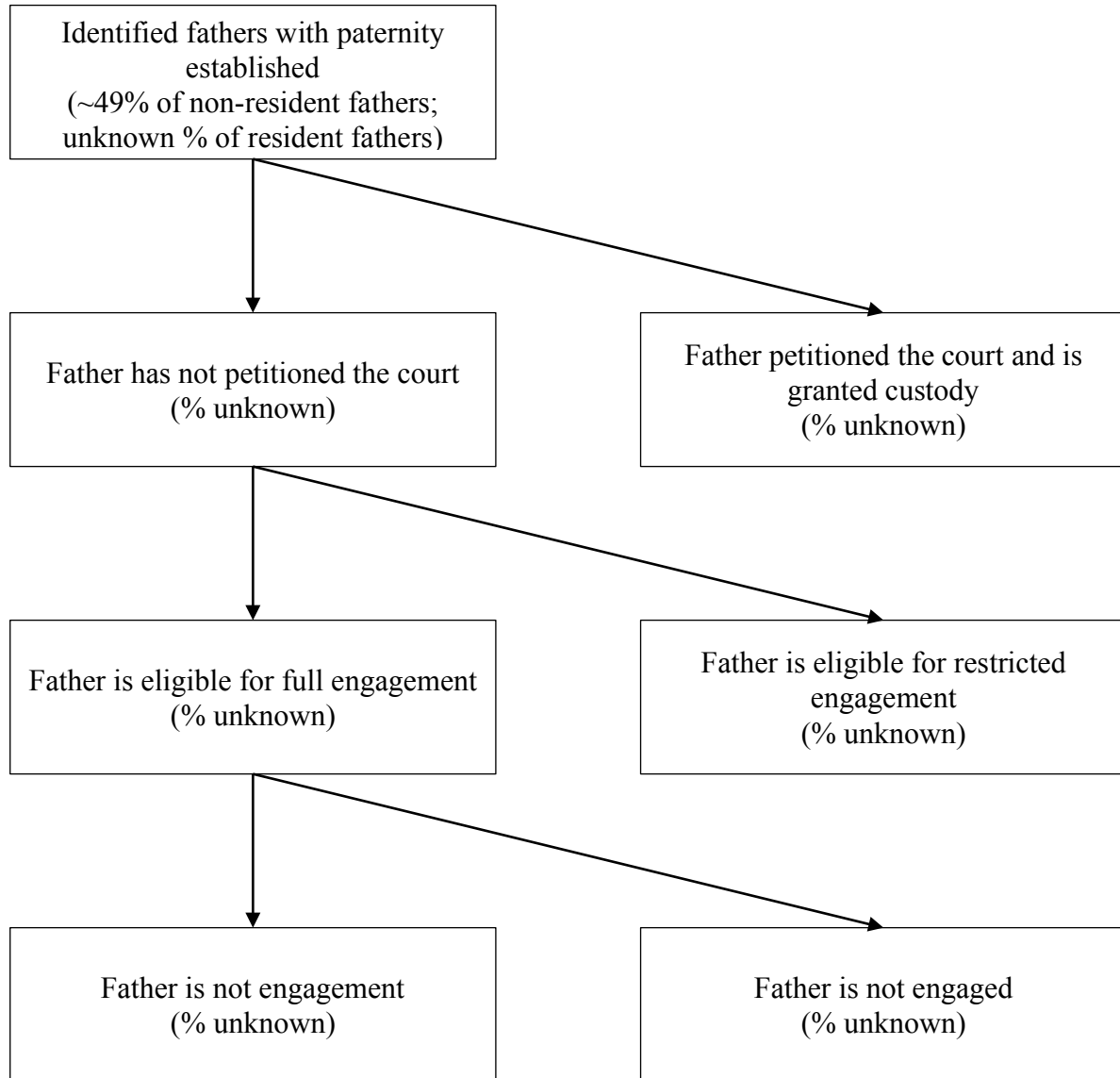


Figure 4. Fathers eligible for engagement

Summary of the literature

In summary, much remains unknown about the engagement of fathers in child welfare. It is unknown how many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at a given time; it is unknown how many fathers are eligible for full or restricted engagement; among eligible fathers, it is unknown how many are and are not being engaged. It is unknown how levels of father engagement compare to those of mother engagement and thus, whether levels of father engagement in particular or parental engagement in general are of concern. The literature also has yet to establish the prevalence of barriers such as identifying fathers, locating fathers, and establishing paternity among resident fathers.

Furthermore, the literature has yet to establish the effects of engaging fathers on child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes. The literature suggests that engaging fathers is beneficial but has not examined for whom, under what circumstances, and why.

2. Theoretical Foundation

Underlying much of the existing father engagement literature is the notion that the engagement of fathers, or lack thereof, impacts child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes (see (Burrus et al., 2012; Malm et al., 2006, 2008). However, much of the literature has not examined why the engagement of fathers is expected to have beneficial effects and through what mechanisms. Applying an ecological systems perspective to the question of the engagement of fathers can provide some insight (see Figure 5). By situating fathers and the engagement of fathers within the larger ecological context of the child welfare system, we can begin to identify potential pathways through which fathers impact child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory posits that development is the result of interactions between an individual and their environment, with the environment being comprised of five interconnected and nested systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). At the microsystem level are the people and institutions, such as the family, that have the most direct impact on an individual. The mesosystem level represents the interactions between microsystems such as the relationship between a child's parents and child's teachers. The exosystem encompasses the setting that an individual does not directly participate in but that nonetheless affects the individual such as a parent's workplace. The macrosystem includes the largest and most distant settings and factors that affect an individual such as a society's culture and policies. Lastly, these systems all exist within the chronosystem, which represents time and transitions over the life course.

Applying this perspective to the question of father engagement allows us to situate father engagement within the various systems that impact child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes. By doing so, we are able to examine the pathways through which fathers and their engagement may affect children in the child welfare system while also acknowledging the multiple other factors and broader context that impact case and child well-being outcomes. The systems of particular relevance to father engagement and the present study – the microsystem and mesosystem – will be explored further in the following sections.

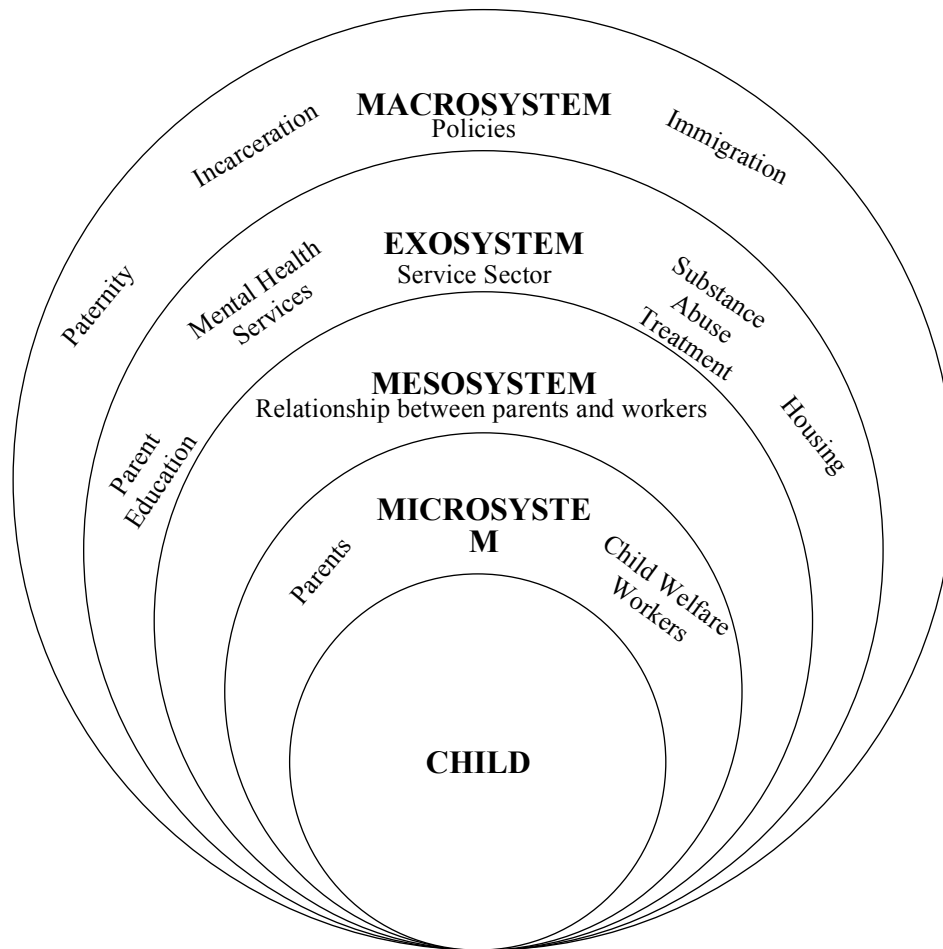


Figure 5. Ecological systems approach to child well-being in the child welfare system

Microsystem: The Family

Family Systems Theory. As the mechanism through which children are socialized and experience the world, families have the most direct impact on child well-being (Maccoby, 1992). To understand this impact, it is helpful to think of families as systems. Family systems theories posit that parents and children are members of a complex social system in which the members affect each other reciprocally, directly, and indirectly (see Figure 6; Kuczynski, 2003). The system includes other parents, other family members, and elements outside of the family. Thus, a family is comprised of individuals but also of several dyadic subsystems, among them the parent-child dyad but also the parental dyad (Maccoby, 2014). Within the family system, members influence one another directly but also indirectly through their relationship with others in the family (Kuczynski, 2003). For example, children have influence on the relationship of mothers with fathers but are also impacted by harmony or conflict within this relationship.

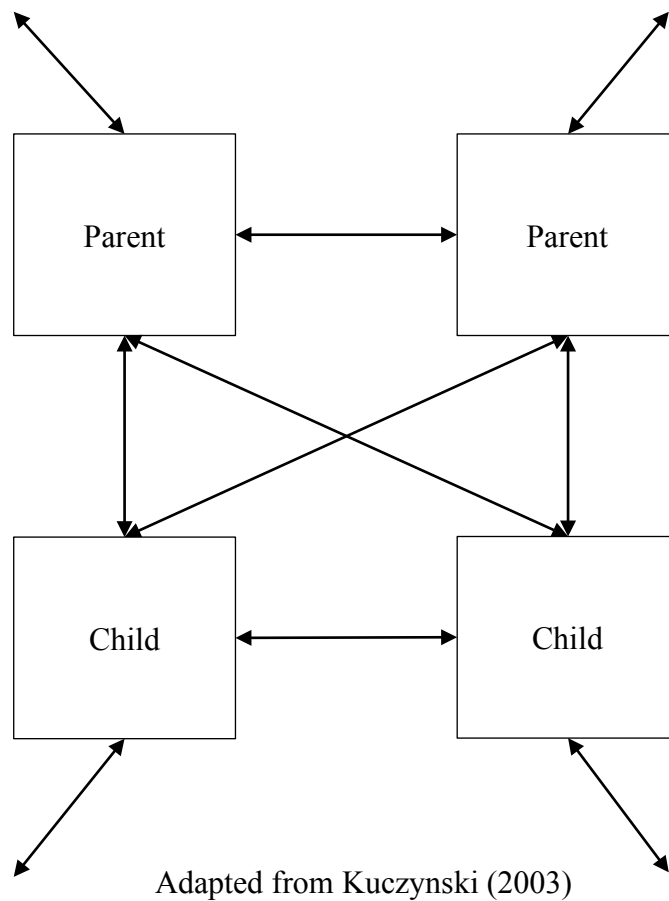


Figure 6. Family systems theory

Although there exist multiple models that attempt to explain family systems, studies of two-parent families highlight five interconnected family domains in which parenting behavior and the parent child relationship operate (Belsky, 1984; Cowan, Cowan, Kline Pruett, & Pruett, 2007; Heinicke, 2002). These domains are:

- (1) family members' personality characteristics, mental health, and well-being;
- (2) the three-generational transmission of expectations and behavior patterns;
- (3) the quality of the parent-child relationships;
- (4) the quality of the relationship between the parents; and
- (5) the balance of life stresses and social supports in the family's relationships with peers, schools, work, and other social systems (Cowan et al., 2007)

From this perspective, fathers influence children directly through their relationship with the child and indirectly through their relationship with the other parent, which has both a direct (e.g., conflict in front of child) and indirect effect (e.g., marital conflict affects mother-child relationships) on the child.

Parent-Child Relationships: Attachment Theory. Attachment theory presents a helpful framework for understanding the relationships between parents and children. Attachment theory proposes that from a very early age, humans learn to discern between emotions and to use emotional experiences as guides to interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1958). This learning happens largely in the context of the attachment relationship, the emotional and physical relationship that develops between a child and their primary caregiver(s). This relationship shapes a child's internal working model, affecting how the child perceives, processes, and navigates the world (Lieberman & Zeanah, 1999). In general, experiences of caregiver warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness to the child's needs lead to secure attachments and internal working models in which others are trustworthy and the self is efficacious and valuable. In contrast, experiences of separation, loss, or harm, such as maltreatment, lead to the development of a pathogenic internal working model and insecure or disorganized attachments (Bowlby, 1958).

Insecure and disorganized attachment patterns in children are associated with increased behavioral problems, psychopathology, and dysregulation as well as poorer cognitive functioning throughout the lifespan (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobvitz, 2008; van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1999). Conversely, a secure attachment to a non-violent parent or other significant caregiver is consistently cited in the literature as an important protective factor in mitigating trauma and distress (Graham-Bermann, DeVoe, Mattis, Lynch, & Thomas, 2006; Mullender et al., 2002). Thus positive parent-child relationships can be leveraged as protective factors against the negative effects of maltreatment and child welfare system involvement.

Engaging fathers in their children's cases can serve as a first step in helping to maintain existing positive parent-child relationships or in establishing positive parent-child relationships when they do not yet exist. Among families with pre-existing father-child relationships, engaging fathers in their children's cases can provide opportunities for fathers to remain connected to their children. For example, providing visitation to fathers allows them to maintain their relationship with their children despite separation while also providing children with access to a caregiver who can potentially help them cope with the stress of being placed in out-of-home care. Among families where fathers may not have an existing relationship with their children, engaging fathers in their children's cases can provide fathers with the opportunity to begin building those relationships and to do so with support from an agency. For example, fathers can be offered services such as parenting education and family therapy, which can support the establishment of a positive relationship with their children.

Furthermore, research is increasingly noting the importance of the father as a primary attachment figure in addition to the mother (Lamb, 2012a). Attachment has traditionally been conceptualized in a hierarchical manner, such that a child has one primary attachment figure, typically the mother, and forms subsequent secondary attachments to other caregivers (Bowlby, 1958). However, recent research has challenged this notion, finding instead that children form attachments to multiple caregivers at the same time and that these attachments are independent of one another (Lamb, 2012b; Liu, 2008; Zanoni, Warburton, Bussey, & McMaugh, 2013). In fact, children who are securely attached to two parents have better outcomes in terms of socio-emotional adjustment and feelings of competence than children with a secure attachment to only one parent (Al-Yagon, 2011; Diener, Isabella, Behunin, & Wong, 2008). Thus, when seeking to

promote the well-being of children, it is important to consider both mothers and fathers and the relationships they do or can have with their children.

Relationship between the Parents. Indirectly fathers influence children through their relationship with the other parent. Fathers who have a positive relationship with the mother can serve as a source of emotional support for mothers, which in turn impacts the mothers' ability to behave sensitively with their children (Lamb, 2010). An enhanced mother-child relationship may have a positive impact on a variety of child outcomes such as externalizing problems in late childhood and adolescence (Kochanska, Kim, Boldt, & Yoon, 2013). In contrast, conflict between parents is linked to adverse effects in children of all ages (Harold & Leve, 2018). Parental conflict during infancy and early childhood is associated with aggression and withdrawal in preschool (Belsky, Putnam, & Crnic, 1996; McHale & Rasmussen, 1998). In childhood and adolescence, experiencing parental conflict is associated with externalizing problems such as aggression (McConnell & Kerig, 2002).

However, it should be noted that the manner in which parents manage conflict and not simply the presence of conflict is of importance (Harold & Leve, 2018). Periodic conflict is natural in relationships and most children will be exposed to parental conflict without adverse effects. In fact, children of parents who manage conflict in constructive and expressive ways (i.e. conflict resolution) experience less distress than children of parents who employ destructive behaviors such as aggression or avoidance in response to conflict (Ubinger, Handal, & Massura, 2013).

Father's effect on the family's social circumstances. Fathers' demographic characteristics and financial situation may also indirectly impact child outcomes (Tamis-LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Fathers' educational attainment or income affects their ability to make financial contributions to the child's household. This directly impacts the resources - such as the quality of housing and amount of food - available to mothers and children, which in turn affect child outcomes. In addition, fathers who contribute financially may have better relationships with their children's mothers, positively affecting the mother-child relationship and subsequently promoting positive child outcomes (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987; Mollborn & Lovegrove, 2011). In fact, fathers' level of education and income are positively associated with mothers' sensitivity and positive regard towards and cognitive stimulation of their children (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004). Parental sensitivity, positive regard, and cognitive stimulation are positively associated with children's executive functioning, and internalizing behavior problems (Tamis-LeMonda et al., 2004; van der Voort et al., 2014).

In summary, fathers influence child outcomes directly through their relationship with their children and indirectly through their relationship with mothers and through the resources they provide to the household. Thus, the way the child welfare system currently responds to child maltreatment may not be fully utilizing all the resources available to families if an important part of the family system, i.e. fathers, is not engaged in the process. By engaging fathers, the child welfare system can provide an additional source of emotional support for children and mothers at what is likely to be a distressing time. In addition, fathers can potentially serve as a financial resource for mothers, improving the family's material resources, such as housing, and potentially helping address some of the concerns that brought the family to the attention of the child welfare system.

Mesosystem: The Father-Child Welfare Worker Relationship

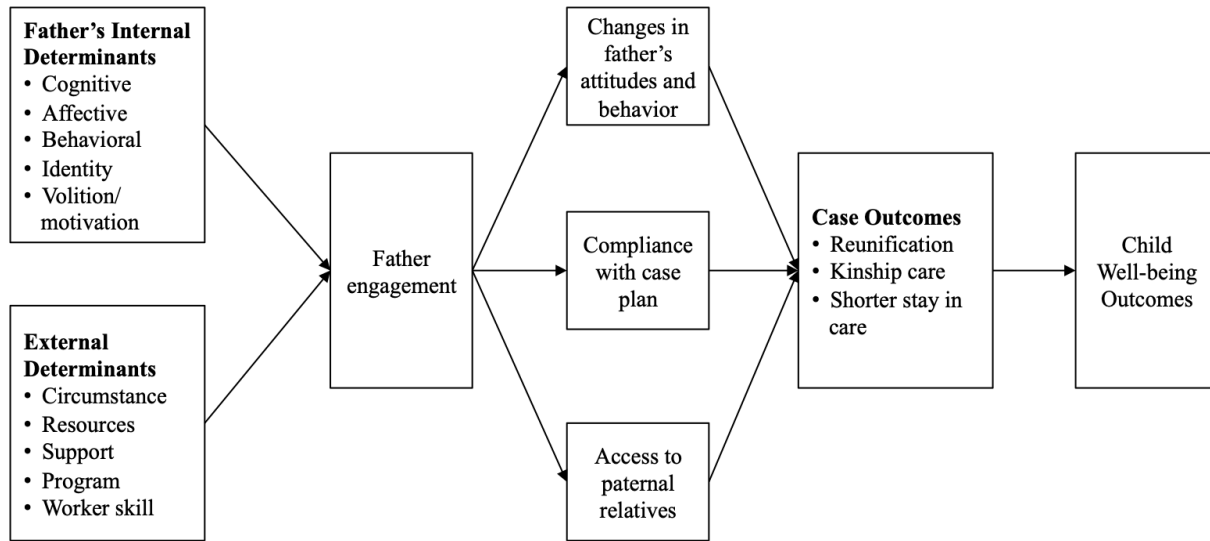
When considering the impact of parent engagement on child well-being in the context of the child welfare system, it is common to focus on the role of parents and overlook the role of the child welfare worker and the manner in which they interact with parents (Platt, 2012). Taking an ecological systems approach allows us to consider the importance of the relationship between the parent(s) and the child welfare worker, which research shows indirectly impacts child welfare outcomes and therefore child well-being (Kemp, Marcenko, Hoagwood, & Vesneski, 2009).

Platt (2012) proposes what they call an integrated model of parental engagement with child welfare services that focuses on the role of the parents but also acknowledges other factors such as the role of the child welfare worker and the child welfare system itself (see Figure 7). According to this model (Platt, 2012), parental engagement in services results in attitudinal and behavioral changes that promote child safety and healthy development. Internal factors, such as the parents' cognition and motivation, and external factors, such as the resources available to parents and the worker's skill in collaborating with the parent, influence the nature and likelihood of engagement in services.

This model conceptualizes engagement as being behavioral and interactional (Platt, 2012). The behavioral components of engagement include attendance in services, openness concerning one's own problems, completing tasks, making sacrifices, and taking initiative. The interactional components include having mutually agreed upon goals and tasks and a bond between parent and worker. Expanding this model to include a broader conceptualization of engagement that captures the precursors to engagement with services (i.e. identifying, locating, and contacting fathers and establishing paternity) and separating out the concept of compliance with the case plan provides a framework for understanding the father-child welfare worker relationship in the context of the current study (see Figure 7).

In this modified model, father engagement, conceptualized as a gradient, results in changes in parent attitude and behavior as well as compliance with the case plan and increased access to paternal relatives. These changes lead to positive case outcomes, namely reunification, kinship care, and shorter stays in out-of-home care, which in turn are associated with improved child outcomes. Among the determinants of father engagement is the child welfare worker's skill in collaborating with fathers.

Compliance with the case plan, that is completing the task outlined in the case plan, was separated out from engagement in the modified model as research demonstrates that compliance is associated with case outcomes like entry into out-of-home placement and re-entry into the system (Fuller & Zhang, 2017; Littell, 2001). In fact, parents and child welfare workers perceive compliance with the case plan, independent of attitudinal and behavioral change, as sufficient for reunification to take place (Smith, 2008).



Adapted from Platt (2012)

Figure 7. Integrated model of father engagement in child welfare

Child welfare worker skill. Research also shows that the child welfare worker’s skill in engaging parents affects engagement and compliance with the case plan. Of primary importance, is the ability to communicate positively and directly with the parent. Positive, direct communication that makes clear expectations and provides transparent reasons for agency involvement is associated with increased engagement, which in turn increases compliance (De Boer & Coady, 2007; Gladstone et al., 2014; Kemp et al., 2009; Kirsh & Tate, 2006). In fact, simply making and returning parents’ phone calls are associated with increased collaboration and compliance (Dawson & Berry, 2002; Gladstone et al., 2014).

A worker’s ability to navigate the power imbalance inherent in the parent-worker relationship is also associated with parental compliance. The manner in which parents perceive workers to be using this power shapes how parents experience worker expectations and how parents react to these expectations. Parents who perceive that workers are using their power as a form of control tend to push back against the worker or feign cooperation, leading to lower levels of compliance (Dumbrill, 2006). In contrast, parents who perceive that workers are using their power in a supportive and judicious manner are more likely to collaborate and comply with worker expectations (De Boer & Coady, 2007; Dumbrill, 2006). Thus, the child welfare workers’ skill in engaging parents affects compliance, which in turn impacts case outcomes.

Changes in attitude and behavior. The services and supports provided to parents through the child welfare system are designed to change the parent attitudes and behaviors that led to or contribute to maltreatment of their children (Benedetti, 2012; Chaffin et al., 2004). Parenting education programs provide an example of how services and supports are theorized to do so. Parenting education programs are designed with the assumption that there are effective and appropriate ways of parenting (Johnson et al., 2008). Among the skills needed to parent effectively are an appropriate use of control, parental warmth, and age appropriate discipline, skills that many maltreating parents lack. Providing parents with parenting education services

builds these skills (Johnson et al., 2008). This new knowledge helps parents set limits and respond to their children in a positive manner. Thus the provision of a service, parenting education, increases parent's knowledge about parenting, which in turn results in behavioral change.

Father engagement and case outcomes. As noted in the previous chapter, various levels of father engagement are associated with increased likelihood of positive case outcomes. Identifying fathers is associated with increased likelihood of reunification with one or both parent (Burrus et al., 2012), contacting fathers is associated with shorter lengths of stay in care (Malm et al., 2008), and including fathers in case planning is associated with shorter stays in foster care and increased rates of family reunification and relative placements (Coakley, 2008, 2013; Malm et al., 2008).

These findings likely reflect the fact that identifying and contacting fathers increases the number of potential placement options. Fathers can provide access to paternal relatives, increasing the number of relatives available to potentially care for the child (Edwards, 2009). In addition, contacting non-resident fathers also provides the opportunity for these fathers as a potential placement option. In fact, California law requires that a child be placed with the father if the father is available and is not implicated in the maltreatment (Cal. WIC § 361.5). Instances such as these are sometimes classified as a reunification even if the child was never previously in the care of the father (D'Andrade & Valdez, 2012), which may partially account for the association between father engagement and increased rates of reunification.

Summary

As previously noted, the literature on father engagement largely assumes that father engagement is being pursued as a means of improving child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes without examining why and how it improves outcomes. In addition, much of this literature focuses on the role of the parent or on the role of the child welfare worker and less so on the relationship between the two. Applying an ecological systems perspective allows us to identify the potential mechanisms that underlie the association between father engagement and child welfare case outcomes and child well-being outcomes while also considering the larger systems that affect this relationship. These mechanisms include the direct influence of fathers on their children, the indirect influence of fathers through their relationship with their children's mothers, and the influence of the father-child welfare worker relationship on case outcomes and ultimately child well-being outcomes. Understanding how these mechanisms function within the context of father engagement in the child welfare system requires an understanding of how the child welfare system is organized and operates.

3. Overview of the Child Welfare System in California

The child welfare system in the United States is largely organized at the state level. The federal government sets national legislation relating to child welfare, allocates federal funding for the state systems, and, through the Children’s Bureau, assesses state child welfare systems for compliance with federal regulations. However, each state determines the organizational structure for its child welfare system(s) (Reed & Karpilow, 2009).

In California, the child welfare system is county-administered. The California Department of Social Services oversees the various county-run systems but each county administers its own child welfare program (Reed & Karpilow, 2009). Thus, county child welfare agencies are the primary entity with which families interact. Each county, through a child welfare or human services agency, manages an Emergency Response hotline, which screens calls of suspected child maltreatment, and investigates instances of potential maltreatment. Each county also provides foster care services and other services, such as substance abuse counseling and parent education, to help families address the concerns that brought them to the attention of the agency. Increasingly in California, public child welfare agencies are partnering with private agencies such that private agencies and not the county provide families with services (Reed & Karpilow, 2009).

Pathways through the Child Welfare System

Potential instances of maltreatment are brought to the attention of county child welfare agencies through referrals made by mandated reporters and the general public. Referrals received by a child welfare agency are either “evaluated in” and an in-person investigation is conducted, or “evaluated out” in which case no formal investigation is conducted. Referrals that are evaluated out are closed and in some counties the reporting party is encouraged to contact community services (Henry, 2014).

Referrals are evaluated in if an alleged action or inaction that meets the state definition of maltreatment has occurred and if sufficient information to locate the child(ren) involved in the referral is provided. Depending on the severity of the allegation, an in-person investigation is conducted within 24 hours, three days, or ten days³ by a county child welfare worker. The worker must contact in person the child(ren) involved in the referral and the child(ren)’s parent or legal guardian (California Department of Social Services, 2016). Within 30 days of the initial contact, the child welfare worker must determine if maltreatment has occurred.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the child welfare worker makes one of four designations (Henry, 2014):

1. the allegation is substantiated (i.e. maltreatment has occurred) and promoted to case status (i.e. a child welfare case is opened)
2. the allegation is substantiated but no further services are needed and the case can be

³ The county in which the present study was conducted investigates referrals within 24 hours or ten days.

closed as the child is now safe

3. the allegation is inconclusive and closed as there is not sufficient information to determine whether maltreatment has occurred

4. the allegation is unfounded and closed as there is no evidence of maltreatment

Cases that are substantiated and promoted to case status receive either voluntary in-home or out-of-home services or mandated in-home or out-of-home services (Reed & Karpilow, 2009). Voluntary services are terminated when it is deemed that the family can provide a safe and secure environment for the child(ren). Cases with mandatory services enter the jurisdiction of the juvenile dependency court (see Figure 8 for an overview of this process). A dependency petition is filed and is followed by a series of court hearings to determine whether child maltreatment has occurred, whether the child should enter the care of the state, and whether the family should receive Family Reunification (FR) services (i.e., services provided when the child has been separated from the parent) or Family Maintenance (FM) services (i.e., services provided in the home to an intact family).

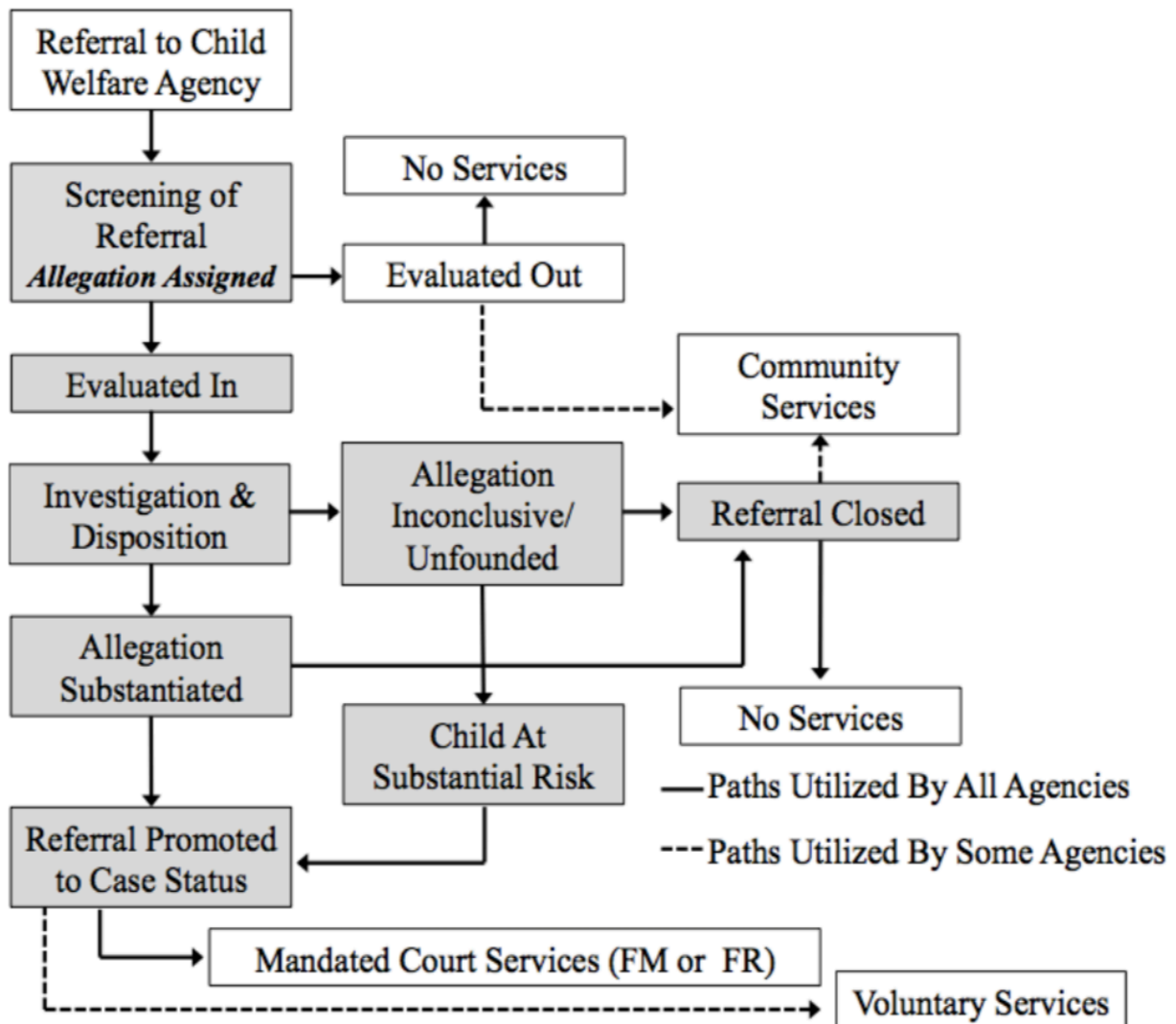


Figure 8. Referral pathways through the California child welfare system (Henry, 2014)

Court Process

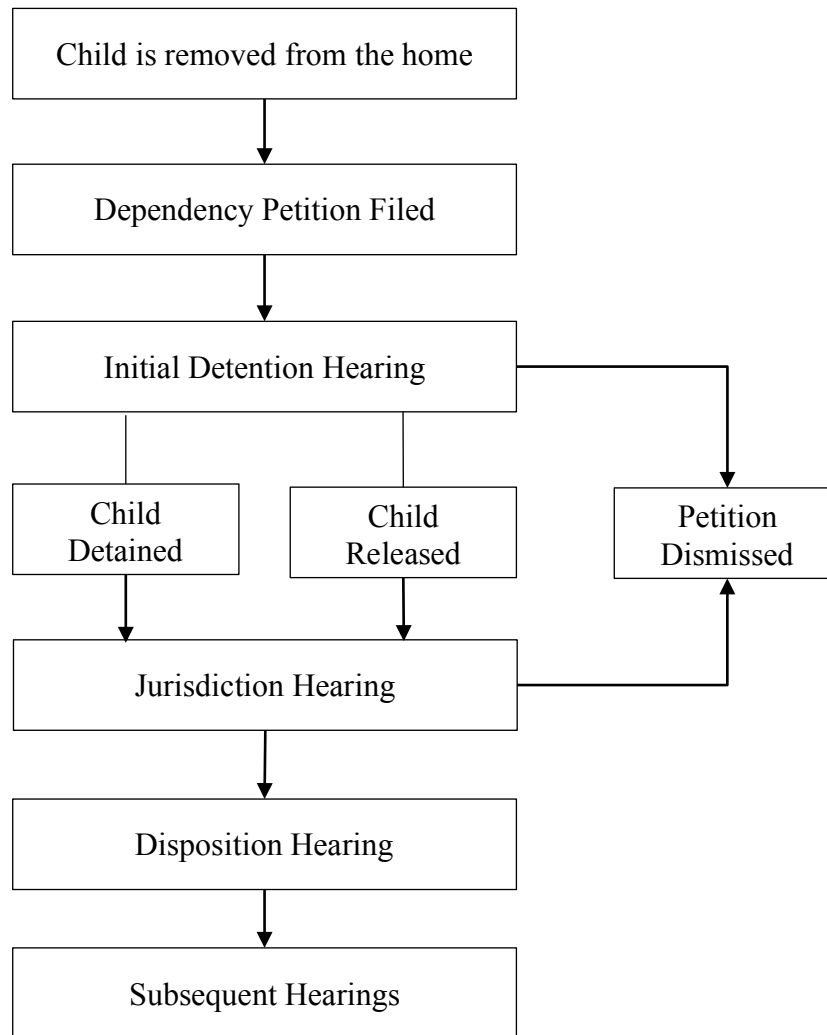
Cases with mandatory services and in which a child is removed from the home enter the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Dependency Court. The Juvenile Dependency Court process begins with the dependency petition, which must be filed within 48 hours of a child being removed from their home. This initiates a court process that includes the initial detention hearing, jurisdiction hearing, and disposition hearing (Reed & Karpilow, 2009).

Initial Detention Hearing. The Initial Detention Hearing, which is held within 24 hours of a dependency petition being filed, is used to determine if the investigation produced sufficient evidence to warrant removal of the child from their home. If the Court finds that there are insufficient grounds for removal or that the problems that brought the family to the attention of the child welfare system have been addressed, the petition is dismissed. If the Court determines that there are sufficient grounds for removal, the case proceeds to the Jurisdictional Hearing. At the conclusion of this hearing, the Court can determine that the child can be safely returned to the care of their parents or that the child must remain in out-of-home care.

Jurisdiction Hearing. The Jurisdiction Hearing occurs within 15 days of the Initial Detention Hearing if the child is in out-of-home care or within 30 days of the Initial Detention Hearing otherwise. At this hearing, the court determines whether the allegations outline in the dependency petition are true. Parents are allowed to dispute or contest the petition. At the conclusion of this hearing, the Court makes a ruling on which allegations are considered “true”. Cases in which the allegations are not found to be true are dismissed; those in which the allegations are found to be true proceed to a Disposition Hearing.

Disposition Hearing. The Disposition Hearing occurs within 10 days of the Jurisdiction Hearing if the child is in out-of-home care or within 30 days of the Initial Detention Hearing otherwise. At this hearing, the Court determines where the child should be placed (e.g., foster care, kinship care, etc.) and approves a service plan for the family.

Subsequent Hearings. Subsequent hearings are held every 6 months to review the progress of the family and determine if the case can be closed. FM services are terminated when the court determines that the safety concerns that brought the family to the attention of the system are no longer present or when the court determines that the child should be removed from the home. FR services are terminated when the court determines that the safety concerns that necessitated removal are no longer present and the child is returned home or when the court decides that reunification efforts should end and another permanency option pursued (Reed & Karpilow, 2009).



Adapted from Reed & Karpilow (2009)

Figure 9. Juvenile Dependency Court process

Case Record

Throughout the course of a case, child welfare workers record information about families through case notes, reports, and assessment forms. These documents comprise a family's electronic case record, which is entered and stored in Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), the agency's case management system. Case records contain information about maltreatment allegations, victims, perpetrators, and child welfare history as well as demographic information about family members. They also include information about the child welfare service response, such as the type of services offered and to whom.

Data entered by child welfare workers into CWS/CMS is extracted quarterly and aggregated into publicly available state and county level reports by the California Child Welfare Indicators Project (CCWIP; Webster et al., 2017).

Case Plan. Included in every family's case record is a case plan which outlines the expectations a family must meet in order for their case to be closed as well as the services the family will be offered. A case plan is required when a child is placed in out-of-home care and is developed within 60 days of the child being removed from their home (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). Case plans include a discussion of how the current plan ensures a safe placement for the child, a discussion of how the current placement is in the best interest of the child, and a description of the services offered and provided to the family. Services commonly offered to families include behavioral and mental health services, parenting education, domestic violence services, substance abuse treatment, and housing support (Family and Children's Services, 2018). Fathers can potentially be included and engaged in the family's plan at any point in the process outlined above. The present study is designed to understand if and when this is done.

4. Methods

The present study was designed to address the lack of nuance in the existing literature on father engagement in the child welfare system. The literature has yet to examine the number of fathers represented in child welfare cases at a given time, the proportion of fathers eligible for full or restricted engagement, or the proportion of eligible fathers not being engaged. Researchers have also yet to compare levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement and therefore have not established that a lack of father engagement in particular and not a lack of parental engagement in general is of concern. In addition, the literature has focused largely on non-resident fathers and not yet examined the prevalence of barriers such as identifying fathers, locating fathers, and establishing paternity among resident fathers.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that engaging fathers in their children's cases improves case outcomes but has not examined for whom, under what circumstances, and why.

To address these unknowns, this exploratory study employs a non-experimental, mixed-methods design with comparative and analytical elements, using data extracted from child welfare case files. Using data from a two-year cohort of all children who entered care for the first time in one urban county, this study employs a systematic content analysis to examine the extent and nature of father engagement in an urban county, how father engagement differs from mother engagement, and quantitative analyses to explore the association between the engagement of fathers and case outcomes. Using a sequential design in which each phase builds upon the previous analyses allows for a more complete utilization of the data and a deeper exploration of quantitative findings.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections. The first section describes the study site. This is followed by a section describing the sample identification process and the final sample. The third section describes the data sources and the process for cleaning the data. The fourth section details protection of human subjects and security procedures used to ensure the confidentiality of the data. The final section provides a detailed description of the study procedures.

Positionality of the Author

Prior to undertaking this study, the author collaborated with the agency under study as part of a university-agency partnership, participating in workforce development activities with agency personnel and becoming acquainted with the agency leadership. Throughout this study, the author was cautious of how her previous professional relationship with the agency may bias her interpretation of case data. To protect against this, the author recruited research assistants with diverse professional experiences to assist in the development of the codebook and the review of cases. The author also consulted with various stakeholders, including past and current child welfare workers, parent attorneys, and child welfare policy experts, to ensure that multiple perspectives were considered when interpreting the results and outlining their implications.

Study Site

This study examines the engagement of fathers in one urban county's child welfare agency, henceforth referred to as "the Agency". The Agency is located in a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse county. Just under half the county identifies as a race other than White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The median household income between 2011 and 2015 was 50% above the national median income but 13% of residents live below the federal poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

In 2016, over 5,400 children – 43.6 per 1,000 children – were referred to and investigated by the Agency for maltreatment, a rate below that of the state of California – 53.8 per 1,000 children (Webster et al., 2017). The rate of referrals investigated by the Agency has decreased slightly but steadily since 2010. Children of color are disproportionately represented in referrals, with Black and Latinx children comprising over half of all referrals investigated by the Agency (Webster et al., 2017). This overrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans, in the child welfare system parallels statewide and national trends (Derezotes, Testa, & Poertner, 2005; McRoy, 2005; Shaw, Putnam-Hornstein, Magruder, & Needell, 2008).

Study Sample

Sample Identification. To identify the study sample, the Agency provided the author with a spreadsheet containing administrative data for all children who entered out-of-home care from 2012 to 2017. The spreadsheet included demographic information such as child's gender, age, and ethnicity as well as information about the child's case such as the date their case was opened, the date their case was closed, and their type of out-of-home placement (i.e. foster care, group home, etc.). The spreadsheet also included unique identifiers for each referral and child - the referral identification number and the client identification number, respectively. The referral identification number is assigned when a referral is received by the Agency. Each member of the household is assigned the same referral identification number but is also assigned a unique client identification number. Once the referral is promoted to case status, each member of the household is also assigned a unique case identification number that can be looked up directly in CWS/CMS.

The author excluded any children who entered care outside the study timeframe from the spreadsheet ($n = 1,347$) as well as any children who had entered care at least once before the study timeframe ($n = 233$). The referral identification number was used to group children into families. This resulted in an initial sample of 574 children from 402 families.

Of these 402 families, the author was not able to access case records for 67 children from 39 families (9.7% of the families). In 21 of cases, the documents of interest were not in the case file. One third of these cases were closed less than one month after opening, meaning they likely did not have a Disposition Hearing and thus no court reports were created. An additional 18 cases were classified as sensitive and were therefore not available for the author to view given the author's security clearance level. Excluding these cases resulted in a sample of 507 children from 363 families.

Sample. This study utilized a two-year cohort of all children who entered out-of-home care in one urban county for the first time between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2015.

Entries into care. The sample includes only data for children from households in which at least one child was placed in out-of-home care.

First entries. Children who were previously in care will have had previous opportunities for father and mother engagement, which may affect the outcomes of their subsequent cases. The sample is, therefore, limited to children who entered out-of-home care for the first time.

Date Range. In order to examine case outcomes, the author must allow enough time for children to exit care. About three-quarters of all children exit care within two years of entry into care. Administrative data showing child outcomes are available publicly through September 2017.

In reviewing the case records, the research team identified 3 additional cases – 3 families with one child each – that did not fit the inclusion criteria. The children in these families had been adopted from foster care and thus did, in fact, have a previous entry into out-of-home care. One additional case with one child was dropped as the child was Safe Surrendered, meaning no information was or would be collected about the child’s parents. Excluding these cases results in a final sample of 507 children from 359 families.

Overview of Data Sources

The data used in this study were generated during the investigation process described above (the gray boxes in Figure 8). For this study, data were extracted from various documents, forms, and tables in the CWS/CMS, but the majority of data were extracted from two sources (1) the Emergency Response Transfer Summary, and (2) the Disposition Report.

When these two documents were not accessible, additional documents containing information similar to that in the two documents were utilized. The Investigation Narrative and Investigation Narrative Transfer Summary were used when an Emergency Transfer Summary was not available. The Detention Report or Jurisdiction Report was used when the Disposition report was not available. Table 4 outlines the frequency with which each document was used. All documents are Microsoft Word documents completed by the child welfare worker and stored in CWS/CMS.

Investigation Narrative. Upon investigating a child welfare referral, child welfare workers complete an Investigative Narrative, which summarizes the child welfare worker’s child maltreatment investigation including information about every contact with the family and other involved parties and the conclusion about the allegations (i.e. whether or not the allegations are sustained).

Investigation Narrative Transfer Summary. The Investigation Narrative Transfer Summary is drafted for cases that are opened and being transferred from the Emergency Response unit to another unit. It contains the findings from the Investigation Narrative as well as an assessment of the family’s needs and strengths.

Emergency Response Transfer Summary. When a referral is substantiated and promoted to case status (i.e. the child welfare worker has determined that abuse or neglect occurred and a child welfare case is opened), much of the information typically recorded in the Investigative Narrative is *instead* recorded in the Emergency Response Transfer Summary form. Typically, the Emergency Response Transfer Summary contains a summary of allegations; a brief family history, including prior involvement with child welfare; the child welfare worker's investigative findings; and a summary of face-to-face visits between the child welfare worker and family.

The Investigative Narrative, Investigative Narrative Transfer Summary, and Emergency Response Transfer Summary were used to determine if a father was identified, located, and contacted at case opening; determine whether there is a resident father; and determine whether a father is the perpetrator of the maltreatment.

Detention Report. The Detention Report is drafted for the Detention Hearing. This report lists the reasons for the detention of the child(ren) and includes information about the parents' paternity, prior child welfare history, and criminal history. It does not include the more comprehensive family history or current family assessment present in the Jurisdiction and Disposition Reports and does not include the case plan, visitation plan, or service plan as those are drafted and approved at a later point in the case.

Jurisdiction Report. The Jurisdiction Report states the facts of the case up to the Jurisdiction Hearing, including the allegations of maltreatment. It contains the same information as the Disposition Report with the exception of the case plan, visitation plan, and service plan as those documents are drafted and approved at a later point in the case.

Disposition Report. The Disposition Report provides evidence on allegations of maltreatment and is drafted for the Disposition Hearing. It contains a summary of the Jurisdictional Hearing; information about the child and parents such as paternity, criminal history, and non-custodial parent status; a brief family history, including prior involvement with child welfare; and a summary of the family's current strengths and needs. It also contains information about the case plan, visitation plan, and any services the children and parents will receive. For this study, the Disposition Report was used to gather information about fathers' and mothers' identity, relationship to the child, and level of engagement (identified, contacted, included in case plan, receiving visitation, etc).

The Detention Report, Jurisdiction Report, and Disposition Report were used to: determine whether the father had been identified, located, and contacted; identify the legal relationship of the father(s) to the children; identify factors that may affect levels of engagement such as a history of criminal involvement or current housing insecurity; identify services offered to fathers; and if services are not offered, identify the reasons.

Table 3. Overview of data sources

Quantitative Data Sources	
CWS/CMS	Administrative case and demographic data
Qualitative Data Sources	
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Emergency Response Summary
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Disposition Report
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Investigation Narrative
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Investigation Narrative Transfer Summary
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Detention Report
CWS/CMS	Narrative data from the Jurisdiction Report

Table 4. Frequency of data sources

Data Source	Frequency
Investigation Narrative	35
Investigation Narrative Transfer Summary	83
Emergency Response Summary	244
Detention Report	7
Jurisdiction Report	2
Disposition Report	337

Protection of Human Subjects

This study relies on administrative and case record data and does not require direct contact with human subjects. However, the study relies on individual-level data from a vulnerable population – families involved, most often involuntarily, with the child welfare system. Low income families and families of color are disproportionately represented in this population. In addition, case records contain sensitive information about maltreatment, domestic violence, physical health, and mental health. Thus, the author took the necessary steps to protect the identity of child welfare clients and staff.

Given that this project involved administrative data and case records, the main risk is a breach of confidentiality. The author took the appropriate measures, detailed below, to minimize this risk. A detailed plan to minimize risk was submitted and approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California at Berkeley in November 2017. Permission to conduct this study was also granted by the Agency and the juvenile court that oversees the Agency.

Data Security

An Agency employee compiled the spreadsheet with administrative data in the sample generation phase. The spreadsheet was stored on a secure network server that is only accessible through networked computers at the agency.

The author de-identified the data in the spreadsheet by removing the referral identification number, client identification number, and case identification. Any other identifiable information,

such as name, date of birth, and social security number was deleted from the spreadsheet. A new unique family identification number was generated for each household. Each child within that household was assigned a child identification number. Combining the family and child identification numbers resulted in a unique identifier for each child that linked the child to their siblings (e.g., 107.1 and 107.2 represent two children from the same household).

These new identity codes were randomly generated and do not offer any clue as to the identity of the individual. The author created a master key linking the original CWS/CMS generated ID numbers to the new identity codes. The de-identified spreadsheet was then transferred to Dedoose, an Internet cloud-based data storage and mixed-methods software analysis program. All transfers of data to Dedoose were done at the Agency using a networked computer.

De-identification of case records. The author fully de-identified all the case record documents before transferring them to Dedoose. The author reviewed each document and removed all names, addresses, dates, locations, and other identifiable information, replacing them with placeholders. For example, mother's name was replaced with MOTHER and the names of programs were replaced with general identifiers such as TREATMENT PROGRAM or PARENTING PROGRAM. De-identified case documents were uploaded to Dedoose as PDFs, a format that prevented them from being altered or downloaded.

Procedures

This study utilized a three stage mixed methods data collection and analysis procedure (see Table 5).

A research team was assembled to assist with data collection in Stage I. The team consisted of the author and four undergraduate level student research assistants. Two of the student research assistants had completed coursework on the child welfare system in California and therefore had an understanding of the procedures and case documents that would be reviewed. The other student research assistants received a brief course on the California child welfare system from the author. All student research assistants had experience working with marginalized populations and received training on human subjects protections and maintaining confidentiality when working with sensitive data. The student research assistants did not have access to any identified data.

Table 5. Data collection and analysis

	Aim	Data Source	Type of Data	Analysis
Stage I	Examine the nature of father engagement	CWS/CMS	Qualitative	Systematic content analysis and descriptive statistics
Stage II	Compare father engagement to mother engagement	Data generated in Stage I	Quantitative	Linear Regression
Stage III	Explore the association between engagement and case outcomes	Data generated in Stage I	Quantitative	Multilevel linear regression and multinomial logistic regression

Stage I: The Extent and Nature of Father Engagement

Stage I employed a systematic content analysis to examine the extent and nature of father engagement in the one urban county. This process involves the quantification of qualitative data; qualitative data techniques were used to code data that were then quantified.

Sample. The initial sample for this stage included all 507 children from 359 families identified in the sample identification phase. For the statistical analyses, an additional 27 children from 19 families were removed due to having at least one deceased parent. This produced a final sample of 480 children from 340 families for the statistical analyses.

Data Entry Survey. The author used blank templates of the case record documents to create a data entry survey on Qualtrics, a web-based survey software. A survey was selected over other data entry formats (i.e. Excel spreadsheet, Access database, etc.) as it reduced the risk of data entry errors and allowed the research team to access the data entry system from any location with an internet connection.

The data entry survey included multiple choice and open-ended items. Items were divided into sections that corresponded with the sections of the case documents (e.g., Family History, Current Family Assessment, Placement and Services, etc.). Each item listed the information of interest, the location of the information in the case documents, and a coding guide for that item. The full survey and coding guide are available in Appendix B.

Table 6. Data entry survey examples

Multiple Choice Question
Is FATHER 1 identified at case opening (ERTS sections 2 & 17)? <i>Enter YES if the father's name is listed in the narrative in section 2 or contact list in section 17</i> <i>Enter NO otherwise</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Open Ended Question
If FATHER 1 is not provided services, what reason is provided (DR section Providing Services)? <i>Enter 999 if FATHER 1 is not identified</i> <i>Enter 888 if no reason is provided</i> Common Answers: parental rights were previously terminated for the child's sibling alleged father has failed to obtain presumed father status incarcerated parent/guardian applies

The author and student research assistant tested the data entry survey using 20 randomly selected cases. Changes were made to the survey as needed to capture the complex family dynamics and circumstances present in the sample.

After testing the data entry survey with the initial 20 cases, the author and three of the student research assistants tested the data entry survey with an additional 20 cases. Minor changes were made to clarify the coding guide.

Inter-coder Reliability. All four student research assistants received one-on-one training from the author on entering data into the data entry survey. First, the author and each student research assistant reviewed and entered 5 cases together. This served to familiarize the student research assistants with the case documents and the survey. The student research assistants then coded 5 cases on their own making note of any items or coding guides that needed clarification. Finally every member of the research team coded the same 20 cases. Responses from those 20 cases were compared and overall, all research team members agreed on 82% of the items. This high rate of inter-coder reliability is expected as a majority of the items do not require any subjective assessment (e.g., Does the mother have a history of child welfare involvement?). The items with the highest rate of disagreement were identified and their coding guides were further clarified.

Data Entry. Each case document was reviewed and entered once by one of the four student research assistants. The author randomly selected 100 of the cases and reviewed and entered the case documents. A comparison of the author's and student research assistant's responses continued to demonstrate a high rate of inter-coder reliability (84% agreement on items).

Data from the Qualtrics survey was downloaded as an Excel spreadsheet and then transferred into Stata.

Data Disaggregation. Each case document contained information for a family in aggregate and thus, the data from the Qualtrics survey had to be disaggregated to allow for analyses at the child level. Separate data sets were created for mothers, fathers, and children.

Statistical Analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the extent and nature of father engagement, including but not limited to describing the number of fathers in the sample, the level of engagement of fathers, and factors that may affect level of engagement. Analyses were conducted in Stata 15 (StataCorp, 2017).

Ineligibility for engagement. Narrative descriptions in the Disposition Report of why fathers were not offered services were used to identify reasons that fathers were ineligible for engagement. The narrative descriptions were coded using the reunification bypass classifications outline in the California Welfare & Institutions Code §361.5b (see Appendix C), which lists the conditions under which services need not be provided to parents or guardians. These include but are not limited to chronic use of alcohol or drugs, prior termination of reunification services, and severe physical abuse of a child under 5. It is important to note that falling into one of these categories could render a parent ineligible for engagement but did not automatically render a parent ineligible. The child welfare worker would petition the court to engage the parent despite the parent meeting the reunification bypass criteria. Additional categories were created as trends emerged in the data, including “alleged/biological father has not obtained presumed father status.”

Full vs. restricted engagement. The engagement gradient and additional information extracted from the Detention Reports, Jurisdiction Reports, and Disposition Reports was used to identify the proportions of fathers eligible for full and restricted engagement. Fathers were considered as only eligible for restricted engagement if they were prevented by the agency or the court from participating in one, some, or all of the later stages of the engagement gradient (i.e. services, case plan, placement). This included fathers who were incarcerated and those who lived in another country. Fathers were considered to be eligible for full engagement if they were not eligible for restricted engagement and were not ineligible for engagement.

Fathers eligible for engagement vs. fathers ineligible for engagement. The demographic characteristics of fathers who were eligible for full engagement were compared to those of fathers who were eligible for restricted engagement and those of fathers who were ineligible for engagement. A series of ANOVAs and Chi-squared analyses were conducted to identify potential differences in age, residency (resident vs. non-resident father), and perpetrator status (perpetrated the maltreatment or not).

Level of engagement. The engagement gradient created for this study was used to quantify the level of engagement of the fathers in the sample. The number and percent of fathers who participated in each stage of the gradient was calculated for all fathers combined and then for fathers eligible for full engagement, fathers eligible for restricted engagement, and fathers

ineligible for engagement. In-depth information about the specific codes used to quantify level of engagement can be found in Appendix B. However, in brief:

Identity. The identity of fathers was recorded as two points in the case – at case opening (i.e. when the referral was promoted to case status) and by the Disposition Hearing. Fathers were marked as identified if a name was included in the case records at either of these points.

Location. The location of fathers was also recorded at the case opening and Disposition Hearing. Fathers were marked as located if there was a known address for them at either of these points.

Contact. Fathers were marked as contacted if the worker noted any communication with the father. This included both in-person and over the phone communications. As with identity and location, it was noted whether fathers were contacted at case opening and whether they were contacted by the time of the Disposition Hearing.

Visitation. Fathers were marked as having been offered visitation if they received supervised or unsupervised visits with their children or the child welfare worker was attempting to schedule visits.

Services. Fathers were marked as being offered services if any services were listed for them on the court report under Recommended Services.

Case plan. Fathers were marked as being included in the case plan if he was offered services as part of the mother's case plan or he had his own case plan.

Placement. Fathers were marked as being considered as a potential placement if the court reports indicated that they were being offered reunification services or a child was placed in their care.

Lack of engagement among fully eligible fathers. Narrative descriptions in the Disposition Report of why fathers were not offered services were used to identify reasons why some fathers who were eligible for full engagement were not engaged in the later stages of the engagement gradient.

Factors associated with level of engagement. Information extracted from the Detention Reports, Jurisdiction Reports, and Disposition Reports was used to examine factors that may be associated with level of engagement. This included information about the father's history (prior child welfare involvement, history of maltreatment as a child, history of mental health concerns, history of substance use, history of criminal justice involvement, and history of domestic violence) and current situation (stability of housing, availability of social support, concerns about parenting skills, physical health concerns, mental health concerns, concerns about substance abuse, criminal justice involvement, domestic violence). Information about the presence of these factors was extracted for fathers who had been contacted by the Agency.

Each factor was coded as present or not present. Factors were coded as present if any source of information– the parents, children, relatives, child welfare worker, Record of Arrests and Prosecutions, etc. – indicated that the factor was present. For example, a case where the mother denied a history of domestic violence but a police record indicated a prior arrest for domestic violence was coded as having a history of domestic violence.

Stage 2: A Comparison of Father Engagement and Mother Engagement

Multilevel analyses were used to address Aim 2 – compare levels of father engagement to those of mother engagement. This involved comparing fathers and mothers as a whole and then comparing resident fathers to resident mothers and non-resident fathers to non-resident mothers. Multilevel linear regressions were used to determine the degree to which father engagement is the same or different from mother engagement while accounting for other parent and family characteristics and resident parent status.

Sample. As each family had only one mother but potentially multiple fathers, a direct comparison of mothers and fathers necessitated modifications to the sample. Comparing each mother to every father in the family would over represent mothers from families with multiple fathers. Thus, mothers were compared only to the first father in each family (i.e. the father for the oldest child in the family involved in the case). The initial sample for this stage of the study, therefore, included 359 mothers and 359 fathers.

An additional 18 families were dropped as the mother and/or father in these families was deceased, resulting in a final sample of 341 mothers and 341 fathers.

Data Sources. This stage of the study utilized the descriptive data about father and mother engagement collected and summarized in Stage I and the demographic data in the spreadsheet of administrative data provided by the Agency.

Variables. Outcome. The engagement gradient presented previously was converted into an ordinal variable ranging from 1 “worker attempts to identify the father/mother” to 10 “father/mother is considered as a placement option”. Examining the normality of the variables revealed that level of engagement was not normally distributed. A histogram of level of engagement (see Appendix E) revealed a ceiling effect, negative skewness, and some discreteness. Multiple transformations of the variable were attempted (i.e. log transformation, log transformation of reflected values, square, cube root, etc.) but none significantly improved the normality of the distribution. An examination of the residuals of the non-transformed variable revealed that both level 1 and level 2 residuals are normally distributed (see Appendix E) indicating that the error terms are normally distributed. As the normality assumption in linear regression assumes that the errors, and not the variable itself, are normally distributed (Carroll & Ruppert, 1988), using a non-normally distributed variable with normally distributed errors will produce accurate coefficients and p-values. Thus, the non-transformed variable was used in the analyses.

Primary predictor. The type of parent (father vs. mother) served as the primary predictor in the analysis

Covariates. A number of covariates were included to account for potentially confounding factors such as criminal justice involvement. The Disposition Report describes a number of factors that may facilitate or inhibit engagement. These factors along with demographic information about the parents and the oldest child in the family were included as covariates (see Table 7 for a full list of the variables and their descriptions). Although prior research found that some of the covariates, namely substance use and incarceration, affect levels of engagement, many of the other covariates have not been examined in relation to engagement. As the present analyses were exploratory, all available covariates were included, with one exception. Paternity could not be included as a covariate as there was no variation in paternity for mothers (i.e. all mothers were biological parents).

Child characteristics were used as a proxy for family-level covariates. Covariates for only one child were included due to the nature of the analyses. Multilevel modeling requires that each observation at the lowest level (i.e. each child) correspond to only one cluster at each of the higher levels (i.e. one parent). As the aim of these analyses was to compare mothers and fathers and as each child had both a mother and father, it was not possible to assign all children to only one parent.

The eldest child was selected due to the manner in which the data were organized and coded. The father of the eldest child was always listed first in the list of parents in the case record and was accordingly coded as the first father. Thus, for every family in the sample, the first father corresponds to the first child. Given that each father could have fathered multiple children, subsequent children did not always correspond to subsequent fathers (i.e. the second child was not always the child of the second father). Covariates for the eldest child were therefore included to ensure that the child-level covariates corresponded with the appropriate father. A majority of cases, 77%, included only one child. However, to account for other children in the 23% of families with more than one child, the number of children in the family was included as a covariate.

The covariates were examined for collinearity and interaction terms were created for the two sets of variables – residence in the same home as the child and perpetrator status, and history of substance use and history of criminal justice involvement – that were highly correlated.

Table 7. Stage II variables

	Description
Primary Predictor	
Type of parent	Binary (father vs. mother)
Parent Level Covariates	
Demographic	
Age	Continuous (17 years old as starting age)
Residence	Binary (resident vs. non-resident)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	Binary (yes vs. no)
Parent's history	
Prior child welfare involvement	Categorical (none vs. prior referrals vs. prior investigations vs. prior substantiations)
History of maltreatment as a child	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of mental health concerns	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of substance abuse	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of criminal justice involvement	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of domestic violence	Binary (yes vs. no)
Parent's current situation	
Unstable housing	Binary (yes vs. no)
Lack of social support	Binary (yes vs. no)
Concerns about manner in which parent directly interacts with the child	Binary (yes vs. no)
Physical health concerns	Binary (yes vs. no)
Mental health concern	Binary (yes vs. no)
Concerns about substance abuse	Binary (yes vs. no)
Criminal justice involvement	Categorical (none vs. probation/parole vs. incarcerated vs. waiting on resolution of arrest)
Domestic violence	Binary (yes vs. no)
Family Level Covariates	
Demographic	
Child's Age	Continuous (0 years old as starting age)
Child's Gender	Binary (male vs. female)
Child's Ethnicity	Categorical (White vs. Black vs. Hispanic vs. other ethnicity)
Number of children	Continuous (1 child as starting number)
Type of maltreatment (most severe)	Categorical (At risk vs. caretaker incapacity vs. emotional abuse vs. general neglect vs. severe neglect vs. physical abuse vs. sexual abuse)
Type of primary placement (where the child spent $\geq 50\%$ of their time)	Categorical (Foster home vs. congregate care vs. kinship care vs. mixed vs. other)
Length of case in months	Continuous (0 months as starting length)

Statistical Analyses. Multilevel linear regressions were used to compare the engagement of fathers to that of mothers. The analyses involved a two-level hierarchical design with fathers and mothers nested within families, modeled using the following equation:

$$\text{Engagement}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta \mathbf{X}_{ij} + \beta \mathbf{Z}_j + \zeta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

$\beta \mathbf{X}_{ij}$ = family-level (i.e. child) covariates

$\beta \mathbf{Z}_j$ = parent-level covariates

Level of engagement for a parent (i) within a family (j) is modeled as a function of a family specific intercept ($\beta_0 + \zeta_j$) and level-1 covariates, represented in the \mathbf{X}_{ij} covariate vector, and level-2 covariates, represented in the \mathbf{Z}_j covariate vector.

Analyses were run using the *xtreg* command in Stata with the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE).

Models. A blocked stepwise procedure was used to identify important covariates at the parent and child level. First, a null model without any explanatory variables was fit to obtain the random intercept and unconditional interclass correlation. Second, an unadjusted model with only the primary predictor – type of parent – was fit. Third, a set of models with parent-level covariates was fit. These included separate models for variables pertaining to parent’s demographic characteristics, history, and current situation. Next, a set of models with family-level (i.e. child) characteristics was fit. Separate models were fit for variables pertaining to the child’s demographics, type of maltreatment experienced, and type of out-of-home placement. Last, a combined model including the primary predictor and all covariates significant in the previous models was fit.

In total, nine models were fit – the null model, a model with only the primary predictor, three models with parent-level covariates, three models with family-level covariates, and one model with all variables found to be significant in the previous models.

Stratified Models. The final model from the previous analyses was stratified by resident parent status (resident vs. non-resident) to allow for a comparison of levels of engagement among resident fathers to those of resident mothers and a comparison of levels of engagement among non-resident fathers to those of non-resident mothers. These two models included the primary predictor and all covariates included in the final model from the previous set of analyses.

Stage 3: The Association between Engagement and Case Outcomes

Two different analyses were used to address Aim 3 – examine the association, if any, between father engagement and case outcomes. Multilevel linear regression models were used to explore the association between levels of father engagement and case length. Multinomial logistic regressions were used to examine the association between levels of father engagement and placement outcomes.

Before delving into the specific analyses for each outcome, the author would like to note why these methods were chosen over others. In examining case length, the ideal analyses would be multivariate frailty models, a type of survival analysis for clustered data. However, given the sample size and the three-level hierarchical nature of the data (i.e. children nested within fathers, nested within mothers), there was not sufficient power to conduct these analyses. Two approaches were possible at this point:

1. retaining the hierarchical structure of the data and examining case length using linear regression
2. selecting one child from each family and conducting a Cox proportional hazards analysis.

Previous studies of the association between father engagement and case length (e.g., Coakley, 2013; Malm et al., 2008) utilized linear regressions. To build upon those studies, the author elected the former approach.

For permanency outcome, the ideal analyses would be multilevel multinomial logistic regressions where multiple outcomes are modeled together. Again, there was not sufficient power to run these analyses. Two approaches again presented themselves:

1. retain the hierarchical structure of the data and examine permanency outcome using simple logistic regression
2. select one child from each family and examine permanency outcome using multinomial logistic regression

To parallel the analyses for case length, the author attempted the former. However, even when employing simplified analyses (simple logistic regression vs. multinomial logistic regression), there was not sufficient power to conduct multilevel analyses. As a result, the latter approach was utilized.

Sample. The initial sample for Stage III included 507 children from 359 families. A multilevel model requires that each observation at a lower level only be assigned to one cluster at a higher level (i.e. each child can only be assigned to one father). As a result, 24 children from 24 families were dropped because they had more than one father. An additional 27 children from 19 families were dropped because they had at least one deceased parent. Excluding these children resulted in a sample of 456 children from 316 families.

Case length. The sample was limited further to exclude 53 children from 45 families whose cases had not been closed when the administrative data were pulled. Seventeen of these children from 9 families had siblings who had exited care and remained in the sample. The final sample for the analyses of case length was, therefore, 403 children from 280 families.

Permanency Outcome. For analyses on permanency outcome, the sample was limited to exclude 12 children who aged-out of care or ran away (see Variables below for further explanation). Four of these children had siblings who remained in the sample, such that excluding them resulted in a subsample of 444 children from 308 families for the analyses on permanency outcome. As a reminder, the analyses of permanency outcome were not multilevel in nature and, thus, including

all children would over represent fathers and mothers with multiple children. In consequence, one child was randomly selected from each family, resulting in a final sample of 308 children from 308 families.

Data Sources. This stage of the study utilized the demographic data in the spreadsheet of administrative data provided by the Agency and the descriptive data about father and mother engagement collected and summarized in Stage I.

Variables. Outcomes. Two outcomes were examined at this stage – case length and type of permanency outcome. Data for both these variables came from the administrative data provided by the Agency.

Case length. Case length represented the number of days from the case opening to the case closing.

Permanency outcome. Type of permanency outcome was a categorical variable representing the child’s type of placement at case closing. Reunification indicates that the child was returned to the care of at least one parent. The data did not specify with which parent(s) the child reunified or whether that parent was a resident or non-resident parent. Adoption indicates that either kin or non-kin adopted the child. Non-kin guardianship denotes that the child was placed under a legal guardianship agreement with a non-kin guardian while kinship guardianship indicates that the child was placed under a legal guardianship agreement with a kin guardian. Due to small cell sizes, non-kin guardianship and kin guardianship were combined into one category labeled guardianship. Children who had not exited out-of-home care by August 2018 were classified as “still in care.”

Two other permanency outcomes, aged-out and other, were possible but were excluded from the present analyses because of small cell sizes. Children who aged-out reached the age of majority, age 21 for children in extended foster care and 18 for all other children, without having a permanent placement. Children with a placement outcome classified as “other” included those who ran away and those for whom the placement outcome was unknown.

Primary predictor. As in Stage II, the engagement gradient was converted into an ordinal variable ranging from 1 “worker attempts to identify the father/mother” to 10 “father/mother is considered as a placement option.”

Covariates. Demographic information about children, fathers, and mothers along with information from the Disposition Reports about factors that may facilitate or inhibit engagement were included as covariates (see Table 8 for a full list of the variables and their descriptions). Different covariates were used for the analyses of case length and permanency outcomes. For the analyses of case length, all available covariates were included. For the analyses of permanency outcome, however, there was not sufficient power to include all covariates. Instead, all child-level covariates and only those parent-level covariates found to be significantly associated with level of engagement in Stage II of the analyses (perpetrator of the maltreatment, prior child welfare involvement, and current criminal justice involvement) were included. Type of maltreatment was not included in the analyses of permanency outcome due to small cell sizes,

which would produce inaccurate results. For example, when looking at children who experienced physical abuse as their most severe form of maltreatment, only one was adopted, one entered guardianship, and four were still in care. Type of primary placement was modified to exclude congregate care and mixed as both these categories also had small cell sizes.

The covariates were examined for collinearity and interaction terms were created for variables that were highly correlated.

Table 8. Stage III variables

	Description
Primary Predictor	
Level of father engagement	Continuous (1 "attempt to contact" to 10 "considered as a potential placement")
Child Level Covariates	
Demographic	
Child's Age	Continuous (0 years old as starting age)
Child's Gender	Binary (male vs. female)
Child's Ethnicity	Categorical (White vs. Black vs. Hispanic vs. other ethnicity)
Type of maltreatment (most severe) (for analyses on case length only)	Categorical (At risk vs. caretaker incapacity vs. emotional abuse vs. general neglect vs. severe neglect vs. physical abuse vs. sexual abuse)
Type of primary placement (where the child spent $\geq 50\%$ of their time)	Categorical (Foster home vs. congregate care vs. kinship care vs. mixed)
Permanency outcome (for analyses on case length only)	Categorical (Reunification vs. adoption vs. kinship guardianship vs. non-kin guardianship vs. other)
Father and Mother Level Covariates	
Demographic	
Age	Continuous (17 years old as starting age)
Residence	Binary (resident vs. non-resident)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	Binary (yes vs. no)
Number of children	Continuous (1 child as starting number)
Parent's history	
Prior child welfare involvement	Categorical (none vs. prior referrals vs. prior investigations vs. prior substantiations)
History of maltreatment as a child	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of mental health concerns	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of substance abuse	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of criminal justice involvement	Binary (yes vs. no)
History of domestic violence	Binary (yes vs. no)
Parent's current situation	
Unstable housing	Binary (yes vs. no)

Lack of social support	Binary (yes vs. no)
Concerns about manner in which parent directly interacts with the child	Binary (yes vs. no)
Physical health concerns	Binary (yes vs. no)
Mental health concern	Binary (yes vs. no)
Concerns about substance abuse	Binary (yes vs. no)
Criminal justice involvement	Categorical (none vs. probation/parole vs. incarcerated vs. waiting on resolution of arrest)
Domestic violence	Binary (yes vs. no)

Statistical analyses. Case length. Multilevel models were used to examine the association between level of father engagement and case length. The analyses involved a three-level hierarchical design with children nested within fathers, nested within mothers (see Figure 10).

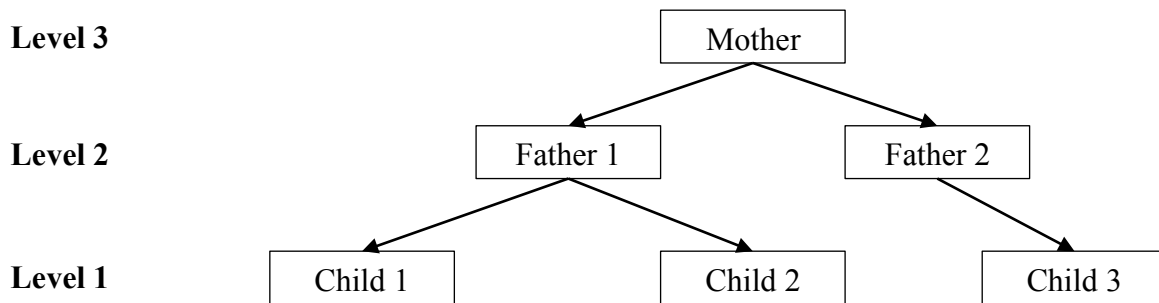


Figure 10. Hierarchical data structure for Stage II

Analyses were completed in two stages. First, a blocked stepwise procedure was used to identify important covariates. Separate linear regressions were run for child-level covariates, father-level covariates, and mother-level covariates. Significant covariates were retained and included in the multilevel models.

Second, multilevel linear models were fitted to examine the association between level of father engagement and case length while controlling for other variables. Analyses were conducted in Stata using the *mixed* command with the *maximum likelihood estimation (ml)* function.

First, a null model without any explanatory variables was fit to obtain the random intercept and unconditional interclass correlation. Second, an unadjusted model with only the primary predictor – level of father engagement – was fit. Third, a model with child-level covariates was fit. Next, a model including both child-level and father-level covariates was fit. A model with child-level, father-level, and mother-level covariates was fit next. Finally, a model with the primary predictor and the covariates found to be significant in the previous model was fit. Included in this final model were also father-level covariates that weren't significant in the covariates analysis but that mirrored significant mother-level covariates and vice versa.

Permanency Outcome. Multinomial logistic regressions were used to examine the association between level of father engagement and permanency outcome. A blocked stepwise procedure

was used to identify important covariates at the child, father, and mother level. Analyses were conducted in Stata using the *mlogit* command with Reunification as the base outcome against which the other outcomes were compared.

First, an unadjusted model with only the primary predictor – level of engagement – was fit. Second, a model with child-level covariates was fit. Third, a model with father-level covariates was fit. Next, a model with mother-level covariates was fit. Lastly, a combined model including the primary predictor and all covariates significant in the previous models was fit.

In total, five models were fit – a model with only the primary predictor, a model with child-level covariates, a model with father-level covariates, a model with mother-level covariates, and a model with all variables found to be significant in the previous models.

5. Findings

As noted in Chapter 1, prior studies of father engagement in child welfare have not quantified the number of fathers represented in a typical case, have not examined differences in eligibility for engagement, and have not examined father engagement in comparison to mother engagement. In addition, only a handful of studies have examined the association between father engagement and case outcomes and those that have conceptualize engagement as a dichotomous variable and not a gradient. This study brings nuance to the literature, addressing those unknowns.

Through a review of child welfare case records and an analysis of the resulting data, this chapter reports on the findings from the questions outlined in the introduction.

1. What is the extent and nature of father engagement in an urban county's child welfare system?
 - a. How many fathers are represented in child welfare cases at a given time?
 - b. What are the reasons for father ineligibility (i.e. presumed father status not established, termination of parental rights, etc.)?
 - c. What proportion of fathers is eligible for full engagement (i.e. eligible to participate in every step of the engagement gradient) or restricted engagement (i.e. only eligible to participate in some of the steps of the engagement gradient)?
 - d. What are the characteristics of fathers who are eligible for full engagement, eligible for restricted engagement, and ineligible for engagement?
 - e. To what extent are fathers engaged?
 - f. Why are fathers eligible for full engagement not engaged?
 - g. What factors may affect eligibility for engagement (i.e. incarceration, substance abuse, etc.)?
2. How do levels of father engagement compare to those of mother engagement?
 - a. How do levels of engagement for resident fathers compare to those of resident mothers?
 - b. How do levels of engagement for non-resident fathers compare to those of non-resident mothers?
3. What is the association, if any, between father engagement and case outcomes?
 - a. Is identifying and contacting fathers associated with case length?
 - b. Is identifying and contacting fathers associated with increased likelihood of permanency outcomes (i.e. exits to reunification (including reunification with the father), adoption, or guardianship)?

The chapter begins with a description of the study sample and compares the sample to the population. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three sections. The first section answers question one by describing the number of fathers represented in the sample, their levels of engagement, and the factors that can affect levels of engagement. The second section addresses question two by analyzing differences in father and mother engagement and identifying factors that may impact these differences. The final section answers question three, examining the association between fathers' levels of engagement and case length and likelihood of permanency

outcomes.

Sample and Population

Children. Table 9 provides a summary of the demographic information for the children in the study, comparing those for whom case records were available to those for whom case records were not available. As noted above, about half the cases for which case records were not available ($n=18$) were classified as sensitive and thus the author did not have the security clearance to access them.

There were no significant differences between children whose case records were available and children whose case records were unavailable, in terms of child's age, child's gender, child's primary language, length of the case, and re-entry into care. However, children for whom case records were not available were less likely to be of an ethnicity other than White, Black, or Hispanic (6% vs. 18%, $p < 0.01$). There were no significant differences between the two groups for other ethnic groups (i.e. White, Black, Hispanic). In terms of the type of maltreatment they experienced, children for whom case records were not available were less likely to have experienced caretaker incapacity/absence (7% vs. 23%, $p < 0.01$). Children for whom records were not available had shorter cases in care ($M = 12.65$ months, $SD = 13.72$) than children for whom records were available ($M = 16.61$ months, $SD = 13.89$). These children were also more likely to reunify with their parent(s) (61% vs. 48%, $p < 0.05$), and less likely to exit to legal guardianship (0% vs. 8%, $p < 0.01$).

These differences indicate that although children for whom records were available and children for whom they were not were similar demographically, they differed in terms of reasons for entering the child welfare system and their pathway through it. Findings about case length and permanency outcomes must therefore be interpreted with some caution.

Parents. Demographic information was collected for the parents of children for whom case records were available (see Table 10). Mothers were significantly younger than fathers, $F(1, 679) = 51.14$, $p < 0.001$, and significantly more likely to reside in the same home as their child(ren) at the time of the referral (84% vs. 27%, $p < 0.001$). In terms of the legal relationship to their children, fathers were predominantly alleged fathers (75%).

Families. Table 11 summarizes information about the families for whom case records were available. Families had between one and six children ($M = 1.41$, $SD = 0.89$) and between one and three fathers ($M = 1.17$, $SD = 0.41$). Families predominantly listed their preferred language as English.

Table 9. Child demographics

	Total		Case record available		Case record unavailable		Significance
	N = 574		N = 507		N = 67		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Age							
under 1 year old	156	27.18	145	28.60	11	16.42	
1 to 5 years old	167	29.09	146	28.80	21	31.34	
6 to 12 years old	158	27.53	132	26.04	26	38.81	
13 to 17 years old	93	16.20	84	16.57	9	13.43	
Gender							
Male	291	50.70	254	50.10	37	55.22	
Female	283	49.30	253	49.90	30	44.78	
Ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	76	13.24	70	13.81	6	8.96	
Black, non-Hispanic	200	34.84	170	33.53	30	44.78	
Hispanic	199	34.67	172	33.93	27	40.30	
Other	97	16.90	93	18.34	4	5.97	**
Missing	2	0.35	2	0.39	0	0.00	
Primary Language							
English	496	86.41	440	86.79	56	83.58	
Spanish	58	10.10	49	9.66	9	13.43	
Other	17	2.96	16	3.16	1	1.49	
Missing	3	0.52	2	0.39	1	1.49	
Maltreatment Type							
At risk, sibling abused	65	11.32	57	11.24	8	11.94	
Caretaker absence	121	21.08	116	22.88	5	7.46	**
Emotional abuse	35	6.10	30	5.92	5	7.46	
General neglect	366	63.76	321	63.31	45	67.16	
Physical abuse	38	6.62	31	6.11	7	10.45	
Severe neglect	28	4.88	28	5.52	0	0	
Sexual abuse	8	1.39	7	1.38	1	1.49	
Length of case							
Less than 1 month	95	16.55	73	14.40	22	32.84	
1 to 2 months	58	10.10	54	10.65	4	5.97	
3 to 5 months	37	6.45	33	6.51	4	5.97	
6 to 11 months	65	11.32	59	11.64	6	8.96	
12 to 17 months	75	13.07	64	12.62	11	16.42	
18 to 36 months	181	31.53	168	33.14	13	19.40	
more than 36 months	63	10.98	56	11.05	7	10.45	
Type of Permanency Outcome							
Reunification	283	49.30	242	47.73	41	61.19	*
Adoption	99	17.25	92	18.15	7	10.45	
Legal guardianship	39	6.79	39	7.69	0	0.00	**
Kinship guardianship	59	10.28	49	9.66	10	14.93	
Aged-out	6	1.05	4	0.79	2	2.99	
Other	14	2.44	12	2.37	2	2.99	
Still in care	74	12.89	69	13.61	5	7.46	
Re-entry into care							
Yes	85	14.81	70	13.81	52	77.61	
No	489	85.19	437	86.19	15	22.39	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Table 10. Parent demographics

	Mothers N = 359		Fathers N = 420		Significance
	N	%	N	%	
Age					***
Under 20	9	2.51	0	0.00	
20 to 29	110	30.64	70	16.67	
30 to 39	157	43.73	141	33.57	
40 to 49	58	16.16	87	20.71	
50 to 59	5	1.39	35	8.33	
60 to 69	2	0.56	7	1.67	
Deceased	6	1.67	14	3.33	
Missing	12	3.34	66	15.71	
Residing with child at time of referral					***
Yes	303	84.40	115	27.38	
No	50	13.93	291	69.29	
Deceased	6	1.67	14	3.33	
Relationship to the child(ren)					
Biological parent	359	100.00	12	2.86	
Presumed father	--	--	94	22.38	
Alleged Father	--	--	314	74.76	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Table 11. Family demographics (N = 359)

	N	%
Number of Children		
1	275	76.60
2	47	13.09
3	19	5.29
4	12	3.34
5	4	1.11
6	2	0.56
Number of fathers		
1	304	84.68
2	51	14.21
3	5	1.39
Preferred Language		
English	280	77.99
Spanish	54	15.04
Other	16	4.46
Missing	10	2.79

Research Question 1: The Extent and Nature of Father Engagement

The first research question examines the extent and nature of father engagement in the study county. This involved identifying the number of fathers represented in the case records, describing levels of engagement, examining the proportion of fathers who were eligible for full and restricted engagement, and examining factors that affect levels of engagement.

Demographic information for fathers from the 340 families included in the subsample for this research questions can be found in Appendix D.

Number of fathers. A review of case records for 340 families reveals that there are 398 fathers represented in the sample. Families include between one and three fathers with an average of 1.17 father per family (SD = 0.41). Most families had only one father (84%). Fathers in the sample were predominantly alleged fathers (74%), meaning they had not established biological paternity via a DNA test and had not been granted presumed status by the court. Almost one quarter of fathers were granted presumed father status by the court (23%), meaning they have a demonstrated record of raising the child as their own. The remaining fathers (3%) were biological fathers who had established biological paternity via a DNA test.

Full vs. restricted engagement. A majority of fathers were eligible for either full or restricted engagement, 258 fathers or 65% of all fathers. Among these, most were eligible for full engagement (n = 231, 90% of eligible fathers, 58% of all fathers). Among those only eligible for restricted engagement (n = 27, 10% of eligible fathers, 7% of all fathers), nine were limited by incarceration and 18 by living in another country.

Ineligibility for engagement. A large proportion of fathers, 140 fathers or 35% of all fathers, were deemed ineligible for the later stages of engagement (i.e. services, case plan, placement). Among these, the majority had failed to obtain presumed father status (n = 123, 88%), followed by those who had previously had their parental rights terminated for another child (n = 8, 6%). Among fathers who had not been granted presumed father status, only 16 fathers requested a paternity test and in all 16 cases the results of the test were still pending when the Disposition Report was submitted. These barriers to eligibility disproportionately affected fathers of Black and Hispanic children. Almost three-quarters (72%) of fathers who had not established presumed father status were fathers of Black or Hispanic children.

Table 12. Father eligibility for engagement

	N	%
Full engagement	231	58.04
Restricted engagement	27	6.78
Ineligible for engagement	140	35.18

Father eligible for engagement vs. fathers ineligible for engagement. There were no significant differences in terms of age between fathers eligible for full engagement, fathers eligible for restricted engagement, and fathers ineligible for engagement.

However, fathers ineligible for engagement were more likely to be non-resident than fathers

eligible for full engagement (85% vs. 62%, $p < 0.001$). Conversely fathers eligible for full engagement were more likely to have perpetrated the reported maltreatment than fathers ineligible for engagement (33% vs. 13%, $p < 0.001$). Compared to fathers eligible for restricted engagement, fathers eligible for full engagement were more likely to be fathers of White children than Hispanic children (48% vs. 36%, $p < 0.001$) children.

Levels of engagement. Table 13 summarizes the findings around fathers' levels of engagement.

Identity. At case opening (i.e. by the time the referral was promoted to case status), the identity of 79% of all fathers was known. By the Disposition Hearing, 95% of all fathers were identified. Among the 19 cases with unidentified fathers, the child welfare worker noted effort to identify the father in all but 3 cases.

Similar trends are observed across fathers with different eligibility statuses such that regardless of eligibility for engagement over 90% of fathers are identified.

Location. At case opening, the location of 59% of all fathers was known. By the Disposition Hearing, the location of three-quarters of fathers, 75%, was known. Child welfare workers noted efforts to locate all but a few fathers who had been identified (98%).

At this stage, differences by eligibility status emerge. Fathers ineligible for engagement are located at a lower rate than fathers eligible for full or restricted engagement (66% vs. 81% vs. 79%, respectively).

Contact. Half of all fathers, 50%, were contacted at case opening. By the Disposition Hearing, 63% of fathers had been contacted, representing 85% of all fathers who had been located.

As with the previous stage, differences by eligibility status are observed. Fathers ineligible for engagement are contacted at a lower rate than fathers eligible for restricted engagement who in turn are contacted at a lower than fathers eligible for full engagement (45% vs. 63% vs. 74%, respectively).

Visitation. Over one-third of all fathers were offered visitation (36%). Among fathers who were contacted, 58% were offered visitation.

Large differences by eligibility status are observed at this stage. Fathers eligible for restricted engagement have the lowest rates of being offered visitation (11%), which is expected given that these fathers are incarcerated or live in another country. Fathers eligible for full engagement have the highest rate of being offered visitation (50%).

Services. Over one-third of all fathers (35%) were offered services. Among fathers who were offered visitation, all but five were also offered services.

In comparing fathers eligible for full vs. restricted engagement (fathers ineligible for engagement are excluded as they are by definition not eligible for services) large differences emerge. Fathers eligible for full engagement were offered services at a much higher rate than fathers eligible for

restricted engagement (58% vs. 22%, respectively). An important finding to note is that among fathers eligible for restricted engagement, three fathers who were not offered visitation were offered services. These fathers were incarcerated and the facilities at which they were held did not allow for visitation with the child but did provide court mandated services such as anger management and individual therapy.

Case plan. Just over one-third of all fathers (34%) were included in the mother's case plan or had their own case plan. Among fathers who were offered services, all but four were also included in the case plan. In these four cases, the child welfare workers noted that the fathers were offered services to improve their parenting although the fathers were not being considered for reunification.

Fathers eligible for full engagement had higher rates of being included in the case plan than fathers eligible for restricted engagement (56% vs. 22%, respectively). The six fathers eligible for restricted engagement who were included in the case plan were incarcerated and would be released within the allotted reunification time frame (i.e. 6 to 12 months).

Placement. One-third of fathers (33%) were considered as potential placements for their children. Among fathers included in a case plan, 95% were considered as potential placements.

As in the previous stages, fathers eligible for full engagement had higher rates of being considered as a potential placement than fathers eligible for restricted engagement (55% vs. 22%). Again, the six fathers eligible for restricted engagement who were considered as a potential placement were incarcerated and would be released within the allotted reunification time frame. Among fathers eligible for full engagement, half (55%) of those considered as a potential placement were resident fathers.

Drop-off. From Table 13 and Figure 11, we are able to identify the stages at which there are the biggest drop-offs in engagement – locating fathers and offering visitation. Although child welfare workers identify and attempt to locate 93% of all fathers, about 75% of fathers are actually located. The transition from being contacted to offering visitation represents an even bigger drop-off. Although 63% of fathers had been contacted, only 36% of all fathers were offered visitation.

In examining drop-offs by eligibility status, similar trends emerge across fathers with different eligibility status but the magnitude of the drop-offs varied. Fathers who were ineligible for services had much larger drop-off between attempting to locate fathers and locating fathers, a drop-off of 33 percentage points, than did fathers who were eligible for restricted engagement and fathers eligible for full engagement, who had drop-off of 15 and 10 percentage points respectively. In the progression from contacting fathers to offering them visitation, fathers eligible for restricted engagement had the largest drop-off, a drop-off of 52 percentage points, when compared to those who were ineligible for engagement and those eligible for full engagement, who had drop-off of 26 and 24 percentage points respectively.

Table 13. Level of engagement

	All Fathers N = 398		Full Engagement N = 231		Restricted Engagement N = 27		Ineligible N = 140	
	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total
Attempted to identify	395	99.25	228	98.70	27	100.00	140	100.00
Identified	379	95.23	213	92.21	26	96.30	140	100.00
Attempted to locate	371	93.22	207	89.61	26	96.30	138	98.57
Located	297	74.62	183	79.22	22	81.48	92	65.71
Attempted to contact	288	72.36	179	77.49	20	74.07	89	63.57
Contacted	251	63.07	171	74.03	17	62.96	63	45.00
Offered visitation	145	36.43	115	49.78	3	11.11	27	19.29
Offered services	140	35.18	134	58.01	6	22.22	--	--
Included in case plan	136	34.17	130	56.28	6	22.22	--	--
Potential placement	133	33.42	127	54.98	6	22.22	--	--

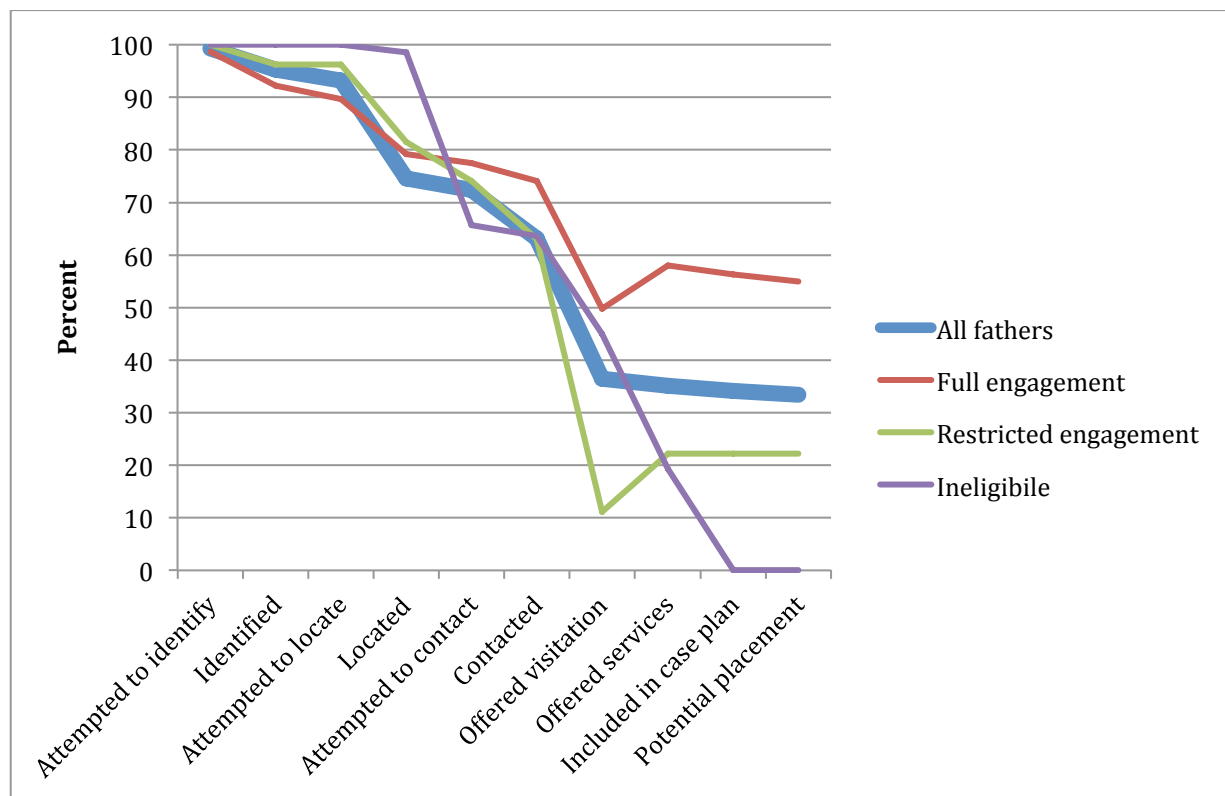


Figure 11. Percent of fathers engaged at each stage of the engagement gradient

Lack of engagement among fully eligible fathers. Over 40% of fathers eligible for full engagement were not offered services, included in the case plan, or considered as a potential placement. For 40% of these fathers, the case record did not include a reason for a lack of engagement. Among those cases in which a reason was given, 28% of the cases were being

dismissed, 24% involved fathers who were non-custodial parents in cases that were being transferred to family maintenance, and 24% of cases included fathers whose whereabouts were unknown.

Factors associated with levels of engagement. Information about factors that may impact level of engagement was extracted from case records for all 251 fathers who had been contacted by the Agency (see Table 14). Information about mothers is included for reference. Over three-quarters (n = 214, 85%) of contacted fathers had at least one factor in their history that may have impacted their level of engagement and almost half (n = 118, 47%) had three or more. Three-quarters (n = 190, 76%) of contacted fathers had at least one factor in their current situation that may impact their level of engagement and over one-third (n = 91, 36%) had three or more.

The factors that impacted the largest number of fathers included having a history of criminal justice involvement, having a history of domestic violence, and having a history of substance abuse.

Table 14. Factors associated with levels of engagement among parents who were contacted

	Mother		Fathers	
	N = 314		N = 251	
	N	%	N	%
History				
Prior child welfare involvement	237	75.48	129	51.39
History of maltreatment as a child	120	38.22	44	17.53
History of mental health concerns	185	58.92	45	17.93
History of substance use problems	198	63.06	133	52.99
History of criminal justice involvement	191	60.83	199	79.28
History of domestic violence	194	61.78	147	58.57
Missing	4	1.27	14	5.58
Current Situation				
Lack stable housing	151	48.09	90	35.86
Lack social support	47	14.97	25	9.96
Concerns about manner in which parent interacts with the child	159	50.64	70	27.89
Physical health concerns	74	23.57	38	15.14
Mental health concerns	187	59.55	56	22.31
Substance abuse concerns	179	57.01	89	35.46
Criminal justice involvement	81	25.80	96	38.25
Probation/parole	36	11.46	54	21.51
Incarcerated	19	6.05	28	11.16
Arrested, awaiting resolution	26	8.28	14	5.58
Domestic Violence	80	25.48	55	21.91
Missing	3	0.96	19	7.57

Research Question 2: A Comparison of Father Engagement and Mother Engagement

The second research question compares father engagement to mother engagement. First, multilevel linear regressions were used to examine differences in levels of father and mother engagement in general when accounting for a number of father-, mother-, and child-related covariates. Second, multilevel linear regressions stratified by resident parent status were used to examine differences in levels of resident father and resident mother engagement and differences in levels of non-resident father and non-resident mother engagement. Levels of engagement were quantified by converting the engagement gradient into an ordinal variable ranging from 1 “worker attempts to identify the father/mother” to 10 “father/mother is considered as a placement option.”

Demographic characteristics of fathers and mothers included in the subsample for this research question can be found in Appendix D.

Comparison of father engagement to mother engagement. Table 15 summarizes the findings of the multilevel linear regressions comparing father engagement to mother engagement (see Appendix E for summary of models 2-7).

In the null model, there was significant variation between families ($\psi = 0.50$, $p < 0.00$) with a small interclass correlation (.04), indicating that 4% of the residual variance in level of engagement is explained by family-level characteristics.

To examine the association between level of engagement and parent type, Model 1 introduced type of parent, which explains 15% of the total residual variance. Type of parent is significantly associated with level of engagement such that being a mother in contrast to being a father is, on average, associated with a 2 unit increase in level of engagement, equivalent to achieving two additional stages on the engagement gradient ($p < 0.001$).

Models 2 – 4 examined the association between level of engagement and parent type while accounting for parent-level covariates. In these models, resident parent status, perpetrator status, prior child welfare involvement, a history of substance abuse, a history of domestic violence, and current criminal justice involvement were significant covariates.

Models 5 – 7 examined the association between level of engagement and parent type while accounting for family-level covariates. In these models, number of children and the eldest child’s age were significant covariates.

The final model, Model 8, examined the association between level of engagement and parent type, accounting for all significant covariates at the parent and family-level. Adding the significant covariates explained 74% of the total variance in level of engagement, a considerable improvement over the model without the covariates (i.e. Model 1) that explained only 15% of the total variance in level of engagement. However, after introducing the covariates, type of parent was no longer a significant predictor of level of engagement. This indicates that much of the variance explained by type of parent in Model 1 was explained by other factors included in the final model, namely perpetrator status and current criminal justice involvement.

Both perpetrator status ($p < 0.01$) and the interaction between perpetrator status and resident parent status ($p < 0.01$) are significant, indicating that the effect of perpetrator status on level of engagement depends on resident parent status. Among non-resident parents, being the perpetrator of the maltreatment was significantly associated with, on average, a 1.06 unit decrease in level of engagement, holding all other variables constant. Thus, non-resident parents who were also perpetrators achieved one less stage on the engagement gradient than non-resident parents who were not perpetrators. However, among resident parents, being the perpetrator of the maltreatment did not impact level of engagement.

In terms of criminal justice involvement, being on probation or parole and being incarcerated significantly decreased level of engagement when compared to having no criminal justice involvement. Holding all other variables constant, being on probation or parole was, on average, associated with 0.54 unit decrease in level of engagement, equivalent to achieving half a stage less on the engagement gradient than parents with no criminal justice involvement ($p < 0.01$). On average, being incarcerated was associated with a 1.28 decrease in level of engagement, equivalent to achieving just over one less stage in the engagement gradient than parents with no criminal justice involvement ($p < 0.001$).

Comparison of father engagement to mother engagement by resident parent status. Table 16 summarizes the findings of the multilevel linear regression comparing resident father engagement to resident mother engagement and the regression comparing non-resident father engagement to non-resident mother engagement. In both the stratified models, parent type was not a significant predictor of level of engagement, indicating that among both resident and non-resident parents have similar levels of engagement when controlling for other covariates.

In comparing the stratified models, different covariates significantly predicted level of engagement for resident vs. non-resident parents. Among resident parents, prior child welfare involvement, a history of domestic violence, and criminal justice involvement significantly predicted level of engagement. For these parents, being on probation or parole in comparison to having no criminal justice involvement was on average associated with about half a unit decrease in level of engagement ($p < 0.01$), while being incarcerated was associated with over a one-unit decrease in level of engagement when holding all other variables constant ($p < 0.01$). In addition, for resident parents, having prior substantiated maltreatment allegations in comparison to having no prior child welfare involvement and having a history of domestic violence were each associated, on average, with a half unit decrease in level of engagement ($p < 0.01$ for both).

In contrast, among non-resident parents, perpetrator status was the only significant predictor of level of engagement such that being the perpetrator of the maltreatment was associated with a 1.28 unit decrease in level engagement while holding all other variables constant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 15. Multilevel linear regression models estimating level of engagement as a function of parent type - Final model
(Standard errors in parentheses)

	Null Model	Model 1	Model 8
Fixed			
Intercept	7.84 (0.10)***	6.80 (0.13)***	9.08 (0.32)***
Between			
Primary Predictor			
Parent Type (<i>Father used as reference</i>)		2.07 (0.17)***	0.11 (0.15)
Parent Level Covariates			
Demographic			
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)			0.45 (0.31)
Perpetrator of maltreatment			-1.06 (0.33)**
Residence x Perpetrator			1.09 (0.42)**
Parent's history			
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)			
Prior referral(s)			0.26 (0.33)
Prior investigation(s)			0.46 (0.25)
Prior substantiation(s)			-0.32 (0.21)
History of substance abuse			0.18 (0.19)
History of domestic violence			-0.34 (0.19)
Parent's current situation			
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)			
Probation/parole			-0.54 (0.21)**
Arrested			-0.39 (0.27)
Incarcerated			-1.28 (0.34)***
Within			
Family Level Covariates			
Demographic			
Number of children			0.15 (0.09)
Child's Gender (<i>reference group: Male</i>)			-0.29 (0.18)
Random			
Between level ψ	0.5	1.14	0.91
Within level θ	2.6	2.16	1.01
R ²		0.15	0.74

Table 16. Multilevel linear regression models estimating level of engagement as a function of parent type - stratified by resident parent status (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Resident Parents N = 400	Non-resident Parents N = 282
Fixed		
Intercept	9.92 (0.27)***	8.21 (0.64)***
Between		
Primary Predictor		
Parent Type (<i>Father used as reference</i>)	0.20 (0.13)	-0.50 (0.51)
Parent Level Covariates		
Demographic		
Perpetrator of maltreatment	-0.01 (0.18)	-1.28 (0.47)**
Parent's history		
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)		
Prior referral(s)	0.31 (0.31)	0.23 (0.75)
Prior investigation(s)	0.35 (0.23)	0.46 (0.69)
Prior substantiation(s)	-0.52 (0.20)**	0.92 (0.61)
History of substance abuse	0.04 (0.17)	0.47 (0.56)
History of domestic violence	-0.46 (0.17)**	-0.14 (0.54)
Parent's current situation		
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)		
Probation/parole	-0.51 (0.19)**	-0.25 (0.64)
Arrested	-0.25 (0.23)	-0.42 (1.02)
Incarcerated	-1.18 (0.31)**	-1.34 (0.98)
Within		
Family Level Covariates		
Demographic		
Number of children	0.10 (0.08)	0.36 (0.22)
Child's Gender (<i>reference group: Male</i>)	-0.39 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.49)
Random		
Between level ψ	0.94	0.00
Within level θ	0.61	1.84
R ²	0.52	0.59

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Research Question 3: The Association between Father Engagement and Case Outcomes

The third research question examines the association between father engagement and case outcomes, namely length of case and type of permanent placement. As with research question 2, levels of engagement were converted into an ordinal variable ranging from 1 “worker attempts to identify the father/mother” to 10 “father/mother is considered as a placement option” and log transformed to correct for skewedness.

Case length. The first set of analyses in this stage sought to examine the association between level of father engagement and case length. This was done in two steps. First, important covariates were identified using linear regressions. Second, the association between level of father engagement and case length was analyzed using multilevel linear regressions.

Covariates. To identify important covariates, separate models were fit for child-level, father-level, and mother-level covariates (see Appendix F). At the child level, type of primary placement and type of permanency outcome were significantly associated with case length. At the father level, prior child welfare involvement, having unstable housing, and domestic violence in a current relationship were significantly associated case length. At the mother level, perpetrator status, having unstable housing, exhibiting concerning parenting skills, and domestic violence in a current relationship were significantly associated case length.

Multilevel linear regressions. Six models were fit to examine the association between level of father engagement and case length while controlling for the covariates identified above (see Table 17). Fitting multiple models allowed the author to examine the individual and combined contributions of the included covariates.

In the null model, there was significant variation between children ($p < 0.00$) with a large interclass correlation (.96), indicating that 96% of the residual variance in case length is explained by father and family-level characteristics.

To examine the association between level of father engagement and case length, Model 1 introduced level of father engagement. Level of father engagement was significantly associated with case length such that achieving one additional level on the engagement gradient was associated with a 16.35 day decrease in case length ($p < 0.05$).

Model 2 examined the association between level of father engagement and case length while accounting for child-level covariates. In this model, level of engagement was no longer significantly related to case length. Instead, case length was predicted by type of primary placement and type of permanency outcome.

Being primarily in congregate care in comparison to primarily being in a foster home is associated with a 417.33 day increase in case length ($p < 0.001$); primarily being in kinship care in comparison to primarily being in a foster home is associated with a 93.42 day increase in case length ($p < 0.01$); and not having a type of primary placement in comparison to primarily being in a foster home is associated with a 162.23 day decrease in case length ($p < 0.01$).

In terms of permanency outcome, every outcome was associated with an increase in case length when compared to reunification when controlling for other variables. Adoption was associated with the largest increase in comparison to reunification, 585.99 days ($p < 0.001$), followed by kinship guardianship, 380.86 days ($p < 0.001$).

Model 3 introduced father-level covariates. In this model, level of father engagement was again not significantly related to case length. In addition, none of the father level covariates were significant predictors. In terms of the child-level covariates, language was no longer significantly associated with case length but type of primary placement and type of permanency outcome were. Compared to being in a foster home as a primary placement, not having a primary placement is associated with a 261.57-day decrease in case length. However, primarily being in congregate care or kinship care are no longer significantly associated with case length. Turning to type of permanency outcome, every outcome was associated with an increase in case length when compared to reunification, when controlling for all other variables with adoption being associated with the largest increase in case length, 594.86 days ($p < 0.001$).

Model 4 introduced mother-level covariates. As with Model 3, level of father engagement and father-level covariates were not significantly associated with case length while type of primary placement and permanency outcome were. In addition, one mother-level covariate, the presence of concerns about mother's parenting, was significantly associated with case length. When holding all other variables the presence of concerns about the manner in which the mother interacts with the child is associated with a 164.67 day decrease in case length ($p < 0.05$).

The covariates significant in Model 4 were retained in the final model, Model 5. In this final model, type of primary placement, type of permanency outcome, and concerns about manner in which the mother interacts with the child were significantly associated with case length. In comparison to primarily being in a foster home, not having a primary placement is associated with an 243.72 day decrease in case length ($p < 0.01$). In comparison to reunification, adoption is associated, on average, with a 542.88 day increase in case length ($p < 0.001$), kinship guardianship with a 413.20 day increase ($p < 0.001$), non-kin guardianship with a 373.34 day increase ($p < 0.001$), and other outcomes (i.e. aged out and ran away) with a 255.95 day increase ($p < 0.01$). Lastly, the presence of concerns about the manner in which the mother interacts with the child is associated, on average, with a 105.71-day decrease in case length ($p < 0.05$).

Table 17. Multilevel linear regression models estimating case length in days as a function of level of father engagement (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Null Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Intercept	393.61 (19.61)***	508.08 (49.32)***	101.84 (37.61)***	313.55 (217.92)***	251.35 (241.46)***	92.59 (129.32)
Primary Predictor						
Father engagement		-16.35 (6.48)*	3.83 (4.38)	-0.35 (19.92)	-6.61 (20.88)	13.78 (13.13)
Child-level Covariates						
Type of primary placement (reference group: foster home)						
Congregate care			417.33 (52.95)***	95.41 (116.64)	98.45 (118.60)	138.17 (105.51)
Kinship care			93.42 (23.35)***	44.47 (39.36)	24.45 (40.49)	20.63 (34.01)
Mixed			-162.23 (57.96)**	-254.66 (80.09)**	-261.57 (80.12)**	-243.72 (72.5)**
Permanency outcome (reference group: Reunification)						
Adoption			559.31 (31.68)***	585.99 (70.74)***	594.86 (68.85)***	542.88 (51.43)***
Kinship guardianship			416.76 (38.37)***	380.86 (61.57)**	387.45 (62.14)***	413.2 (58.87)***
Non-kin guardianship			345.60 (42.77)***	371.32 (109.34)***	451.46 (120.9)***	373.34 (69.89)***
Other			187.64 (52.43)***	253.76 (75.85)**	248.34 (75.70)**	255.95 (73.22)***
Father-level Covariates						
Residence (resident vs. non- resident)				-95.35 (79.90)	-124.10 (85.32)	
Perpetrator of maltreatment				34.04 (84.17)	6.05 (98.04)	
Residence x Perpetrator				28.30 (104.77)	110.71 (111.77)	
Prior child welfare involvement (reference group: No prior involvement)						
Prior referral(s)				-45.58 (96.86)	-3.97 (150.59)	
Prior investigation(s)				-21.17 (67.33)	-52.16 (120.7)	
Prior substantiation(s)				-14.71 (58.38)	6.94 (79.01)	
Unstable housing				-48.15 (50.05)	-34.64 (65.99)	
Concerns about parenting skills				-57.92 (57.56)	4.95 (65.34)	49.91 (45.04)
Current domestic violence				9.43 (53.38)	0.19 (52.65)	
Mother-level Covariates						
Residence (resident vs. non- resident)					72.70 (119.24)	
Perpetrator of maltreatment					247.89 (134.43)	

Residence x Perpetrator					-163.44 (161.99)	
Prior child welfare involvement (reference group: No prior involvement)						
Prior referral(s)					25.20 (154.11)	
Prior investigation(s)					89.05 (126.10)	
Prior substantiation(s)					-1.89 (83.53)	
Unstable housing					21.77 (65.46)	
Concerns about manner in which parent interacts with the child					-164.67 (61.40)*	-105.71 (43.36)*
Current domestic violence					0.00 (0.00)	

Between family ψ	31168.40	35990.90	14559.45	17079.93	14592.05	0.00
Between father ψ	78161.01	71442.76	30123.75	17079.92	14592.06	35153.22
Within level θ	4739.546	4736.474	5841.18	4353.05	4339.557	4057.20
R ²		0.02	0.56	0.66	0.71	0.66

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Permanency outcomes. The second set of analyses in this stage of the research sought to examine the association between level of father engagement and permanency outcomes using multivariate multinomial logistic regressions. Table 18 summarizes the findings of these analyses (see Appendix F for summaries of Models 2-4).

The first model, Model 1, included only the primary predictor, level of father engagement. In this model, level of father engagement was significantly associated with likelihood of adoption and still being in care but not the likelihood of exiting to legal guardianship. Increased levels of father engagement decrease the likelihood of a child being adopted or remaining in care instead of reunifying with one of both parents ($p < 0.05$).

Model 2 examined the association between level of engagement and permanency outcome while accounting for child-level covariates. In this model, child's age and type of primary placement were significant covariates.

Model 3 examined the association between level of engagement and permanency outcome while accounting for father-level covariates. In this model, father's perpetrator status and current criminal justice involvement were significant covariates.

Model 4 examined the association between level of engagement and permanency outcome while accounting for mother-level covariates. In this model, mother's age, the number of children in the family involved in the case, and mother's prior child welfare history were significant covariates.

The final model, Model 5, examined the association between level of engagement and permanency, accounting for all significant covariates at the child, father, and mother-level. Level of father engagement was not significantly associated with likelihood of a child exiting to legal guardianship instead of reunifying with a parent. However, increased levels of father engagement were associated with decreased likelihood of remaining in care, 0.60 times the relative risk ($p < 0.01$), and decreased likelihood of adoption, 0.73 times the relative risk ($p < 0.05$), instead of reunification, holding all other variables constant.

Three covariates – child's age, type of primary placement, and mother's prior child welfare involvement – were predictive of type of placement outcome. Child's age was associated with decreased likelihood of adoption, 0.79 times the relative risk, such that older children were more likely to reunify with a parent than to be adopted ($p < 0.05$). In terms of type of primary placement, children who were primarily in kinship care compared to those primarily in foster care were more likely to be adopted, 3.25 times the relative risk ($p < 0.05$), and considerably more likely to enter legal guardianship, 18.19 times the relative risk ($p < 0.05$), than to reunify with a parent. In terms of mother's prior child welfare involvement, children of mothers who had prior child maltreatment substantiations were more likely to be adopted, 4.89 times the relative risk ($p < 0.05$), and enter legal guardianship, 7.18 times the relative risk ($p < 0.05$), than to reunify with a parent.

Table 18. Multinomial logistic regression estimating permanency outcome as a function of level of father engagement
(Standard errors in parentheses)

	Still in Care	Adoption	Guardianship
Primary Predictor			
Father engagement	0.60 (0.11)**	0.70 (0.10)*	0.75 (0.12)
Child-level Covariates			
Child's Age	1.14 (0.09)	0.79 (0.09)*	0.99 (0.07)
Type of primary placement (<i>reference group: foster home</i>)			
Kinship care	2.99 (2.14)	3.25 (1.86)*	18.19 (13.09)*
Father-level Covariates			
Perpetrator of maltreatment	1.37 (1.04)	1.19 (0.75)	0.69 (0.42)
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)			
Probation/parole	3.00 (2.56)	1.18 (0.74)	1.38 (0.89)
Arrested	0.55 (0.83)	0.00 (0.00)	0.55 (0.59)
Incarcerated	0.27 (0.37)	0.61 (0.50)	0.49 (0.46)
Mother-level Covariates			
Mother's age	0.98 (0.07)	0.92 (0.05)	0.95 (0.05)
Number of children	1.08 (0.36)	0.49 (0.27)	1.17 (0.31)
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)			
Prior referral(s)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	2.27 (2.90)
Prior investigation(s)	0.73 (0.87)	1.43 (1.35)	2.85 (2.94)
Prior substantiation(s)	2.41 (2.33)	4.89 (3.41)*	7.18 (6.65)*

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Summary of findings

A review of the data suggests that families of children who entered out-of-home care for the first time over a two year span had between one and three fathers. In aggregate, these families included 420 fathers, most of whom were alleged fathers (75%).

A majority of all fathers were identified (95%) located (75%), and contacted (63%). When considering only fathers who were contacted, as these fathers represent those who could be engaged in the later stages of the engagement gradient, over half of fathers were offered visitation (58%), offered services (56%), included in the case plan (54%), and considered as a potential placement for their children (53%).

Turning to eligibility for engagement, 35% of fathers were found to be ineligible for engagement, largely due to a failure to establish presumed father status. Among fathers eligible for engagement, 90% were found to be eligible for full engagement and 10% for restricted engagement. Fathers eligible for engagement were more likely to be resident fathers and to have perpetrated the maltreatment that brought the family to the agency's attention than fathers ineligible for engagement.

Among fathers who were eligible for full engagement, 40% were not offered services, included in the case plan, or considered as a potential placement. Among these, half were fathers on cases that were being dismissed or that were being transferred to FM. Another quarter were fathers whose whereabouts were unknown.

In comparing father engagement to that of mothers, significant differences were found. On average, mothers had higher rates of engagement than fathers. However, this difference was attributable to parent's criminal justice involvement, perpetrator status, and residency and not to type of parent (i.e. mother vs. father).

In terms of the association between levels of father engagement and case outcomes, on average, higher levels of father engagement were associated with decreased case length. However, this difference was attributable to child's type of primary placement and type of permanency outcome, such that when controlling for these variables, level of father engagement is no longer significantly associated with case length. Increased levels of father engagement were, however, associated with increased likelihood of reunification over adoption or remaining in care but not with likelihood of reunification in comparison to legal guardianship.

6. Discussion

The past decade has seen a growth in the literature examining the engagement of fathers in the child welfare system. This literature suggests that fathers are routinely not engaged in the child welfare system and that child welfare worker bias against fathers plays a large role in this lack of engagement. The literature also suggests that engaging fathers is associated with improved case outcomes, namely increased likelihood of reunification with a parent (Burrus et al., 2012; Coakley, 2013; Malm & Zielewski, 2009) and shorter stays in care (Malm et al., 2008). However, the existing literature lacks nuance that this study sought to consider.

The present study was designed to address many of these shortcomings in the literature. This study conceptualizes engagement as a gradient encompassing the various points throughout the front end of a child welfare case during which fathers can potentially be engaged. Using the engagement gradient, this study seeks to address three research questions.

Research Question 1: The Extent and Nature of Father Engagement

The first research question examined the extent and nature of father engagement in one urban county. A review of case records reveals that when considering all fathers regardless of eligibility for engagement, over half of fathers were identified, located, and contacted by child welfare workers but, only one-third of fathers were offered visitation, offered services, included in the case plan, or considered as a potential placement for their children (see Figure 12). These findings are in line with findings from previous studies that indicate that many fathers are not offered services or considered as a potential placement for their children (Reynolds, 2011). However, examining rates of engagement in the earlier stages of the engagement gradient shows that many fathers were not engaged in the later stages because they had not been successfully located or contacted despite child welfare worker efforts to locate and contact them. For example, when looking at only fathers who had been contacted ($n = 251$, 63.07% of all fathers), we see that over half of these fathers were offered visitation and services. This represents a considerably higher rate of engagement in visitation and services than is suggested by simply looking at the percent of all fathers who are offered visitation and services regardless of whether they have been identified, located, and contacted (i.e. 36% and 35% for visitation and services respectively).

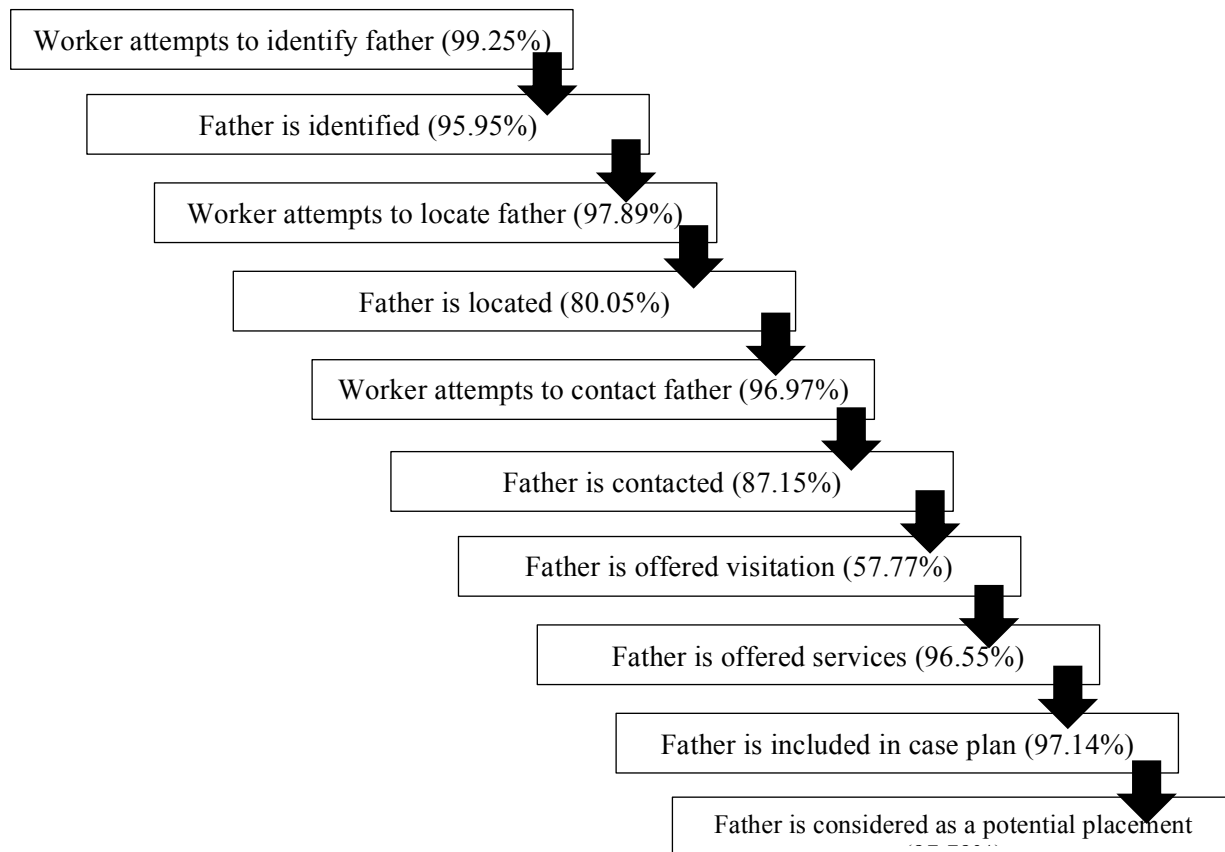


Figure 12. Father engagement gradient (percent of fathers from previous stage who achieved each stage in parentheses).⁴

Examining rates of engagement across fathers with different levels of eligibility for engagement introduces further nuance into our understanding of father engagement. A majority of fathers, 65%, was eligible for full or restricted engagement; that is, eligible to participate in most or every stage of the engagement gradient. However, a sizeable portion of fathers, 35% of all fathers, was ineligible for engagement, meaning they were not eligible to participate in the later stages of the engagement gradient (i.e. visitation, services, case plan, potential placement).

In comparing fathers by eligibility status, similar rates of identifying fathers are observed regardless of eligibility status. However, differences by eligibility status emerge when examining rates of locating and contacting. Ineligible fathers have the lowest rates of being located and contacted while fathers eligible for full engagement have the highest rates. Fathers eligible for restricted engagement fall in between. Differences in engagement by eligibility status also emerged in the later stages of the engagement gradient with fathers eligible for full engagement being engaged at higher rates at each stage than fathers eligible for restricted engagement.

⁴ The percentages in this figure represent the percent of fathers from the previous stage who achieved each stage. For example, child welfare workers located 80.05% of fathers who they attempted to locate.

These findings indicate that there exists more nuance in rates of fathers' engagement than previous studies suggest. By failing to consider eligibility for engagement, previous studies are overestimating the percentage of fathers who are not offered services, not included in the case plan, and not considered as potential placements.

Turning to barriers to engagement, a failure to establish presumed father status, incarceration, and immigration/deportation rendered many fathers ineligible for engagement or eligible for only restricted forms of engagement. As previously noted, California legislation and Juvenile Dependency Court guidelines restrict fathers who have not established presumed father status, i.e. alleged fathers and biological fathers, from receiving child welfare services (Judicial Council of California, 2019). Among fathers ineligible for engagement, 88% were rendered ineligible by their alleged father status. Almost three-quarters (72%) of fathers who had not established presumed father status were fathers of Black or Hispanic children, indicating that this barrier disproportionately affects families of color.

Among the small number of fathers eligible for restricted engagement (6.78% of total), 33% were limited in the extent to which they could be engaged by incarceration and 67% by immigration or deportation. With few exceptions, these fathers were prevented from receiving visitation or services by physical separation from their children and could therefore not be included in the case plan or considered as a potential placement.

Physical separation due to incarceration complicates or in some cases prevents visitation and service provision. Many jails and prisons lack facilities that would allow for visitation with children, do not offer many court-mandated services, or have complex protocols that complicate the provision of services and visitation (Campbell et al., 2015). For example, one child welfare worker noted in an incarcerated father's Disposition Report that visitation was not being offered because the prison "does not have facilities that would allow for the children to visit." As noted in the literature review, incarceration disproportionately affects families of color. Previous studies found that child-welfare involved children with incarcerated parents are predominantly African-American (Berger et al., 2016). In the present sample, three-quarters (76%) of fathers who were incarcerated were fathers of Black or Hispanic children. Thus, barriers to engagement related to incarceration disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic families.

As with incarceration, fathers who reside in another country because of immigration or deportation (4.52% of all fathers and 66.67% of fathers eligible for restricted engagement) – their immigration or deportation to another country or their child's immigration to the U.S. – cannot be offered visitation or services. Children of fathers residing in other countries can be placed in the care of those fathers but this would require the child to leave the U.S. Fathers in the current study who were offered this option invariably chose to waive their right to reunification services and allow their children to remain in the U.S.

Although very few fathers in the current study, 18, resided in another country, recent trends in immigration suggest that this number might be higher in more recent child welfare caseloads, particularly in states adjacent to the Southern U.S. border. The present study utilized data from 2013 to 2015. Since that time, there has been a surge in the number of unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. from Latin America (Ataiants et al., 2018). Immigration is therefore likely to be

a barrier to father engagement for an increasing number of families and particularly for Hispanic families. In fact, in the present sample, almost two-thirds (62%) of fathers who lived in another country were fathers of Hispanic children, suggesting that barriers related to immigration disproportionately affect this ethnic group.

Among fathers eligible for full engagement, barriers to engagement were more difficult to examine as child welfare workers did not document a reason for not offering eligible fathers services in 40% of cases. Among the 60% of cases in which a reason was given, factors related to the progression of the case through the child welfare system – namely the case was being dismissed or being transferred to family maintenance – were at the root of a lack of engagement for half of fathers. These outcomes are typically viewed as favorable in the child welfare system and thus not engaging these fathers in services is not a negative event. An additional quarter of these fathers were not engaged in visitation or services because their whereabouts were unknown. Engaging these fathers was not an option and therefore, classifying these cases as lacking father engagement overestimates the number of fathers who are not being engaged.

Taken together, these findings on barriers to engagement indicate that factors other than child welfare worker bias against fathers, specifically establishing presumed father status, incarceration, immigration, the progression of a case through the child welfare system, and a lack of information about father's whereabouts, prevented fathers from being engaged in the later stages of the engagement gradient.

Implications. The findings summarized above have important implications for research and child welfare practice and policy.

Research. As previously noted, research on father engagement has largely represented engagement as a dichotomous outcome – fathers are either engaged or they are not (e.g., Coakley, 2013) – or look at one aspect of involvement in a child welfare case (e.g., Burrus, Green, Worcel, Finigan, & Furrer, 2012; Coakley, 2008). The present findings suggest that these approaches may not be appropriate, as they do not represent the full range of behaviors that can encompass father engagement. Additionally, given that some forms of father engagement are dependent on earlier forms of engagement, for example offering fathers services is conditional on having identified, located, and contacted fathers, examining individual aspects of father engagement in isolation will result in overestimations of the number of fathers who are not engaged. Instead, future research should examine father engagement as a gradient or continuum, as in Figure 5, in which each stage builds upon the previous stages.

In examining levels of engagement, there is also a need to account for variability among fathers in terms of paternity and eligibility for engagement. Failing to do so masks important differences between fathers who are eligible for full engagement, eligible for restricted engagement, and ineligible for engagement.

Practice and policy. A sizeable portion of fathers was rendered ineligible for engagement in the later stages of the engagement gradient because of a failure to establish presumed father status.

This suggests a need to re-examine policies relating to paternity. As noted above, in this sample fathers who had failed to establish presumed father status were predominantly fathers of Black and Hispanic children. The requirement that fathers obtain presumed father status before services are offered, therefore, disproportionately excludes fathers of Black and Hispanic children, children who are already disproportionately represented in the child welfare system, from being engaged in services. There is thus a need to reexamine policies around paternity and the differential impact these policies are actually having.

The Juvenile Dependency Court requirement that fathers establish presumed father status before receiving services is in direct conflict with California Family Code, which states that biological fathers are to be afforded the same rights and services as presumed fathers (Cal. Family Code § 7601; Cal. Family Code § 7611) and that a judgment of paternity – be it biological or presumed – is “determinative for all purposes” (Cal. Family Code § 7636). Furthermore, the Juvenile Dependency Court has stricter criteria than the Family Code for obtaining presumed father status, requiring the fathers demonstrate fatherhood – a history of caring for the child and holding the child out as their own – and not simply paternity. By establishing and implementing different criteria for service provision, the Juvenile Dependency Court renders the Family Code null (N. G. Soter⁵, personal communication May 7, 2019). In this sample, three percent of fathers were identified as “biological” and were thus excluded from full participation in their child’s case plan. Aligning the Family Code with Juvenile Dependency Court procedures would make an important difference but for a small percentage of fathers

Under the current policy, alleged and biological fathers who have failed to obtain presumed father status essentially do not have an avenue through which they can change their paternity status. The Juvenile Dependency Court allows fathers to petition for a change in their paternity status at each hearing (M. Connelly, personal communication April 2, 2019) and thus if an alleged or biological father can demonstrate that he has made efforts to establish a relationship with his child since the previous hearing, he can potentially be granted presumed father status. However, the primary way in which fathers can demonstrate efforts to establish a relationship is through visitation with their child, which alleged and biological fathers are not entitled to. Thus, although there is technically a legal pathway to change their paternity status, in practice, alleged or biological fathers who wish to become engaged in their children’s cases have little to no recourse.

Furthermore, the Juvenile Dependency Court’s standards for establishing paternity raise concerns about equal protections (N. G. Soter, personal communication May 7, 2019). Biological mothers are granted rights and services without having to demonstrate that they have an existing relationship with the child or that they have a record of raising the child as their own. Thus, mothers are not held to the same standards as fathers who have to prove their connection to the child beyond paternity.

One potential approach to address these discrepancies is that taken by other states, such as Arizona, which allow for all fathers regardless of paternity status to receive services (K.

⁵ Attorney practicing in the San Francisco Juvenile Dependency Courts

Rittschof⁶, personal communication, March 18, 2019). However, there is a need to assess the feasibility of doing so in California, given that California is a much larger state and that the child welfare system is county-based instead of state-based. In addition, the cost – monetary, availability of services, child welfare worker time – of expanding services to all fathers must be considered.

Extending services to biological fathers but not alleged fathers represents a less resource-intensive option. Doing so addresses some of the conflicts between the Juvenile Dependency Court definition of paternity and that of the California Family Code by placing biological fathers on equal standing with presumed fathers. However, this approach creates other concerns, namely those around if and when a DNA test is administered to establish biological paternity. Currently, in the county being studied, paternity tests are only administered at the request of the father. Extending services to biological fathers will therefore have minimal impact unless alleged fathers know to ask for a paternity test.

The process of administering a paternity test itself presents another challenge. Agency policy notes that it typically takes two to three days to schedule a paternity test after a request for testing has been submitted. It takes an additional seven to 10 days to receive the results once the test has been administered (Family and Children’s Services Handbook, 2012). However, there is no information about how far out appointments are scheduled (i.e. do fathers have to wait days or weeks for an available appointment). There is also currently no information about how many paternity tests are scheduled and how many results are available within the timeframe outlined in the Agency’s policy.

Data from the present sample suggest that there is potentially a delay between the time a paternity test is first ordered and the time it is administered. A majority of fathers who had their paternity tested had not received their results by the time the Disposition Report was written – 20 out of 28 fathers. An approach taken in Cook County, IL could potentially address this issue. Housed within Cook’s County’s Child Protection Courts, equivalent to California’s Juvenile Dependency Courts, is the Cook County Juvenile Center, a center that performs paternity tests. Thus fathers involved in dependency hearings who have not established paternity can have their paternity tested in the same building in which their hearing is held and immediately after their hearing. Having paternity tested as early in a case as possible and having the test administered by the court itself and not a third party is likely to increase the number of fathers who have established biological paternity and reduce the time between referral to testing and results.

Establishing biological paternity and extending services to biological fathers alone, however, may not increase rates of father engagement. Establishing paternity does not guarantee that fathers will choose to be engaged. One of the factors the court considers when making a presumed father designation is the father’s history of providing and caring for the child. In general, alleged fathers do not have a history of providing or caring for their alleged children. It may be that, for any number of reasons, they continue to not provide or care for the child even after their paternity is established through a paternity test. Thus, although establishing biological

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paternity can address one barrier to engagement, it does not guarantee that fathers will be engaged.

A focus on biological paternity is also in conflict with recent trends in child welfare placements. Child welfare agencies are increasingly moving away from defining families in terms of biological relationships and emphasizing social relationships instead (Hegar & Scannapieco, 2017). California, in fact, grants equal consideration to biological kin and non-relative extended family members (NREFM), such as godparents, when seeking kin placements for children (AB 1695, Chapter 653, 2002). Giving preference to fathers who have established biological paternity via a DNA test but who have no relationship with their children would be a direct contradiction to policies and legislation such as this that emphasize the maintenance of existing social relationships.

Two other factors to consider before engaging alleged and biological fathers are mothers' wishes, their prioritizations of safety for their children, and the children's wishes. A mother may have intentionally not named a father on their child's birth certificate or may not want a previously uninvolved father to assume a parental role. Given the power imbalance inherent in the child welfare worker-parent relationship, it is important not to further disempower mothers by overriding their right to define their family. Similarly, the perspective of the child(ren) should be considered. Given that alleged and biological fathers, as defined by the Juvenile Dependency Court, do not have an established relationship with their children, engaging them in cases could mean introducing a stranger into a child's life. To a child, a previously uninvolved father may be no different than a non-relative foster parent, and placement with such a father may carry the same level of risk as any out of home placement. It is therefore important to consider mothers' and children's preferences around engaging father(s).

The present findings also indicate that incarceration and immigration pose additional barriers to father engagement. To address these barriers, there is a need to examine ways in which parents can remain involved in their children's lives despite physical separation. Advancements in technology, namely the development of virtual or video visitation, present one possible solution. As the name suggests, "video visiting is real-time interactive video communication which uses video conferencing software programs, such as Skype" (Hollihan & Portlock, 2014 pp. vii). Hundreds of jails and prisons across the U.S. already employ virtual visitation (Rabuy & Wagner, 2015), although fewer than a dozen facilities in California and none within the county being studied here do so. Introducing video visitation to jails and prisons within this county and expanding its use to include families separated by immigration would address the barrier posed by physical separation, facilitating the father-child relationship and father engagement in the later stages of the engagement gradient.

Research has yet to examine if and how video visitation affects case outcomes. In fact, the author was able to locate just one study that explored the use of video visitation in the context of the child welfare system. That study, a survey of 40 child welfare workers who had used video visitation, found that workers perceive video visitation to be advantageous, namely in maintaining relationships between parents and children who are separated (Quinn, Sage, & Tunseth, 2015). However, child welfare workers also noted that video visitation required that both the parent and child have access to certain technology, which may not be possible in many

jails or prisons or homes. Thus, although video visitation may be a promising approach with incarcerated parents, it is highly dependent on the availability of technology in jails and prisons and the ability of parents to access said technology, factors which are outside of the control of the child welfare system.

Research Question 2: A Comparison of Father Engagement and Mother Engagement

The second research question compared the engagement of fathers to that of mothers, first comparing fathers and mothers in general and then comparing fathers and mothers by resident parent status. Quantitative analyses reveal that, in line with what the extant literature suggests, there is a significant difference in level of engagement between fathers and mothers in general, such that mothers are engaged to a greater extent than fathers. On average, mothers are engaged in two more stages on the engagement gradient than fathers.

However, the observed difference is attributable to parent characteristics and not to parent type (mother vs. father). Specifically, differences in level of engagement are driven by whether or not the parent perpetrated the maltreatment, the parent's resident status, and the parent's current criminal justice involvement. Being the perpetrator of the maltreatment is associated with decreased levels of engagement but only for non-resident parents. This finding is not surprising given that the purpose of the child welfare system is to reunify children with their resident parents, even if that parent maltreated them. In the case of resident parents, there is a motivation to engage the parent as they have a pre-existing relationship with the child and maintaining this relationship is almost always to the benefit of the child. However, in cases where the perpetrator is a non-resident parent, there may be less of an impetus to engage the perpetrator, as there may be a weaker or non-existent relationship between the non-resident parent and the child.

The present data do not allow for examination of whether or not this is the case or why. However, one possible explanation is that in cases with a non-resident parent who is the perpetrator of the maltreatment, the best way to ensure the child's safety is sometimes to remove that parent from the child's life. Doing so removes the immediate threat to the child's safety while causing less disruption in the child's life. For example, in a case where a non-resident father perpetrated severe domestic violence placing the child at risk for harm, the child's safety plan may include a protective order to keep the father away. In this instance, the primary goal of child welfare intervention would be to return the child to the care of the mother, assuming that the mother is able to demonstrate an ability to protect the child from future harm. The non-resident father would not be offered visitation as the protective order prevents contact with the child.

In terms of criminal justice involvement, being on probation or parole and being incarcerated in comparison to having no criminal justice involvement, are associated with decreased levels of engagement. The finding around incarceration is supported by the finding in Research Question 1 that incarceration restricts eligibility for engagement and can prevent fathers from being offered visitation and services. However, it should be noted that active incarceration only decreased level of engagement at one stage on the engagement gradient, suggesting that although incarceration is a barrier to engagement, it does not prevent engagement altogether or decrease levels of engagement by a large amount.

The mechanisms underlying the association between being on probation and parole and levels of father engagement remain unknown. However, research on the experiences of parents on parole and probation can provide some insight. The conditions of a parent's parole or probation can prevent them from being engaged in their children's cases. Individuals on parole and probation must juggle multiple systems including but not limited to parole offices, social services agencies, and employment agencies (Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017). The demands of these many systems can make it difficult for parents to spend time with their children, making it less likely that parents form the type of relationships that the Juvenile Dependency Court views as a prerequisite for engaging parents. Additionally, restrictions on where individuals can live or travel can limit the ability of parents to form or maintain relationships with their children, potentially decreasing the likelihood of engagement. Travel restrictions can prevent parents from visiting children who live in counties other than that in which the parents reside and tethers and electronic monitoring can restrict the activities in which parents can engage with their children (Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017).

Many parents on parole or probation are also faced with challenges associated with their involvement in the carceral system. Individuals on parole or probation often experience difficulty with securing and maintaining stable housing (Herbert, Morenoff, & Harding, 2015). Lacking stable housing or lacking housing that is suitable for children complicates visitation (Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017). For example, many homeless shelters are not equipped to house children or are not safe spaces for children to visit. Furthermore, parents who lack stable housing often also have limited resources with which to care for children (Bradley, McGowan, & Michelson, 2018), another factor that child welfare workers consider when determining a child's placement.

The process of re-entry after incarceration presents another unique challenge for parents on parole. These parents may be expected to resume their parental roles immediately, without sufficient time to adjust and prepare themselves for re-entering the role of a caregiver (Brown & Bloom, 2009). Appearing less prepared for caregiving may negatively impact child welfare worker's perceptions of parents, which in turn decrease the likelihood that child welfare workers engage those parents in services. Judgments about paternity may also be made before parents have sufficient time to re-establish a relationship with their children. Many parents do not have any contact with their children while they are incarcerated (Crandell-Williams & McEvoy, 2017), and may not be able to demonstrate an established relationship with their children or a record of having cared for their children as their own – one of the primary factors that the Juvenile Dependency Court considers when making paternity designations.

Examining levels of engagement for resident parents and non-resident parents separately reveals that different factors impact level of engagement for resident vs. non-resident parents. Among resident parents, prior substantiated maltreatment allegations, a history of domestic violence, being on probation or parole, and current incarceration were associated with decreases in level of engagement. Prior substantiated maltreatment allegations may be indicative of families that have multiple challenges, challenges that have repeatedly brought them to the attention of the child welfare system. These challenges may exacerbate the difficulty of engaging parents in services or in their children's case plans. A history of domestic violence may be indicative of a parent's

inability to protect their children from risk of harm. Child welfare workers may be more likely to consider pursuing reunification bypass if applicable when that parent has a demonstrated history of being involved in situations that may cause harm to the child.

In contrast, for non-resident parents, perpetrator status alone was associated with a decrease in level of engagement. As previously noted, non-resident parents who are the perpetrators of the maltreatment may have a weak or non-existent relationship with their children, and thus there may be less of an impetus to pursue reunification. Doing so would require that limited resources (i.e. child welfare worker's time) be diverted from a resident parent who likely has a pre-existing relationship with the child and potentially a greater likelihood of successfully reunifying with the child.

Taken together, these findings indicate that although differences in level of engagement are observed between fathers and mothers, these differences are attributable to factors other than parent type. Additionally, the findings indicate that resident and non-resident parents should be examined separately as different factors impact levels of engagement for resident and non-resident parents.

Implications. Research. Given that factors other than parent type drive the observed differences in levels of father and mother engagement, subsequent research on father engagement should control for these factors, as a failure to do so risks producing biased results. These findings also suggest that a shift in focus, away from the role of bias against fathers and towards the role of incarceration and resident parent status, may be appropriate. Future research should assess if and how jails and prisons serve parents and their children. It should assess the extent of barriers both in terms of accessing jails and prisons (i.e. transporting children to where their parents are being held) and in terms of the facilities available (i.e. availability of rooms for visitation, availability of court-mandated services, etc.), and examine potential ways to address these barriers.

The findings around resident parent status suggest a need for increased specificity about which populations are being studied, as fathers do not represent a homogenous group. Much of the extant father engagement research uses the term father but focuses almost exclusively on non-resident fathers. The present findings suggest that resident and non-resident parents are not the same and consequently that extant research on non-resident fathers cannot be generalized to resident fathers. There is need to specify which fathers are being studied. Furthermore, there's a need for more research on resident fathers to further examine the ways in which their engagement with their children is similar to or different from that of non-resident fathers.

Practice and policy. These findings further emphasize the role of incarceration as a barrier to engagement. They suggest that it is the complexity of engaging incarcerated parents – parents who are predominantly fathers of Black and Hispanic children– in the later stages of the engagement gradient and not child welfare worker bias against fathers, that leads to lower levels of engagement for fathers. Again, there is a need to evaluate the manner in which incarcerated parents are or are not being engaged and potential ways, such as virtual visitation, which can help address a lack of certain types of engagement. California has explicit policies around reasonable efforts to engage incarcerated parents (Cal. WIC §361.5) but it is unclear how counties interpret and implement these state statutes. In addition, it is unknown whether the

training that child welfare workers receive around engaging incarcerated parents sufficiently prepares workers to work with the realities of the situation of incarcerated parents.

There is also a need to consider the differential impact that a lack of engagement as a result of parental incarceration and probation/parole is having on Black and Hispanic children and the ways that the child welfare system may be mirroring ethno-racial inequities present in the criminal justice system. Despite this mirroring, however, it is not within the scope of the child welfare system's responsibilities or abilities to make jails and prisons more amenable to children and child welfare service provision.

Research Question 3: The Association between Father Engagement and Case Outcomes

The third research question sought to extend the father engagement literature by establishing the association between the engagement of fathers and case outcomes, namely length of stay in care and type of exit from care.

Case length. Quantitative analyses revealed that as previous studies found, level of father engagement is associated with case length such that as father engagement increases, case length decreases. However, this difference is attributable to type of permanency outcome. Specifically, differences in case length are driven by whether the child reunified with their parent(s), was adopted, entered kinship legal guardianship, entered non-kin legal guardianship, or aged-out/ran away. These findings are supported by existing research on the association between case length and permanency outcomes that shows that adoptions take longer than guardianship, which takes longer than reunification (Akin, 2011).

Permanency outcome. Quantitative analyses reveal that level of father engagement is not associated with a child's likelihood of entering legal guardianship in comparison to reunification with one or both parents. However, in line with previous findings (e.g., Malm et al., 2008) increased levels of father engagement are associated with decreased likelihood of being adopted and decreased likelihood of remaining in care. Thus, although father engagement was not associated with case length, it was associated with type of permanency outcome, which in turn was predictive of case length.

As the data for this study were pulled from the early stages of a case, it is not possible to examine the mechanisms through which father engagement impacted the likelihood of reunification vs. adoption and reunification vs. still in care. However, family systems theory and the Integrated Model of Father Engagement in Child Welfare (shown on p. 27) provide insight into possible pathways. The opening of a child welfare case presents an opportunity for previously unidentified or uninvolved fathers to be identified and become involved in a part of their children's lives (i.e. their children's child welfare cases). These fathers have the potential to serve as an additional resource and source of support for their children and for their children's mothers. Added support and resources in turn might help mothers address the concerns that brought them to the attention of the child welfare system to begin with. Additionally, identifying and involving fathers who were previously unidentified or uninvolved provides the opportunity for these fathers to be considered as a potential placement option, increasing the likelihood of reunification with a parent.

Implications. One of the stated goals of the child welfare system is to promote permanency for children who have experienced maltreatment. The present findings suggest that improving the engagement of fathers in the child welfare system may be one way to achieve this goal. A first step in increasing father engagement is addressing barriers to men's engagement.

Research. Currently, there is a lack of such research on best practices for developing and implementing new policies that encourage father engagement. Agencies seeking to improve father engagement have little to no guidance on how to do so, suggesting a need for research on how to create and enact these policies.

In addition, the findings suggest a need to include fathers in social work research broadly and child welfare research specifically. As previously noted, existing social work research rarely includes fathers (Shapiro & Krysik, 2010; Strega, et al., 2008) or focuses on fathers' deficits (Brewsough & Strozier, 2016; Clapton, 2009; Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsley, & Dominelli, 2009). Without more knowledge about fathers and the roles that they can and do play in the child welfare system, it will be difficult to design interventions that address the unique needs and circumstances of fathers.

Last, the findings suggest that more research on father-focused interventions is needed. As noted previously, child welfare services are largely mother-focused and may not address the needs of fathers (Alaggia et al., 2015). Thus, there is a need for the development and evaluation of programs that do target fathers, as well as the need for evaluations of ways to adapt existing programs to be more father-oriented.

Practice and policy. Previous studies of father engagement in child welfare find that one of the barriers to engaging fathers was a lack of agency policy around fathers and fathers' engagement (Campbell et al., 2015; English, Brummel, & Martens, 2009; Scalera, 2001). Although these policies and related trainings are in place in the site for this study, this may not be the case in many other jurisdictions. Counties, states, and the federal government have differing definitions of fathers and child welfare workers must interpret these definitions with little to no guidance. A first step in addressing barriers to father engagement would therefore be explicit agency policies and trainings that assist child welfare workers in interpreting and implementing the different definitions.

Agencies that have not yet developed policies or guidelines should also consider developing these (i.e. how to engage fathers, which fathers are eligible for engagement, etc.) and should provide their child welfare workers with training on how to implement these policies. This process can be time consuming and costly, so agencies may consider using pre-existing resources, such as the CalSWEC toolkit on engaging fathers (California Social Work Education Center, 2012), as a starting point or guide.

At the state level, policy makers and practitioners should consider the ways in which existing child welfare data systems may promote a focus on mothers. Although a complete overhaul of the system is improbable, states can consider making small changes that make systems more father-friendly. For example, California's CWS/CMS system can be modified to use a unique

family ID instead of mother's ID to identify a case. The system can also be simplified to ease the process of adding data on fathers who were identified after the case was opened. When new data systems are being designed, agencies should consider evaluating the extent to which those systems are mother-focused and make changes before those systems are rolled out.

In terms of practice, agencies may consider focusing their resources on increasing father engagement at specific stages of the engagement gradient. As the findings around levels of engagement revealed, there is a large drop-off between attempting to locate fathers and successfully locating fathers, presenting a possible point of intervention. Many agencies already have dedicated Family Finding units that are tasked with identifying and locating kin, including fathers. Increasing the resources available to these units or creating sub-units that focus exclusively on fathers may result in increased success in locating identified fathers.

These changes, and potentially others not identified here, are likely to positively impact levels of father engagement by addressing many of the barriers that currently prevent fathers from being engaged in the care of their children.

Limitations

The case records that were reviewed for this study were created by child welfare workers for non-research purposes. Because of this, in some instances the information in the records was fractured or missing. The case records were written from the perspective of the child welfare worker, meaning they were dependent on child welfare worker knowledge. When fathers were not available or did not make themselves available, the child welfare worker was forced to rely on information provided by mothers and other family members. It is possible that the family was aware of the father's identity but did not share it with the caseworker or that a father was involved in a child's life without the caseworker's knowledge. Is it, therefore, possible that the association between engagement of fathers and case outcomes may be confounded by fathers who have relationships with their children outside of the agency's knowledge.

Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, the findings do not allow for a determination of causality between engaging fathers and case outcomes. Without knowledge of the timing of child welfare worker decisions around identifying and contacting fathers, causality cannot be established. The cross-sectional nature of the data also prevents the examination of changes in engagement of fathers over the course of a case. This study employs documents that are typically created at the beginning of a case and does not examine subsequent case notes or court reports. However, it does examine case outcome data that are time-varying.

In addition, the composition of families included in the present study may not be representative of all families involved in the child welfare system. While child-welfare involved families tend to be large and are more likely than families not involved with the child welfare system to have four or more children (Barth, Courtney, Berrick, & Albert, 1994), a majority of the families included in the present study had only one child involved in their current child welfare case. This difference is likely due to the manner in which children were sampled. The present study included only children who entered out-of-home care for the first time, excluding any siblings who had previously entered out-of-home care. Thus, the sample is likely to include only the

youngest siblings in a family who had previous child welfare involvement or young children of young mothers who have few children. This study does not include social fathers and focuses exclusively on cisgender men. Thus, the findings may not capture the experiences of all the father figures present in a family or the experiences of families that do not have heteronormative family structures.

The present study is limited to one agency in a wealthy, diverse, and urban county. The observed trends and findings may not generalizable to agencies located in counties with fewer resources or counties in rural areas. Caution must therefore be taken in extending the present findings to other settings. Last, this study did not examine child outcomes and thus, the findings are not able to inform our understanding of whether engaging fathers in their children's cases affects child well-being. This is an important step for further studies.

Strengths

While having limitations, this study offered several benefits for research on father engagement in child welfare. Notably, this study is the first to use a population comprised of all children who entered out-of-home care within a given time frame rather than a convenience sample.

This study expands current knowledge by measuring father engagement as a gradient rather than a dichotomous outcome. This adds complexity to the concept of fathers' engagement, as it permits consideration of a range of behaviors and actions across the early stages of a case rather than at a single point in time. The use of a gradient allows for the identification of the point in the engagement process at which there is the biggest drop-off in engagement, which will be important in considering what kind of interventions might foster greater engagement of fathers in their children's lives.

Additionally, the present study contributes to existing knowledge by collecting data on mothers as well as fathers, which allows for a direct comparison of mother and father engagement. This comparison allows us to conclude that factors other than a bias against fathers and in favor of mothers, namely criminal justice involvement and residency, contribute to different rates of engagement for fathers and mothers.

The study employed multilevel modeling, which allowed for the full sample of children to be examined without over-representing parents from families with multiple children. Multilevel modeling also allowed for an examination of the impact of characteristics at both the child and parent level, providing a more complete picture of the factors that impact parents' level of engagement.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the present study distinguished between fathers who were eligible for full engagement, eligible for restricted engagement, or ineligible for engagement. Previous studies grouped all fathers together regardless of eligibility, making it impossible to identify variations in levels of engagement among subgroups of fathers. By distinguishing among fathers with different eligibility statuses, the present study is able to demonstrate that many fathers were not eligible to participate in the later stages of the engagement gradient and

that in some instances, eligible fathers were not offered services, included in the case plan, or considered as potential placements because their cases were being dismissed or transferred – circumstances that are typically viewed as positive in the child welfare system. Thus, previous findings around a lack of father engagement overestimate both the magnitude and possible causes of the problem.

Together, these innovations represent a first step in bringing more nuance to the literature on the engagement of fathers in the child welfare system – and draw attention to the true complexity of trying to help more fathers become positively involved in their children’s lives.

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Appendix A. Case Record Document Templates



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
Family & Children Services

Referral Name:
Referral #:

PSW:
Date:

INITIAL ER DOCUMENTATION & INVESTIGATION NARRATIVE

THIS DOCUMENT WILL BECOME PART OF THE CASE RECORD AND/OR DISCOVERY PROCESS.
SELECT THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE FOR EACH ITEM, SELECT N/A IF AN ITEM DOES NOT APPLY OR IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THIS PARTICULAR CASE DURING THE INITIAL ER PROCESS.
(Hyperlinks to the FCS Handbook, and other California Codes and Regulations are for your reference)

PART 1: INITIAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE DOCUMENTATION TOOL					
I. PRIOR TO ASSESSMENT/INVESTIGATION:					
YES	N/A		YES	N/A	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reviewed Referral Documents and allegations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prior case record available/reviewed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assessed for special language/cultural needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interviewed reporting party if available
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reviewed copy of Police report (if available)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PRUCOL child? (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interview Approval: (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)	Parental permission		
Comments:					

II. INITIAL SAFETY ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION WITH FAMILY:					
YES	N/A				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Initial Home Visit - Introduced my self and informed parent of reason for my visit. Gave business card. Parent acknowledged why I was there. (ACIN 1-64-99) • Explained parent's rights, as for permission to enter. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.			
Comments:					

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provided and explained First Packet including: Language, Rights, ADA, CACI, SF Survey & ICWA			
Comments:					

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interviewed all persons with knowledge of the allegation separately. All interviews and responses noted and documented in the Investigative Narrative under #3.			
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Interviewed all named victims.		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Interviewed all suspects and documented any suspects not interviewed at the request of law enforcement agency or for other reasons.		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Interviewed the caregiver(s).		
		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Interviewed all collaterals who had knowledge of allegation and documented each interview.		
Comments:					

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed the SDM Safety Assessment tool (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)			
		• Select the appropriate Safety Decision from SDM –Documented in the Case:			
		<input type="checkbox"/> 1. No safety threats were identified at this time. Based on currently available information, there are no children likely to be in immediate danger of serious harm.			
		<input type="checkbox"/> 2. One or more safety threats are present. Without effective preventive services, the planned arrangement for the child will be out-of-home care (e.g., foster family, group home). Safety interventions have been initiated and the child will remain in the home as long as the safety interventions mitigate the danger. SAFETY PLAN REQUIRED. <input type="checkbox"/> Completed Safety Plan with Caregiver Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. (Since the Safety Plan is an external document, the safety plan needs to be documented in the CWS/CMS Investigation Contact and in Part 2, 5. Safety Plan of this document.)			
		<input type="checkbox"/> 3. One or more safety threats are present, and placement is the only protecting intervention possible for one or more children. Without placement, one or more children will likely be in danger of immediate or serious harm.			

Comments:

REMOVAL PERMISSION Please Select One Explain the Specific Exigent Circumstances present at removal
What Were the Exigent Circumstances? Click here and select one of the following
Instructions: Enter the autotext code consistent with the number for the exigent circumstance(s) selected above and <u>explain</u> the details as to why this safety threat applies to this referral. (i.e. 1. Imminent Danger of Physical Abuse = EX1, 2. Severity of Current Circum. w/ Prev. Maltreatmt = EX2. etc.)
Explanation of Exigent Circumstances
If Exigency does not exist: Is a PC Warrant needed? (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
If a PC Warrant was needed: Contacted supervisor and coordinated with Law Enft. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments:

III. CONTINUED SAFETY & RISK ASSESSMENT /EVALUATION WITH FAMILY - The following areas and questions were inquired about: (if any of the sections below do not apply to your investigation, check the N/A box – use the comments box to explain.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inquired about Domestic Violence (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A<ul style="list-style-type: none">Do you feel unsafe in your current relationship? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/AIs there a partner from a previous relationship who is making you feel unsafe now? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/AIn the past year, have the police ever been called to your home because of a fight or argument, no matter who was fighting or who was at fault? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inquired about Emotional abuse (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inquired about Sexual abuse (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A<ul style="list-style-type: none">Has anyone ever touched you in a way that makes you uncomfortable? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/ADoes the child exhibit inappropriate sexualized behavior? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/AIf Yes to either of the above, inquire further. (Notate in narrative.) If sexual abuse suspected, consulted with MDIC-CASARC (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)
Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewed and documented Physical abuse in the CWS/CMS investigative contact(s) - Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Parent Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is there previous history of confirmed or suspected physical abuse? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/AIs the explanation of the injury consistent with the injury? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/AIs the child wary of adults, or frightened of the caregiver? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/ADoes the injury constitute serious physical abuse and require SFPDJD Involvement? MDIC referral? (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewed and documented Neglect (medical, general or severe neglect) in the CWS/CMS investigative contact(s). Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Family Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are the child's basic needs; food, clothing cleanliness, taken care of? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/ADoes the child have special medical needs that are not being addressed? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Inquired about Mental Health concerns – Consulted w/ MH & documented in CWS/CMS investigative contact(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Family Declined <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Comments:

Inquired about Substance abuse (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.). Use the UNCOPE assessment in your interview. Used the comments box to enter results if more than one Caregiver is being assessed, e.g. Father's UNCOPE assessment UOE Yes Family Declined N/A

ASSESSMENT FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVER Select Type	U	In the past year, have you ever drank or used drugs more than you meant to? Or Have you spent more time drinking or using than you intended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	N	Have you ever neglected some of your usual responsibilities because of using last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	C	Have you felt you wanted or needed to cut down on your drinking or drug use in the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	O	Has anyone objected to your drinking or drug use? Or has your family, a friend, or anyone else ever told you they objected to your alcohol or drug use?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	P	Have you ever found yourself preoccupied with wanting to use alcohol or drugs? Or have found yourself thinking a lot about drinking or using?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
E	Have you ever used alcohol or drugs to relieve emotional discomfort such as sadness, anger, or boredom?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Scoring: Two or more positive responses indicate possible abuse or dependence. If the referral is **not being promoted** complete a **1081 DR CBO Referral**. If planning to **promote to a case** complete a **1082 HPP-Substance Abuse Referral** for follow up.

Comments:

Inquired about criminal history - responses noted and documented in the Investigative Narrative under #3. Yes Family Declined N/A

Comments:

IV. COMPLETED AN ACTIVE ASSESSMENT/INVESTIGATION (CA Code of Regulation Title 11 Section 901a)

YES	N/A	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed SDM Family Risk Assessment w/in 30 days of initial Face to Face with the child victim. Provide the Scored Risk Level from SDM: NOTE: If unfounded, Risk Assessment no longer required. Unless the worker is promoting the referral to a case.
		Neglect Risk Level: Abuse Risk Level: Scored Risk Level:

NOTE: A case must be opened when risk level is high or very high. If there are mitigated safety factors a Non-Court FM case may be opened even if the risk is moderate or low - The reasons for monitoring the mitigated safety factors must be clearly stated in case notes. For a high or very high risk referral, if the allegation is unfounded or inconclusive, open a Non-Court FM case using "Family Services" (the only time Family Services can be used as an Intervention Reason.) If there are any exceptions to this protocol, review the referral decision at a SAFE meeting."

Comments:

CURRENT HOUSING STATUS

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SDM Risk Assessment marked as homeless; Family is considered homeless per Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.:
		<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter <input type="checkbox"/> Street i.e., outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> Doubled-Up e.g., temporarily with friends/extended family <input type="checkbox"/> Make-Shift e.g., garage, abandoned building <input type="checkbox"/> Transitional – In SRO w/out tenancy rights; or formerly homeless, but is now incarcerated, hospitalized, in treatment, transitional housing, or half-way house

Comments:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed Investigative Narrative, which must include the following:
		1. In the Current Allegations state the presenting problem; and priors noted. 2. In the Conclusion of Investigation , clearly state whether allegation was Unfounded, Inconclusive, Substantiated (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.) 3. In the Assessment state the persons interviewed, including when, where, how interview took place 4. Services Provided (Current and Past Reasonable Efforts, Referrals to CBO, etc.) 5. Select a Referral Disposition .
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Date DOJ Report was submitted for mailing: (Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The investigation is completed, and the referral is closed (not promoted to a case.) If the allegations are substantiated but risk is moderate to low – Complete the 1081 DR CBO Referral for a smooth transition to the appropriate CBO. Enter the following Special Project Code in CWS/CMS: 38- Referred to DR

Comments:

PART 2: INVESTIGATION NARRATIVE

ALL SECTIONS BELOW MUST BE COMPLETED.
DO NOT STATE, "REFER TO TRANSFER SUMMARY" OR "DETENTION REPORT."

1. CURRENT ALLEGATIONS:

2. CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATION:

3. ASSESSMENT:

4. SERVICES PROVIDED:

5. SDM – SAFETY PLAN:
 Safety Plan was Required (Note: If safety threat is identified, a safety plan must be made before worker can leave child in home. Without a safety plan, the child cannot remain in the home; if a Safety Plan was initiated, another Safety Assessment must be completed **before closing the referral**. If safety threats remain unresolved, a case should be opened.)
 No Safety Plan Required

Date of Meeting: Family Name:

Safety Factor#:
Family Will Do What? By When?
PSW Will Do What? By When?

Safety Factor#:
Family Will Do What? By When?
PSW Will Do What? By When?

Safety Factor#:
Family Will Do What? By When?
PSW Will Do What? By When?

The Safety Plan was signed by:

A copy of the safety plan was provided to the caregiver(s) and the original filed in section 1 of 6 part file folder.

6. REFERRAL DISPOSITION:

- Select a Disposition
- Note: If are filing a detention or in home petition, you need to have a substantiated allegation. **If the allegations are inconclusive or unfounded a petition cannot be filed.**

Signatures:

 Unit # - Protective Services Worker Date: _____ Protective Services Supervisor Date: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY ER SUPERVISORS – ONLY IF AN FCS CASE WILL OPENED.

If all boxes are checked ‘YES’, the family meets preliminary "Families Moving Forward" criteria.

- The ER supervisor must e-mail lottery@sfgov.org **within 2 days from case promotion** to say they have a "Families Moving Forward" qualified family. The email must include:
 - the Referral ID number
 - case ID number(s)
 - names of family members on the case, and
 - the name of the current ER Worker assigned to the referral.
- The ER supervisor & others will be notified if the family has received a "Families Moving Forward" lottery ‘win’ or ‘no win.’
- A separate email must be submitted for each qualified family.

If any box is checked ‘NO’:

The family does not meet minimum “Families Moving Forward” criteria. DO NOT send an e-mail.

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Meets San Francisco Definition of “Homeless.”
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A child welfare case (FR or FM-Court or Non-Court) will be opened.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least one (1) child on this referral has NO prior open child welfare case. (see CWS/CMS Case History)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One or more of the following risk factors are present on the SDM Risk Assessment: Caregiver: Domestic Violence Substance Abuse Criminal History Mental Health Problem Child: Medically fragile Developmental Disability Physical Disability Mental Health Problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caregiver(s) cleared; RAP sheet does not list a conviction of producing methamphetamine on public housing premises.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caregiver(s) cleared; RAP sheet does not list that the caregiver is subject to lifetime sex offender registration.

Comments:

MUST BE COMPLETED

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The ER Supervisor emailed the family name and info to the FMF lottery on: _____
--------------------------	--------------------------	---



INVESTIGATION NARRATIVE AND TRANSFER SUMMARY

- This document contains hidden text (in blue italic font). Enable the Word hidden text feature to view it.
Press the enter key to add additional information in limited text fields
All fields must be completed. Even if something does not apply, indicate your attempts to inquire about the matter.

Referral Name: PSW Name:
Referral ID: Date:

Table with 3 columns: Mother's Name and DOB, Father's Name and DOB, Child's Name and DOB

Table with 4 columns: Perpetrator Name, Victim Name, Allegation, Conclusion

Interview Approval: (select one)

SDM Assessments:

Safety Assessment: (select one)

Risk Assessment: Neglect Level: (select one) Abuse Level: (select one) Scored Risk Level: (select one)

Child Advocacy Center (CAC) Interview Needed? [] Yes [] No

If Yes, CAC interview requested by:

Initial Packet with Civil Rights Information was provided to: [] Mother [] Father [] Legal Guardian

List additional caregivers and/or needed American Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations here:

If no information was provided, indicate why:

Primary Language of Family: (select one), Other:

Interpreter needed? [] Yes [] No - Level of Interpretation Needed: (select one), Other:

Presenting Problems:

Child Protective Services (CPS) History:

M

Investigation Chronology:

Family Assessment:

- **Family Constellation:** 3
 - **Family Factors:**
 - **Substance Abuse Issues:**
 - **Mental Health Concerns:**
 - **Criminal History:**
 - **Domestic Violence:**
- Removal Permission:** (select one)

Explanation of Exigent Circumstances, Parental Consent, Court Order (ex: Protective Custody Warrant), or No Removal:

For Exigent Circumstances: (select one and explain below)

Explanation:

Disposition/Closing Summary:

STOP:

Referral is being closed as of: ____; [click here for the signature page.](#)

- The Transfer Summary (below) does not need to be completed for child/ren already in an open case.

CONTINUE:

Referral is being opened for on-going FCS involvement as of: ____; **After this date, see the Investigation Narrative and Transfer Summary in the case for the most updated information.**

- Save this document to your computer and import it into the case to complete the Transfer Summary portion below. For help with importing, see the CWS/CMS Quick Guide for Importing Documents.

TRANSFER SUMMARY

(ER to CDU Only)

Long Parent Search Initiated?

- Yes, list parent(s) being searched, and date(s) search was initiated:
- No, why:

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):

Asked parent(s) about ICWA: (select one)

Follow up:

TDM: Yes, date: No, Exception, date:

Placement:

Resource Family Approval (RFA) Placement Information

N/A, Family Maintenance (FM) or Non Court Family Maintenance (NCFM)

The parent(s)/guardian have not provided sufficient information regarding relatives for placement consideration; Child was placed (e.g.: FFA, group home, etc.): _____

The following relatives/possible RFA placements have been identified for assessment:

Proposed Caretaker(s)	Relationship	RFA Status
		(select one)
		(select one)
		(select one)
		(select one)
		(select one)

Relative Notification: Yes No

Permanency/Concurrent Planning:

Face-to-Face Visits Made:

Child	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

Parent/Legal Guardian	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

Caretaker(s) / Substitute Care Provider (SCP)	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

Visitation in Place:

Follow up items for the next worker:

For the Child:

For the Mother/Legal Guardian:

For the Father(s):

Interventions and Services Offered and/or Referred; include details where applicable:

- Assisted parent in obtaining an EPO: _____
- Assisted parent in obtaining a TRO: _____
- Domestic Violence (DV) Services: _____
- Family Resource Center (examples: Bayview TLC, La Raza): _____
- Homeless Prenatal Program (HPP): _____
- Housing Assistance: _____
- Immigration Assistance, (include PRUCOL, if applicable): _____
- Linkages: _____
- Mental Health/Therapy: _____
- Talkline: _____
- Safe Care: _____
- Shelter: _____
- Other: _____

Recommended Client Disposition:

Child Name	Referral Disposition	Next Court Date (if applicable)	Hearing Type (if applicable)
	(select one)		(select one)
	(select one)		(select one)
	(select one)		(select one)
	(select one)		(select one)
	(select one)		(select one)

Other: _____

	DISPOSITION (Supervisors only)	Date
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer to the Court Dependency Unit (CDU)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Court Family Maintenance (NCFM)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Close Referral	

- ER Supervisor** emailed family name and information to the FMF lottery on: _____
Click here for the [FMF Criteria Checklist](#)

Signatures

Completed by:

Reviewed by:

Unit # - Protective Services Worker Date: _____ **Protective Services Supervisor** Date: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY ER SUPERVISORS – ONLY IF AN FCS CASE WILL OPENED.

If all boxes are checked 'YES', the family meets preliminary "Families Moving Forward" criteria.

1. The ER supervisor must e-mail lottery@sfgov.org within 2 days from when the ER Supervisor transfer the case to CDU or NCFM case promotion to say they have a "Families Moving Forward" qualified family. The email must include:
 - the Referral ID number
 - case ID number(s)
 - names of family members on the case,
 - family contact phone number, and
 - the name of the current ER or CDU/NCFM Worker assigned to the referral.
2. The ER supervisor & others will be notified if the family has received a "Families Moving Forward" lottery 'win' or 'no win.'
3. A separate email must be submitted for each qualified family.

If **any** box is checked 'NO': The family does not meet minimum "Families Moving Forward" criteria. DO NOT send an e-mail.

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Meets San Francisco Definition of "Homeless."
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	A child welfare case (FR or FM-Court or Non-Court) will be opened.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least one (1) child on this referral has NO prior open child welfare case. (see CWS/CMS Case History)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	One or more of the following risk factors are present on the SDM Risk Assessment : Caregiver: Domestic Violence Substance Abuse Criminal History Mental Health Problem Child: Medically fragile Developmental Disability Physical Disability Mental Health Problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caregiver(s) cleared; RAP sheet does not list a conviction of producing methamphetamine on public housing premises.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caregiver(s) cleared; RAP sheet does not list that the caregiver is subject to lifetime sex offender registration.
Comments:		



Case Name: _____ Case #: _____ PSW: _____

Date Assigned: _____ Transfer Status: ER to **SELECT ONE OPTION TO CONTINUE**

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRANSFER SUMMARY

This form has hidden text to assist you in completing it. To view the hidden text, go to Tools Menu, select Options and check the Hidden text option. To hide the hidden text, go to Tools Menu, select Options and uncheck the Hidden text option.

1. Next Court Date and Type: N/A

2. Court Status: N/A – Non Court FM

<input type="checkbox"/> In-Home (Specify child(ren): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> TDM Exception Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Out of Home (Specify child(ren): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> TDM (Removal) Date: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Right to Release (Specify Conditions): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> TDM (Placement) Date: _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> TDM (Reunification) Date: _____

3. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):

Asked parents/guardians about Native American Ancestry. Filled out ICWA 010 and attach to Detention Report

ICWA does or may apply – Referred to 2910/12 Social Worker for completion of ICWA 030

ICWA does not apply – Document in case notes.

Follow up: _____

4. Structured Decision Making (SDM)

<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/> Sex Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prior Investigations (indicate number of prior investigations)	<input type="checkbox"/> One or two	<input type="checkbox"/> Three or more		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prior failed reunification or death of a child due to abuse or neglect				

Safety Assessment: Safety Issue Present Yes No

Summarize safety factors and concerns regarding each child’s safety and well-being. Refer to Structured Decision – Making (SDM) Safety Assessment Tool:

Risk Assessment (SDM Risk Assessment) Neglect Risk Level: _____ **Abuse Risk Level:** _____

NOTE: A case must be opened when risk level is high or very high. If there are mitigated safety factors a Non-Court FM case may be opened even if the risk is moderate or low - The reasons for monitoring the mitigated safety factors must be clearly stated in case notes. For a **high** or **very high** risk referral, if the allegation is **unfounded** or **inconclusive**, **open a Non-Court FM** case using "Family Services" (the only time **Family Services** can be used as an **Intervention Reason**.) **If there are any exceptions to this protocol, review the referral decision at a SAFE meeting "**

5. Family’s Preferred Language:

Interpreter needed? Yes No **Language:** _____

6. Assessment and Plan: Refer to Court Report
This section is mandatory if transferring the case as a Non-Court FM, if not check the box field above.

7. Services in Place:

For the Parent(s)/Legal Guardian:

For the Child(ren):

8. Follow-Up necessary:
 Generated the **Letter to Father** in order to inform the father (alleged or birth) that a Child Welfare Case (FM or FR) has been open for his children. Yes No

9. Describe nature of Domestic Violence (DV) between adult partners, if any:
 None Past Current Unknown List dates of incident (if known) _____
DV Follow-Up necessary for Parent(s)/Legal Guardian: *(Include due date if applicable and who is responsible for follow-up).*
Status: Lapsed Violated Status Unknown
 • **Name of Restrained Perpetrator:**
 • **Parties Protected by Order:**

10. Visitation in Place:

11. Relatives notified, if child(ren) being separated from home: Yes No

12. Discussed Permanency Options with Parents/Foster Parents/Relatives/NREFM and assessed/developed a back up plan. Included full disclosure about Permanency and concurrent planning, as appropriate. Yes No
 ➤ **The current substitute care provider (Foster, Rel/NREFM Parent) has been notified that an initial placement in a home does not guarantee approval as an adoptive home, nor does it guarantee that a child will continue to live in a home after it has been determined that the parents are not likely to reunify.** Yes No

13. Proposed Caregiver(s): Child(ren) in home of Relative/NREFM, please specify:

BACKGROUND CHECKS (DOJ, CLETS, CACI, HARD-COPY, (CWS/CMS))	
Name of Proposed Caregiver	Status of Background Checks
	Select One

	Select One
	Select One
	Select One

Referral to NREFM Unit: Yes, Date: _____ No N/A

14. Long Search Initiated: Yes, Date: _____ No N/A

15. Rap Sheet Requested for Parents: Yes, Date: _____ No N/A

16. Initial Family-Involved Team Meeting (FTM) e.g., Linkages (CalWORKs/FCS) Case Coordination Meeting: Yes, Date: _____ No N/A
 Name of CalWORKs Worker & #/Phone # _____

17. Face-to-Face Visits Made/Next Due:

Minor(s)	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

Parent(s)	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

Caregiver(s)	Date	Date	Date	Next Due

18. Are family members documented? Yes No N/A
Does PRUCOL apply for any children? Yes No N/A
Child is a Foreign National AND does not have U.S. Citizenship: Yes No N/A
If Yes, Consulate/Embassy notified: (Refer to Notification to Foreign Embassy Consulate Form) Yes No N/A

Comments:

19. This case was referred to Dependency Drug Court: Yes, Date: _____ No N/A

20. Was a referral made for CANS assessment? Yes No N/A
 Name of Child(ren) Referred: _____

Signatures:

Unit # - Protective Services Worker

Date: _____

Protective Services Supervisor

Date: _____

OTHERS

**Name/
Birthdate**

**Address/
Phone**

**Relationship/
To Whom**

ATTORNEYS

Name

**Address/
Phone**

Representing

INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT STATUS

The Indian Child Welfare Act does or may apply. PSW has not been able to discuss this matter with the parents.

LEGAL HISTORY

300 WIC Subsection(s)

Initial Removal

Initial Detention Order

Initial Jurisdiction Finding

Initial Disposition Order

Initial 364 FM Review

Second 364 FM Review

Initial 366.21(e) – 6 Month FR Review

Initial 366.21(f) – 12 Month FR Review

Initial 366.22 – 18 Month FR Review

Initial 366.25 – 24 Month/PP Review

Initial 366.3 PP Review

Initial NMD Review

FR Services Terminated

Non-Reunification Ordered

Initial Permanent Plan: Type/ Date Ordered

Current Permanent Plan: Type/ Date Ordered

Additional Legal History

N/A

REQUESTING DETENTION

NOT REQUESTING DETENTION

REMOVAL/PLACEMENT INFORMATION

Date/Time	Removed from: Name/Relationship	Removal Reason

Child's Current Placement

Mother Father Legal guardian Relative Shelter care Foster care
 NREFM (non-relative extended family member) Other:

Requesting warrant: Efforts to remove the child/ren, _____ from the parent(s)/ guardian have been unsuccessful. A warrant is requested because:

INTERPRETER

Interpreter Required? (yes/no)	Language	For Whom?

NOTICE OF DETENTION HEARING *(Detention only)*

Name	Relationship	Method	Date

SEARCH RESULTS

- Not applicable
- Due diligence search report attached
- Due diligence search report submitted under separate cover

BASIS FOR DETENTION *(Delete this whole section if you are not requesting detention)*

THE NEED FOR CONTINUED DETENTION *(Detention only)*

- There is a substantial danger to the physical health of the child, or the child is suffering severe emotional damage, and there are no reasonable means by which the child's physical or emotional health may be protected without removing the child from the parents' or guardians' physical custody.
- There is substantial evidence that a parent, guardian, or custodian of the child is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court.
- The child has left a placement in which he or she was placed by the juvenile court.

[] The child indicates an unwillingness to return home, if the child has been physically or sexually abused by a person residing in the home.

REASONABLE EFFORTS (*Detention only*)

Information can be addressed in summary form as long as it is clear and specific. Do not enter a list of every single contact on the case.

When did you meet with, talk with, or send a letter to parents (specific dates)? Did you discuss resources for services?

PATERNITY/LEGAL RELATIONSHIPS

What information do you have on paternity? What is mother's marital history? Has mother named anyone? Has he acknowledged or denied paternity – verbally or in writing? Did he sign a declaration of paternity at the hospital? Has any man come forward himself? Has he signed an acknowledgement of paternity? How long have mother and alleged father known each other? Have they/do they live together? Has he supported mother and/or child? Has he lived with or offered a home for child? Has any court made an order of paternity – for whom, what court, when? Has paternity testing been requested/completed? What were results?

FAMILY LAW STATUS

Has there been an open Family Law Court case or order made on this child prior to this dependency action? Which court? What is case number? What order was made?

PRIOR CHILD WELFARE HISTORY

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Date of Arrest/Conviction	Charge/s	Disposition

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY

Describe nature of Domestic Violence (DV) between adult partners

(List dates of incidents, persons involved, if known or whether the children or siblings were present or witnessed the incident(s). Describe severity of incident and any collateral agencies involved, Police, Hospital, DV agencies.)

DV Follow-Up Needed for Parent(s)/Legal Guardian:

Restraining Order

[] Not Applicable

[] Current – List effective dates:

Issued by: Civil Criminal Family Court

Status: In Force: Date due to expire:
Name of Restrained Perpetrator:
Parties Protected by Order:

Lapsed - Date expired:
Name of Restrained Perpetrator:
Parties Protected by Order:

Violated: Date(s) violation (s) occurred:

Past – Expiration dates, if known:

1) Date:
Name of Restrained Perpetrator:
Parties Protected by Order:

2) Date:
Name of Restrained Perpetrator:
Parties Protected by Order:

SIBLINGS

The child/ren on this report have no other siblings who are known to the Agency at this time.

The child/ren on this report have other siblings, as indicated below.

Name	DOB	Sex	Whereabouts	Petition #	Current Dependent? County? Status?

Contact and Placement

Mother Father Probate legal guardian Relative Foster care
 NREFM (non-relative extended family member)

RELATIVE/NREFM (non-relative extended family member) PLACEMENT INFORMATION
(Detention only)

The parents/guardian have not provided sufficient information regarding relatives for placement consideration.

There are no relatives to consider for placement.

The following relatives/possible NREFMs have been identified for assessment:

Detention Report _____

Name	Relationship	Assessed? (yes/no)	Approved? (yes/no)

The relative/NREFM home/s above was/were not approved because:

Relative/NREFM Approval

The fingerprinting of adults in the relative/NREFM home was completed on _____ .
 has not been completed.

The results of fingerprinting were received on _____ .
 are pending.

The relative/NREFM home selected for placement of the child was found to meet approved health and safety standards as of _____ .

VISITATION

Parents/legal guardians

Parents (and guardians) are entitled to visits, unless you can document detriment.

What is current visitation plan for child and parents/Probate guardian? Are parents complying with the plan? How do visits go? Prior to disposition, follow local Standing Order #201, unless following the order would be detrimental to child. What is the detriment? What is your recommended plan following disposition?

Others

Are there any relatives or other adults with whom the child is visiting, or should visit? What is the plan for those visits?

ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable

The following attachments identified in this report are attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference:

- Declaration of Parent Search (Form 1026 for Detention only)
- Current CES referral
- Previous CES referrals
- SFPD report
- CASARC report
- Medical report
- ICWA 010
- Other:

BASIS FOR NOT REQUESTING DETENTION *(Non-detention only)*

Describe the current type of referral (neglect and/or abuse)

Current Situation of the Parent/s

Current Situation of the Children

- child/ren's age (0 – 5 years)
- child/ren's significant diagnosed medical or mental disorder
- child/ren is/are of school age, but not attending school
- child/ren's diminished mental capacity (e.g. developmental delay, non-verbal)
- child/ren's diminished physical capacity (e.g. non-ambulatory, limited use of limbs)

PATERNITY/LEGAL RELATIONSHIPS

What information do you have on paternity? What is mother's marital history? Has mother named anyone? Has he acknowledged or denied paternity – verbally or in writing? Did he sign a declaration of paternity at the hospital? Has any man come forward himself? Has he signed an acknowledgement of paternity? How long have mother and alleged father known each other? Have they/do they live together? Has he supported mother and/or child? Has he lived with or offered a home for child? Has any court made an order of paternity – for whom, what court, when? Has paternity testing been requested/completed? What were results?

FAMILY LAW STATUS

Has there been an open Family Law Court case or order made on this child prior to this dependency action? Which court? What is case number? What order was made?

PRIOR CHILD WELFARE HISTORY

CRIMINAL HISTORY

Date of Arrest/Conviction	Charge/s	Disposition

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HISTORY

Describe nature of Domestic Violence (DV) between adult partners

DV Follow-Up Needed for Parent(s)/Legal Guardian:

(List dates of incidents, persons involved, if known or whether the children or siblings were present or witnessed the incident(s). Describe severity of incident and any collateral agencies involved, Police, Hospital, DV agencies.)

Restraining Order

Not Applicable

Current – List effective dates:

Issued by: Civil Criminal Family Court

Status: In Force: Date due to expire:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

Lapsed - Date expired:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

Violated: Date(s) violation (s) occurred:

Past – Expiration dates, if known:

1) Date:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

2) Date:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

SIBLINGS

The child/ren on this report have no other siblings who are known to the Agency at this time.

The child/ren on this report have other siblings, as indicated below.

Name	DOB	Sex	Whereabouts	Petition #	Current Dependent? County? Status?

ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable

The following attachments identified in this report are attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference:

Declaration of Parent Search (Form 1026 for Detention only)

- Current CES referral
- Previous CES referrals
- SFPD report
- CASARC report
- Medical report
- ICWA 010
- Other:

RECOMMENDATION

Signature format -----

San Francisco Human Services Agency /
Family and Children's Services Division
P.O. Box 7988
San Francisco, California 94120

**SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO**
400 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102

DISPOSITION REPORT

Hearing Date **Hearing Time** **Dept./Room** **Hearing Type/Subtype**
Jurisdiction/Disposition /
Settlement/Pretrial Conference

IN THE MATTER OF

Name **Date of Birth** **Age** **Sex** **Court Number**

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

CHILD'S WHEREABOUTS

<u>Child/ren's Name</u>	<u>Caretaker Name/Address</u>

PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS

Name/ **Address/** **Relationship/**
Birth date **Phone** **To Whom**

OTHERS

<u>Name/ Birth date</u>	<u>Address/ Phone</u>	<u>Relationship/ To Whom</u>
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ATTORNEYS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address/ Phone</u>	<u>Representing</u>
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INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT STATUS

LEGAL HISTORY

300 WIC Subsection(s)

<u>Initial Removal</u>	<u>Initial Detention Order</u>	<u>Initial Jurisdiction Finding</u>
<u>Initial Disposition Order</u>	<u>Initial 364 FM Review</u>	<u>Second 364 FM Review</u>
<u>Initial 366.21(e) – 6 Month FR Review</u>	<u>Initial 366.21(f) – 12 Month FR Review</u>	<u>Initial 366.22 – 18 Month FR Review</u>
<u>Initial 366.25 – 24 Month/PP Review</u>	<u>Initial 366.3 PP Review</u>	<u>Initial NMD Review</u>
<u>FR Services Terminated</u>	<u>Non-Reunification Ordered</u>	
<u>Initial Permanent Plan: Type/ Date Ordered</u>	<u>Current Permanent Plan: Type/ Date Ordered</u>	

Additional Legal History

JURISDICTION

Jurisdictional facts:

SEARCH RESULTS

PATERNITY/LEGAL RELATIONSHIPS

What information do you have on paternity? What is mother's marital history? Has mother named anyone? Has he acknowledged or denied paternity – verbally or in writing? Did he sign a declaration of paternity at the hospital? Has any man come forward himself? Has he signed an acknowledgement of paternity? How long have mother and alleged

father known each other? Have they/do they live together? Has he supported mother and/or child? Has he lived with or offered a home for child? Has any court made an order of paternity – for whom, what court, when? Has paternity testing been requested/completed? What were results?

FAMILY LAW STATUS

Has there been an open Family Law Court case or order made on this child prior to this dependency action? Which court? What is case number? What order was made?

FAMILY HISTORY

What was the history of both parents prior to their current involvement with HSA/Court, including relevant information that impacts their parenting? What prior child welfare/Court involvement has the family had with this child or siblings?

For a Probate guardianship case, what were the circumstances of appointment of the guardian?

Prior Child Welfare/Court Involvement with this Child or with Child’s Sibling/s

Caregiver/s’ History of Abuse or Neglect as a Child

Caregiver/s’ History of Mental Health Problem

Caregiver/s’ History of Drug and/or Alcohol Problem

Caregiver/s’ Criminal History

Caregiver/s’ History of Domestic Violence

Describe nature of Domestic Violence (DV) between adult partners

(List dates of incidents, persons involved, if known or whether the children or siblings were present or witnessed the incident(s). Describe severity of incident and any collateral agencies involved, Police, Hospital, DV agencies.)

Restraining Order

Not Applicable

Current – List effective dates:

Issued by: Civil Criminal Family Court

Status: In Force: Date due to expire:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

Lapsed - Date expired:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

Violated: Date(s) violation (s) occurred:

Past – Expiration dates, if known:

1) Date:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

2) Date:

Name of Restrained Perpetrator:

Parties Protected by Order:

CURRENT FAMILY ASSESSMENT/SOCIAL STUDY

Complete separate paragraphs for mother and father/s.

*Include the following and any other relevant information: What is current housing situation? Who lives in household? What is marital status? What is criminal history and how does it impact parenting? (Include details of criminal history if not included in Detention Report. Use Autotext code **rap** for formatting, if needed.) What is employment status/income? What are relevant cultural/social factors that impact functioning of parent? Are there domestic violence, drug abuse, and mental or physical health problems? What are family strengths?*

Current referral is for neglect abuse

Caregiver/s' Assessment of Incident (if current referral is for abuse only)

Caregiver/s' Current Housing Situation/Resource Management Skills/Basic Needs

Caregiver/s' Parenting Skills

Caregiver/s' Social Support System/Cultural Identity

Caregiver/s' Physical Health

Caregiver/s' Mental Health Status/Coping Skills

Caregiver/s' Current Substance Abuse/Use

Caregiver/s' Current Criminal Status

Caregiver/s' Household Relationships/Domestic Violence

CURRENT SITUATION OF CHILD

Complete separate paragraphs for each child.

*What is the **medical** (CHDP), **developmental**, **educational**, and **mental/emotional** status of child? Highlight those that require the court's continued supervision. What school does child attend (unless it should be kept confidential)? What are child's grade level, functioning, and grades? Does child attend day care/preschool? Does child have special needs? What*

services are being provided to meet them? Does child have special needs as a minor parent?
For youth 15 1/2 years or older: Has youth been referred to **ILS** or a similar emancipation program? Is youth participating in a program? What program? If not, why not? What efforts have been made to engage youth in an emancipation program? Is there an alternative way to assist youth in meeting his/her emancipation needs? If youth has not been referred to a program yet, what is the plan to do so?

Child's Medical/Physical Health

Child's Educational Status

Child's Developmental Status

Child's Mental/Emotional/Behavioral Status

Child's Family Relationships/Cultural Identity

Child's Peer/Adult Social Relationships

Status of Responsible Adult/Surrogate Parent

PLACEMENT OF CHILD

Type of Current Placement

Mother Father Probate legal guardian Relative Foster care
 NREFM (non-relative extended family member)

Appropriateness of Placement and Child's Adjustment

*Complete separate paragraphs for each child.
What is the basis for your placement decision? Respond to placement type:*

If child remains with parent/s (or Probate guardian): Why is it safe/appropriate for child to child in home, or be placed with previously non-custodial parent?

*If child is with a relative or NREFM: Why is child not being placed with either parent? If with a relative, what is relationship? Is the relative/NREFM interested in providing a permanent home for the child? **Note:** A parent's 1st cousin is now considered relative status.*

*If child is in foster care: Why is child not being placed with either parent, or with a relative or NREFM? What is type of foster placement - foster home, group home, residential treatment?
Is the foster parent interested in providing a permanent home for the child?*

For all: Has child had any placement changes since detention? When was child placed in current placement? How is child doing there? Why is this the most appropriate placement for child? If not, are there plans to change it in order to better meet child's needs? Is an out-of-county placement or ICPC needed? Why?

***Note:** Prior to disposition, follow Standing Order #202 only if child has to be removed from a relative where placement was authorized at Detention.*

RELATIVE/NREFM (non-relative extended family member) PLACEMENT INFORMATION

ε

The parents/guardian have not provided sufficient information regarding relatives for placement consideration.

No new information concerning relatives has been made available since Detention.

The following relatives/possible NREFMs have been identified for assessment:

Name	Relationship	Assessed? (yes/no)	Approved? (yes/no)

SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTACT

The child has no siblings who are known to the Department at this time.

The child has siblings, as indicated below. (*Siblings include full, half, and step relationships.*)

If child has siblings: The law states that HSA must develop and maintain relationships between siblings and place children together, if appropriate, using such factors as whether they were raised together and therefore have shared experiences and close bonds, and whether they want contact.

Who are the siblings? Where do they live – generally? Are they dependents? What is the relationship between siblings? Is it appropriate to develop or maintain a relationship? If they are not placed together, why not? Do they want to visit and maintain contact? What is the visitation/contact plan? Will efforts be made to place them together, or would it be detrimental? What is the detriment? Would maintaining sibling relationships impact this child’s placement and plan for permanency?

VISITATION

Parents/legal guardians

Parents (and guardians) are entitled to visits, unless you can document detriment.

What is current visitation plan for child and parents/Probate guardian? Are parents complying with the plan? How do visits go? Prior to disposition, follow local Standing Order #201, unless following the order would be detrimental to child. What is the detriment? What is your recommended plan following disposition?

Others

Are there any relatives or other adults with whom the child is visiting, or should visit? What is the plan for those visits?

REASONABLE EFFORTS (FR only)

Delete this section on an FM case.

Enter services offered/delivered to parents (Probate guardian) since the Detention Hearing. Information can be addressed in summary form as long as it is clear and specific. Do not enter a list of every single contact on the case. When did you meet with, talk with, or send a letter to parents (specific dates)? Did you discuss resources for services?

What services/agencies did you recommend and why? Did you contact any agencies yourself, or did you give parents information to contact them? Why was it more appropriate for the parents to make the call/contact themselves? Did you contact parents or program to see if they were participating? If they did not follow through, what did you do?

CONCURRENT PLANNING (FR only)

A Human Services Agency representative has advised the parents of their option to participate in adoption planning and to voluntarily relinquish the child for adoption, if an adoption agency is willing to accept the relinquishment. In addition, the parents have been advised that they may voluntarily enter into a Postadoption Contact Agreement, if agreed upon with the adoptive parents.

or

Relinquishment has not been discussed with the parents because:

What is the plan for achieving legal permanence for the child if efforts to reunify with the parents (or Probate guardian) fail?

What is the plan? If a plan has been not finalized yet, what efforts will continue to be made to develop a plan? Is child likely to be adopted if reunification fails?

SERVICE PLANS

Case Plan

A copy of the current Case Plan is attached to this report.

Recommended Services

*Using Autotext, enter Service Plan Heading/s (S01 – S05); then enter and number the appropriate FM/supportive or FR services (SR01 – SR35), if services are being provided. ***You do not have to offer services to the non-custodial parent on an FM case, but you can offer supportive services, not for the purpose of reunification, but to improve his/her parenting skills.****

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

Provide your opinions and assessments and the basis for them, not just a restatement of the facts of the case.

*Select and complete all appropriate sections below. **Delete all unused parts.** You can begin at the form field with a brief description of the current status of the case, and you may include any additional information, but the topics below that apply to this case must be addressed.*

You may have a combination of service options, such as providing services to mother, but not to father. If so, use both applicable service sections.

Family Maintenance

There is a need for Court intervention, and alternative interventions (voluntary services) are not appropriate because:

Why you are recommending FM rather than voluntary services or removal?

Family Reunification

There is a need for Court intervention and placement, and return of child would be detrimental to the safety, protection, or emotional or physical well being of the child because:

Why you are recommending FR rather than FM or voluntary services? Why would child be at risk in the home of parents? What have parents' responses been to services offered to this point?

Providing Services to Parent/s/Guardian

The Human Services Agency recommends that services be provided to _____, in spite of the fact that

- W&I Code §361.5(b), non-reunification, applies.
- W&I Code §361.5(e), incarcerated parent/guardian, applies.
- alleged biological father has not obtained presumed father status.

This recommendation is being made because:

Why are you recommending FR services in the above circumstance? What is the specific reason §361.5 would apply? Why would it not be detrimental to child for services to be provided to an incarcerated parent? (Refer to §361.5 section of report handbook.) What steps has alleged or biological father taken to obtain presumed father status? Why is it appropriate to assist him?

The Human Services Agency recommends that supportive services be provided to the non-custodial parent, (name), not for the purpose of reunification, but in order to improve his/her parenting skills, because:

Supportive services can be provided to the non-custodial parent while custodial parent receives FM services. Why are you recommending that supportive services be offered? Will s/he be residing in the home, or co-parenting child even if not residing in the home?

Not Providing Services to Parent/s/Guardian

The Human Services Agency recommends that no services be provided to _____, since

- W&I Code §361.5(b), non-reunification, applies.
- W&I Code §361.5(e), incarcerated parent/guardian, applies.
- alleged biological father has not obtained presumed father status.
- s/he is a non-custodial parent on an FM case.
- the case is proceeding to legal guardianship in lieu of dependency.

This recommendation is being made because:

Why you are not recommending services in the above circumstance? What is the specific reason §361.5 would apply? Why would it be detrimental to child for services to be provided to an incarcerated parent? (Refer to §361.5 section of report handbook.) Has alleged or biological father taken any steps to obtain presumed father status? Why are you not recommending any services for non-custodial parent? Will s/he not be a member of household or co-parenting child? Why are you recommending guardianship in lieu of dependency? Do parents agree with the guardianship plan?

ATTACHMENTS

Select one and delete other.

Note: When attaching CES referrals, include only the allegations and id pages, (with name of referent redacted, if necessary). If identity of referent needs to be disclosed, the Court will order

it. Be prepared to provide it immediately in Court.

Not applicable

The following attachments identified in this report are attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference:

Declaration of Parent Search (Form 1027 or 1027A)

Current CES referral

Previous CES referrals

SFPD report

CASARC report

Medical report

Other:

Signature format -----

Appendix B. Stage I Data Extraction Codebook

Survey Question	Document	Location	Response Options	Definitions
Family ID				
Court status at case opening	ERTS	section 2	Non-court FM In-home Out of home Right to release Missing N/A	<i>If both "Right to release" and another option are selected, enter the other option</i>
Type of maltreatment	ERTS	section 4	Physical abuse Emotional abuse Neglect Sexual abuse Domestic violence Tox positive birth	<i>If the ERTS does not have a type of maltreatment checked, review the DR for this info</i> Enter Tox positive birth if the child was exposed to drugs in utero (ex. "drug exposed infant")
Does the family have prior investigations	ERTS	section 4	No Yes, one or two Yes, three or more Yes, number not specified	Enter No if the prior investigations box is not checked Enter Yes, number not specified if the prior investigations box is checked but a number is not listed
Does the family have a prior failed reunification or death of a child due to abuse or neglect?	ERTS	section 4	No Yes	Enter Yes if the prior investigations box is checked Enter No if the prior failed reunification box is not checked and the DR doesn't list a prior failed reunification
Family's preferred language	ERTS	section 5	English Spanish Other	Enter English if an interpreter is not needed and no other language is listed under "Language" Enter Spanish if Spanish is listed under "Language" Enter Other if any language other than Spanish is listed under "Language"

Is the MOTHER identified at case opening?	ERTS	section 2 section 17 narrative	Yes No	Enter Yes if MOTHER is listed in "Case Name", child is placed with mother (section 2), mother was contacted (section 17), or mother is listed in the narrative
Is MOTHER's location known at case opening?	ERTS	section 2 section 17 narrative	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if child was removed from mother's care, child is placed with mother (section 2), contact was made with mother (section 17), or the narrative notes that mother was contacted Enter N/A if mother is not identified. Enter No otherwise
Is FATHER identified at case opening?	ERTS	section 2 section 17 narrative	Yes No	Enter Yes if FATHER is listed in "Case Name", child is placed with father(section 2), father was contacted (section 17), or father is listed in the narrative
Is FATHER's location known at case opening?	ERTS	section 2 section 17 narrative	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if child was removed from father's care, child is placed with father (section 2), contact was made with father (section 17), or the narrative notes that father was contacted Enter N/A if father is not identified. Enter No otherwise
Was there contact with MOTHER?	ERTS	section 17narrative	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if there is at least one date listed for MOTHER in section 17 or the narrative notes that mother was contacted Enter No if there are no dates listed for MOTHER and the narrative does not note that mother was contactedEnter N/A if MOTHER is not identified or location is unknown
Was there contact with FATHER?	ERTS	section 17 narrative	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if there is at least one date listed for FATHER in section 17 or the narrative notes that father was contacted Enter No if there are no dates listed for FATHER and the narrative does not note that father was contacted Enter N/A if FATHER is not identified or location is unknown

How many children are involved in the case?	DR	In the matter of		<i>Count only children who assigned a case number</i>
Child's age	DR	In the matter of		<i>Enter age as a whole number (ex. 1, 2, 9) If the child is under 1 year old, enter age in months (ex. 3 months)</i>
Child's gender	DR	In the matter of		<i>Enter the child's gender as listed If the child is transgender, enter the gender listed</i>
Is MOTHER identified?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No	Enter Yes if MOTHER is listed under "Name/Birthday" Enter No otherwise
MOTHER's age	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians		Enter age in years as a whole number Enter 999 if MOTHER is not identified or is deceased Enter 888 if age is not listed
Is MOTHER's location known?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if "known" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter No if "unknown" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter N/A if MOTHER is not identified
Does MOTHER live in another country?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if "lives in another country" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter No if "lives in another country" is not listed under "Address/Phone" Enter N/A if MOTHER's location is not known
How many fathers are there?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians		<i>Include fathers who have not been identified Ex. A case where an alleged father takes a paternity test that shows that he is not the father but no other father is mentioned has 2 fathers - the alleged father who was tested and the unidentified biological father</i>
Is FATHER identified?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No	Enter Yes if FATHER is listed under "Name/Birthday" Enter No otherwise

Is FATHER's location known?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if "known" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter No if "unknown" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter N/A if FATHER is not identified
Does FATHER live in another country?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if "lives in another country" is listed under "Address/Phone" Enter No if "lives in another country" is not listed under "Address/Phone" Enter N/A if FATHER'S location is not known
What is FATHER's relationship to the children as listed in the Parents/Legal Guardians section?	DR	Parents/Legal Guardians	Biological father Presumed father Alleged father Other None Missing N/A	<i>Select a relationship for each child involved in the case</i> Enter None if father is not related to that child Enter N/A if FATHER is not identified
What is FATHER's relationship to the children as listed in the Paternity/Legal Relationships section?	DR	Paternity/Legal Relationships	Biological father Presumed father Court presumed father Alleged father Other None Missing	<i>Select a relationship for each child involved in the case</i> Biological - father has taken a DNA test to establish paternity Presumed - father is on the birth certificate or was married to mother at least 6 months prior to birth or signed Declaration of Paternity Court presumed - court has granted the father presumed father status Alleged - father says he is the father or mother says he is the father but he is not on the birth certificate Other - father is the grandfather, sibling, uncle, etc. Enter None if father is not related to that child If both Presumed and Court Presumed apply, enter Court Presumed

Was MOTHER interviewed for the Disposition Report?	DR	all narrative sections	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if any of the narrative sections note that MOTHER provided information to the worker Enter No if none of the narrative sections note that MOTHER provided information to the worker Enter N/A if MOTHER is not identified or location is not known
Was FATHER interviewed for the Disposition Report?	DR	all narrative sections	Yes No N/A	Enter Yes if any of the narrative sections note that FATHER provided information to the worker Enter No if none of the narrative sections note that FATHER provided information to the worker Enter N/A if FATHER is not identified or location is not known
Does MOTHER/FATHER have prior child welfare involvement?	DR	Family History Prior Child Welfare/Court Involvement	No Yes, prior referrals Yes, prior investigations Yes, prior substantiated case(s) Missing	<i>Enter the most in-depth type of involvement (substantiated case > investigation > referral) If narrative lists a referral and says the case was "inconclusive" or "unfounded", that means the referral was investigated. If narrative lists a referral and says "evaluated out" or "EO", that means there was not an investigation</i> Enter Missing if the report does not include information about prior CW involvement Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified
Did MOTHER/FATHER experience abuse or neglect as a child?	DR	Family History Caregiver/s' History of Abuse or Neglect as a Child	No Yes Missing N/A	Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, CMS/CWS, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER experienced abuse or neglect as a child Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER did not experience abuse or neglect as a child Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's history of abuse or neglect as a child Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted

Does MOTHER/FATHER have a history of any mental health problems?	DR	Family History Caregiver/s' History of Mental Health Problem	No Yes Missing N/A	Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, hospital reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has a history of mental health problems Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have a history of mental health problems Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's history of mental health problems Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted
Does MOTHER/FATHER have a history of any drug and/or alcohol problems?	DR	Family History Caregiver/s' History of Drug and/or Alcohol Problem	No Yes Missing N/A	Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, hospital reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has a history of drug/alcohol problems Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have a history of drug/alcohol problems Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's history of drug/alcohol problems Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted
Does MOTHER/FATHER have a criminal history?	DR	Family History Caregiver/s' Criminal History	No Yes Missing N/A	Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has a criminal history Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have a criminal history Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's criminal history Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted

Does MOTHER/FATHER have a history of domestic violence?	DR	Family History Caregiver/s' History of Domestic Violence	No Yes Missing N/A	<p><i>Include both instances where MOTHER/FATHER is the victim and where MOTHER/FATHER is the perpetrator</i></p> <p>Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has a history of domestic violence</p> <p>Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have a history of domestic violence</p> <p>Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's history of domestic violence</p> <p>Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted</p>
Does MOTHER/FATHER have stable housing?	DR	Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Parenting Skills	No Yes Missing N/A	<p>Enter Yes if MOTHER/FATHER owns a home, is renting, is living with a relative or friend, etc.</p> <p>Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's current housing situation</p> <p>Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted</p> <p>Enter No otherwise</p> <p>Hotel - enter No if living in a hotel</p> <p>Incarcerated - enter No if currently incarcerated</p> <p>Treatment facility - enter No if currently in a treatment facility</p>

<p>Are there concerns about MOTHER/FATHER's parenting skills?</p>	<p>DR</p>	<p>Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Social Support System/Cultural Identity</p>	<p>No Yes Missing N/A</p>	<p>Enter Yes if MOTHER/FATHER has at least one person listed in this section and that person is able to provide resources (housing, financial support, emotional support, etc.) Enter No if MOTHER/FATHER does not have at least one person that is able to provide resources Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's social support Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted</p> <p><i>DO NOT include court mandated therapists as social support</i> <i>DO include therapist as social support if the caregiver sought therapy on their own without a court mandate</i></p>
<p>Does MOTHER/FATHER have a social support system?</p>	<p>DR</p>	<p>Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Physical Health</p>	<p>No Yes Missing N/A</p>	<p><i>Include short-term and chronic illnesses and injuries</i> Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has physical health concerns Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have any physical health concerns Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's physical health Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted <i>Pregnancy</i> Enter Yes if the pregnancy is confirmed Enter No if the pregnancy is suspected but not confirmed</p>

Does MOTHER/FATHER have any physical health concerns?	DR	Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Mental Health Status/Coping Skills	No Yes Missing N/A	<p><i>Include short-term and chronic illnesses</i></p> <p>Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has mental health concerns Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have any mental health concerns Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's mental health Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted</p>
Does MOTHER/FATHER have any mental health concerns?	DR	Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Current Substance Abuse/Use	No Yes Missing N/A	<p>Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER has a substance abuse problem Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have a substance abuse problem Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's substance use Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted</p>
Does MOTHER/FATHER have any current substance use problems?	DR	Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Current Criminal Status	None Probation/parole Incarcerated Arrested, awaiting resolution Missing N/A	<p>Enter Parole/probation if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER is currently on parole/probation Enter Incarcerated if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER is currently incarcerated Enter Arrested, awaiting resolution if MOTHER/FATHER has been arrested but not charged, is awaiting trial, or has an outstanding warrant Enter None if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER does not have any current criminal justice involvement Enter Missing if the report does not include</p>

				information about MOTHER/FATHER's current criminal justice involvement Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified
What is MOTHER/FATHER's current criminal justice involvement	DR	Current Family Assessment/ Social Study Caregiver/s' Household Relationships/Domestic Violence	No Yes Missing N/A	<i>Include both instances where MOTHER/FATHER is the victim and where MOTHER/FATHER is the perpetrator</i> Enter Yes if any source (mother, father, relative, police reports, etc.) reports that MOTHER/FATHER's current relationship is characterized by domestic violence Enter No if narrative states that MOTHER/FATHER's current relationship is characterized by domestic violence Enter Missing if the report does not include information about MOTHER/FATHER's current relationship Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted
Child's current placement	DR	Placement of the Child	Mother Father Probate legal guardian Relative Foster care NREFM	<i>Select a placement for each child involved in the case</i>
Is MOTHER/FATHER offered visitation?	DR	Visitation Parent/Legal Guardian	No Yes Missing N/A	Enter Yes if narrative lists a visitation schedule, notes that visits are being or will be arranged, or notes that MOTHER/FATHER has turned down visitation Enter No if narrative notes that MOTHER/FATHER is not being offered visitation Enter Missing if the report does not include information about visitation for MOTHER/FATHER Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted, if the children are living with MOTHER/FATHER, or MOTHER/FATHER lives in another country

Is MOTHER/FATHER offered services?	DR	Service Plans Recommended Services	No Yes, therapy (individual, family, group, etc.) Yes, domestic violence group/counseling Yes, substance abuse assessment or treatment Yes, parent education program Yes, other N/A	<i>Select the types of services listed for MOTHER under "Recommended Services"</i> <i>DO NOT include non-services such as visitation, restraining orders, signing consent forms, cooperating with child welfare work, providing supervision, etc.</i> Enter N/A if MOTHER is not identified Enter No if no services are listed for MOTHER/FATHER
If MOTHER/FATHER is not offered services, what reason is provided?	DR	Service Plans Not Providing Services to Parents/Guardians		<i>Common answers: - parental rights were previously terminated for the child's sibling- alleged/biological father has failed to obtain presumed father status- incarcerated parent/guardian applies</i> Enter 888 if no reason is provided
Were the children living with MOTHER/FATHER at the time of the referral/investigation?	DR	Assessment/Evaluation	No Yes N/A	Enter Yes if children and MOTHER/FATHER resided in the same home at the time of the referral Enter N/A if MOTHER is not identified Enter No otherwise
Did MOTHER/FATHER perpetrate the maltreatment?	DR	Assessment/Evaluation	No Yes N/A	Enter Yes if MOTHER is listed as a perpetrator; do not include failure to protect Enter N/A if MOTHER is not identified Enter No otherwise

<p>If MOTHER/FATHER is not identified, did the worker attempt to identify MOTHER/FATHER?</p>			<p>No Yes Parent is identified</p>	<p>Enter Yes if worker asks current caregiver and/or family member's about MOTHER'/FATHER's identity or worker seeks help from other agency (ex. child support) in identifying MOTHER Enter Parent is identified if MOTHER/FATHER is listed anywhere on ERTS or DR Enter No otherwise</p>
<p>If MOTHER/FATHER's location is unknown, did the worker attempt to locate MOTHER/FATHER?</p>			<p>No Yes N/A Parent's location is known</p>	<p>Enter Yes if worker asks current caregiver and/or family member's about MOTHER's location or worker seeks help from other agency (ex. child support) in identifying MOTHER/FATHER Enter Parent's location is known if address is listed as known in DR Parent/Legal Guardians or MOTHER/FATHER was contacted at any point Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER has not been identified Enter No otherwise</p>
<p>Did the worker contact MOTHER/FATHER?</p>			<p>No Yes N/A</p>	<p>Enter Yes if the a contact is listed in ERTS section 17, a phone or in-person contact is listed in DR Reasonable Efforts or narratives, MOTHER/FATHER was interviewed for the DR, Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified, MOTHER/FATHER's location is unknown Enter No otherwise</p>
<p>If MOTHER/FATHER was not contacted, did the worker attempt to contact MOTHER/FATHER?</p>			<p>No Yes N/A Parent was contacted</p>	<p>Enter Yes if the worker notes in DR Reasonable Efforts or narrative that they called MOTHER/FATHER, mailed MOTHER/FATHER a letter, or sent MOTHER/FATHER an email Enter Parent was contacted if MOTHER/FATHER was contacted Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or MOTHER/FATHER's location is unknown Enter No otherwise</p>

Is MOTHER/FATHER included in the case plan?	DR	Service Plan Case Plan	No Yes N/A	Enter Yes if MOTHER/FATHER is mentioned in the case plan or one of the Recommended Services is "developing and signing a Case Plan" Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified or has not been contacted Enter No otherwise
Is MOTHER/FATHER being considered as a potential placement?	DR	Service Plan	No Yes N/A	Enter Yes if the children are placed with MOTHER/FATHER, reunification with MOTHER/FATHER is being pursued, or the narrative notes that MOTHER/FATHER was considered as a placement but rejected Enter N/A if MOTHER/FATHER is not identified, location is unknown, or has not been contacted Enter No otherwise

Appendix C. California Welfare & Institutions Code §361.5b Reunification By-pass

WIC Section	Provision
361.5(b)(1)	The whereabouts of the parent or guardian is unknown. A finding pursuant to this paragraph shall be supported by an affidavit or by proof that a reasonably Diligent Search has failed to locate the parent or guardian. The posting or publication of notices is not required in that search. [Note: If the whereabouts of the parent become known within 6 months of the out of home placement, the court shall order the social worker to provide family reunification services (WIC § 361.5(d).]
361.5(b)(2)	The parent or guardian is suffering from a diagnosed mental disability and that renders him/her incapable of utilizing services. Mental disability described in Family Code 7827.
361.5(b)(3)	The child or a sibling was previously adjudicated a dependent pursuant to any subdivision of Section 300 as a result of physical or sexual abuse and removed from the custody of a parent or pursuant to Section 361, returned to the custody of the parent or legal guardian from whom they had been originally removed, and is now being removed due to additional physical or sexual abuse.
361.5(b)(4)	The parent or guardian of the child has caused the death of another child through abuse or neglect.
361.5(b)(5)	The child was brought within the jurisdiction of the court under WIC § 300(e), because of the conduct of that parent or guardian
361.5(b)(6)	The child has been adjudicated a dependent pursuant to WIC Section 300 as a result of severe sexual abuse or the infliction of severe physical harm to the child, a sibling or a half-sibling by the parent or guardian, as defined in this subdivision, and the court makes a factual finding that it would not benefit the child to pursue family reunification services with the offending parent or guardian.
361.5(b)(7)	The parent is not receiving reunification services for a sibling or a half-sibling of the child pursuant to paragraph (3), (5), or (6).
361.5(b)(8)	The child was conceived by means of the commission of an offense listed in Penal Code § 288 (lewd or lascivious acts), or 288.5 (continuous sexual abuse of a child), or by an act committed outside of this state that, if committed in this state, would constitute one of those offences. This only applies to the offending parent.
361.5(b)(9)	The child has been willfully abandoned by the parent or guardian as described by WIC § 300(g), and the court finds that the abandonment itself constitutes a serious danger to the child.

361.5(b)(10)	<p>Sibling Permanent Plan Ordered/Parental Rights Severed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The court ordered a permanent plan for any siblings or half-siblings of the child because the parent or guardian failed to reunify after the siblings or half-siblings had been removed from their custody. • Parental rights terminated over any siblings or half - siblings and according to the findings of the court, this parent or legal guardian has not made a reasonable effort to treat the problems that led to the removal of the sibling or half-sibling of that child from that parent or guardian.
361.5(b)(11)	<p>The parental rights of a parent over any sibling or half-sibling has been permanently severed, and this parent is the same parent described in subdivision (a), and that, according to the finding of the court, this parent has not subsequently made a reasonable effort to treat the problems that led to the removal of the sibling or half-sibling of that child from that parent.</p>
361.5(b)(12)	<p>The parent or guardian of the child has been convicted of a Violent Felony, as defined in Penal Code § 667.5(c). (See definition of violent Felony below.)</p>
361.5(b)(13)	<p>The parent or legal guardian has a history of extensive, abusive, and chronic use of drugs or alcohol abuse and has resisted prior treatment for this problem during a three-year period immediately prior to the filing of the petition that brought the child to the court's attention. The parent or guardian has refused to comply with a drug or alcohol treatment program as described in the case plan required by WIC § 358.1 on at least two occasions, even though the programs identified were available and accessible.</p>
361.5(b)(14)	<p>“Waiver of services :” The parent or guardian advises the court that he/she does not wish to receive FM, FR services , or have the child returned to, or placed in, his/her custody. (Formerly WIC § 361.5(b)13).</p>
361.5(b)(15)	<p>The parent or guardian had, on one or more occasions, willfully abducted the child, sibling, or half-sibling from his/her placement and refused to disclose said child's or child's sibling or half-sibling's whereabouts, refused to return physical custody of the child, or child's sibling or half sibling to his/her placement, or to return physical custody of the child, child's sibling or half-sibling to the social worker. (Formerly WIC § 261.5(b) 14).</p>
361.5(b)(16)	<p>The parent or guardian has been required by the court to be registered on a sex offender registry under the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 16913(a)), as required in Section 106 (b)(2)(B)(xvi)(VI) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. Sec. 5106a(2)(B)(xvi)(VI).</p>

361.5(e)1	<p>If the parent or guardian is incarcerated, institutionalized, or detained by the United States Department of Homeland Security, or has been deported to his or her country of origin, the court shall order reasonable services unless the court determines, by clear and convincing evidence, those services would be detrimental to the child.</p> <p><i>(In determining detriment, the court shall consider the age of the child, the degree of parent-child bonding, the length of the sentence, the length and nature of the treatment, the nature of the crime or illness, the degree of detriment to the child if services are not offered and, for children 10 years of age or older, the child's attitude toward the implementation of family reunification services, the likelihood of the parent's discharge from incarceration, institutionalization, or detention within the reunification time limitations described in subdivision (a), and any other appropriate factors. In determining the content of reasonable services, the court shall consider the particular barriers to an incarcerated, institutionalized, detained, or deported parent's access to those court-mandated services and ability to maintain contact with his or her child, and shall document this information in the child's case plan.)</i></p>
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Appendix D. Subsample Demographics

Table 19. Research question 1 subsample demographics

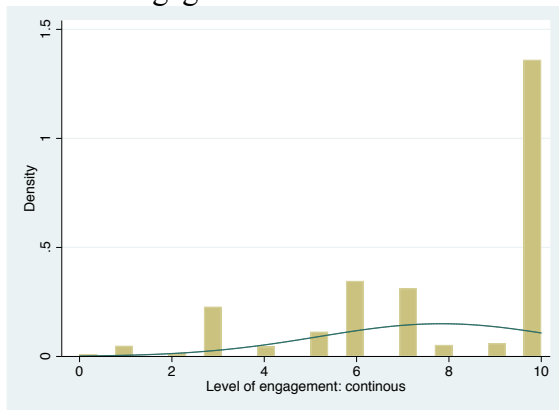
	All fathers		Father 1		Father 2		Father 3	
	N = 398		N = 340		N = 53		N = 5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age								
Under 20	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
20 to 29	70	17.59	58	17.06	10	18.87	2	40.00
30 to 39	138	34.67	123	36.18	13	24.53	2	40.00
40 to 49	86	21.61	74	21.76	11	20.75	1	20.00
50 to 59	33	8.29	31	9.12	2	3.77	0	0.00
60 to 69	6	1.51	6	1.76	0	0.00	0	0.00
Missing	65	16.33	48	14.12	17	32.08	0	0.00
Residing with child at time of referral								
Yes	112	28.14	108	31.76	4	7.55	0	0.00
No	286	71.86	232	68.24	49	92.45	5	100.00
Relationship to the child(ren)								
Biological								
father	11	2.76	10	2.94	1	1.89	0	0.00
Presumed father	92	23.12	79	23.24	12	22.64	1	20.00
Alleged Father	295	74.12	251	73.82	40	75.47	4	80.00

Table 20. Research question 2 subsample demographics

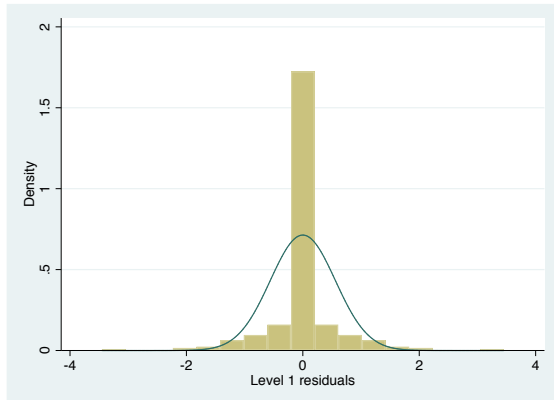
	Mothers		Fathers	
	N = 341		N = 341	
	N	%	N	%
Age				
Under 20	9	2.64	0	0.00
20 to 29	110	32.26	58	17.01
30 to 39	150	43.99	123	36.07
40 to 49	54	15.84	74	21.70
50 to 59	4	1.17	31	9.09
60 to 69	2	0.59	6	1.76
Missing	12	3.52	49	14.37
Residing with child at time of referral				
Yes	292	85.63	108	31.67
No	49	14.37	233	68.33
Relationship to the child(ren)				
Biological				
parent	341	100.00	11	3.23
Presumed				
father	--	--	79	23.17
Alleged Father	--	--	251	73.61

Appendix E. Research Question 2 Histograms and Tables

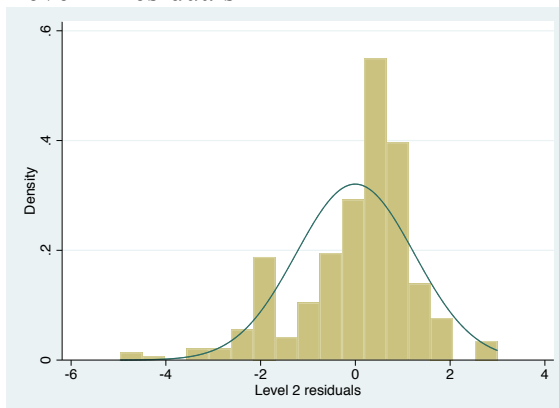
Level of engagement



Level 1 Residuals



Level 2 Residuals



Research Question 2: Examining covariates of level of engagement

Table 21. Multilevel linear regression models estimating level of engagement as a function parent type - Parent covariates (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Null Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Primary Predictor					
Parent Type (<i>Father used as reference</i>)		2.07 (0.17)***	0.35 (0.18)†	0.29 (0.14)*	0.17 (0.13)
Parent Level Covariates					
Demographic					
Age (<i>17 years old used as reference</i>)			-0.01 (0.01)		
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)			2.48 (0.31)***		
Perpetrator of maltreatment			0.70 (0.33)*		
Residence x Perpetrator			-0.91 (0.44)*		
Parent's history					
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)					
Prior referral(s)				-0.06 (0.34)	
Prior investigation(s)				0.49 (0.25)*	
Prior substantiation(s)				-0.27 (0.21)	
History of maltreatment as a child				0.09 (0.16)	
History of mental health concerns				-0.13 (0.17)	
History of substance abuse				0.82 (0.30)**	
History of criminal justice involvement				0.18 (0.26)	
History of domestic violence				-0.46 (0.19)*	
History of criminal justice involvement x History of substance abuse				-0.76 (0.39)	
Parent's current situation					
Unstable housing					-0.01 (0.19)
Lack of social support					-0.15 (0.23)
Concerns about manner in which parent					-0.12 (0.17)

interacts with the child					
Physical health concerns					0.15 (0.16)
Mental health concern					0.01 (0.16)
Concerns about substance abuse					-0.19 (0.17)
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)					
Probation/parole					0.02 (0.19)
Arrested					-0.07 (0.26)
Incarcerated					-0.75 (0.36)*
Domestic violence					0.16 (0.21)

Between level ψ	0.50	1.14	0.91	1.04	0.85
Within level θ	2.61	2.16	1.72	0.79	0.70

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Table 22. Multilevel linear regression models estimating level of engagement as a function parent type - Family covariates (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Null Model	Model 1	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Primary Predictor					
Parent Type (<i>Father used as reference</i>)		2.07 (0.17)***	2.06 (0.17)***	2.08 (0.17)***	2.07 (0.17)***
Family Level Covariates					
Demographic					
Number of children			0.29 (0.12)*		
Child's Age			-0.02 (0.02)†		
Child's Gender (<i>reference group: Male</i>)			0.40 (0.20)		
Child's Ethnicity (<i>reference group: White</i>)					
Black			-0.07 (0.32)		
Hispanic			0.39 (0.31)		
Other			0.55 (0.35)		
Type of maltreatment (most severe) (<i>reference group: At risk, sibling abused</i>)					
Caretaker absence/incapacity				-0.48 (0.53)	
Emotional abuse				0.22 (0.82)	
General neglect				0.03 (0.49)	
Physical abuse				0.38 (0.61)	
Severe neglect				0.39 (0.71)	
Sexual abuse				0.82 (1.19)	
Type of primary placement (<i>reference group: Foster home</i>)					
Congregate care					-0.16 (0.48)
Kinship care					0.41 (0.22)
Mixed					-0.66 (0.56)
Other					-1.20 (0.58)
Between level ψ	0.50	1.14	1.08	1.12	1.09
Within level θ	2.61	2.16	2.16	2.16	2.16

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Appendix F. Research Question 3 Covariates Tables

Table 23. Research Question 3a: Examining covariates of case length

Child-level covariates

	β (SE)
Child-level Covariates	
Demographic	
Child's Age	-0.74 (2.49)
Child's Gender (<i>reference group: Male</i>)	-25.6 (21.03)
Child's Ethnicity (<i>reference group: White</i>)	
Black	28.04 (33.96)
Hispanic	13.87 (33.47)
Other	70.77 (37.41)
Type of maltreatment (most severe) (<i>reference group: At risk, sibling abused</i>)	
Caretaker absence/ incapacity	-121.1 (45.44)
Emotional abuse	114.8 (77.39)
General neglect	-29.98 (38.66)
Physical abuse	-45.91 (56.87)
Severe neglect	-89.75 (59.74)
Sexual abuse	-37.4 (91.02)
Type of primary placement (<i>reference group: foster home</i>)	
Congregate care	244.84 (66.13)***
Kinship care	93.04 (23.28)***
Mixed	293 (96.68)**
Permanency outcome (<i>reference group: Reunification</i>)	
Adoption	547.67 (30.74)***
Kinship guardianship	433.31 (40.01)***
Non-kin guardianship	441.24 (35.12)***
Other	-26.12 (88.16)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$; † $p = 0.05$

Father-level Covariates

	β (SE)
Father-level Covariates	
Demographic	
Age (<i>17 years old used as reference</i>)	-2.64 (4.46)
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)	-210.26 (115.2)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	-113.35 (121.47)
Residence x Perpetrator	32.45 (171.48)
Father's history	
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)	
Prior referral(s)	-344.7 (172.21)
Prior investigation(s)	-261.86 (106.12)*
Prior substantiation(s)	-250.86 (102.71)*
History of maltreatment as a child	214.46 (87.26)
History of mental health concerns	-77.66 (85.52)
History of substance abuse	-300.86 (160.38)
History of criminal justice involvement	-168.16 (141.44)
History of domestic violence	-228.12 (81.98)
History of substance abuse x history of criminal justice involvement	492.44 (173.43)
Father's current situation	
Unstable housing	289 (93.10)**
Lack of social support	-44.93 (97.27)
Concerns about manner in which parent interacts with the child	-71.44 (92.34)
Physical health concerns	-46.35 (86.00)
Mental health concern	-14.29 (132.10)
Concerns about substance abuse	-40.37 (107.34)
Criminal justice involvement	
Probation/parole	-66.15 (82.87)
Arrested, awaiting resolution	302.35 (156.49)
Incarcerated	53.56 (197.60)
Domestic violence	-202.76 (85.72)*
Mental health concern x concerns about substance abuse	301.94 (152.48)

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$; † $p = 0.05$

Mother-level covariates

	β (SE)
Mother-level Covariates	
Demographic	
Age (<i>17 years old used as reference</i>)	-4.73 (4.21)
Number of children	-1.36 (20.17)
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)	419.05 (228.26)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	450.54 (221.72)*
Residence x Perpetrator	-546.47 (251.04)*
Mother's history	
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)	
Prior referral(s)	-157.57 (111.57)
Prior investigation(s)	-144.25 (88.28)
Prior substantiation(s)	82.68 (86.31)
History of maltreatment as a child	-10.53 (54.44)
History of mental health concerns	-18.41 (63.77)
History of substance abuse	21.90 (98.90)
History of criminal justice involvement	-18.17 (81.51)
History of domestic violence	34.44 (55.95)
History of substance abuse x history of criminal justice involvement	131.96 (124.82)
Mother's current situation	
Unstable housing	256.25 (60.80)***
Lack of social support	-23.6 (72.86)
Concerns about manner in which parent interacts with the child	183.66 (62.21)**
Physical health concerns	-91.40 (54.70)
Mental health concern	70.60 (66.18)
Concerns about substance abuse	-104.16 (78.19)
Criminal justice involvement	
Probation/parole	62.67 (84.99)
Arrested, awaiting resolution	-75.09 (77.35)
Incarcerated	-52.68 (142.44)
Domestic violence	-207.19 (64.92)**

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Research Question 3b: Examining covariates of placement outcome

Table 24. Multinomial logistic regression models estimating permanency outcome as a function level of father engagement - Child covariates (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Still in Care	Adoption	Guardianship
Primary Predictor			
Father engagement	0.86 (0.07)	0.76 (0.05)***	0.85 (0.06)*
Child-level Covariates			
Demographic			
Child's Age	0.98 (0.04)	0.65 (0.05)***	0.99 (0.04)
Child's Gender (<i>reference group: Male</i>)	1.40 (0.64)	1.53 (0.55)	1.13 (0.43)
Child's Ethnicity (<i>reference group: White</i>)			
Black	1.37 (1.00)	1.39 (0.77)	2.19 (1.56)
Hispanic	1.76 (1.26)	1.43 (0.80)	2.18 (1.56)
Other	0.29 (0.35)	2.68 (1.62)	1.36 (1.12)
Type of primary placement (<i>reference group: foster home</i>)			
Kinship care	1.81 (0.83)	2.15 (0.79)*	6.48 (2.77)***

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Table 25. Multinomial logistic regression models estimating permanency outcome as a function level of father engagement - Father covariates (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Still in Care	Adoption	Guardianship
Primary Predictor			
Father engagement	0.76 (0.13)	0.76 (0.11)	0.98 (0.16)
Father-level Covariates			
Demographic			
Age (<i>17 years old used as reference</i>)	1.05 (0.04)	0.97 (0.03)	0.96 (0.04)
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)	4.88 (5.28)	1.83 (1.44)	0.54 (0.53)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	7.90 (8.00)*	0.23 (0.31)	0.39 (0.39)
Residence x Perpetrator	0.06 (0.09)	2.21 (3.39)	2.62 (3.64)
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)			
Prior referral(s)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	2.05 (2.06)
Prior investigation(s)	0.67 (0.56)	0.15 (0.17)	1.31 (1.14)
Prior substantiation(s)	0.44 (0.36)	1.73 (1.12)	3.98 (3.05)
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)			
Probation/parole	2.87 (2.18)	4.69 (2.91)*	2.04 (1.39)
Arrested	0.54 (0.74)	0.00 (0.00)	2.18 (2.13)
Incarcerated	0.00 (0.00)	4.02 (3.45)	1.92 (1.89)

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05

Table 26. Multinomial logistic regression models estimating permanency outcome as a function level of father engagement - Mother covariates (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Still in Care	Adoption	Guardianship
Primary Predictor			
Father engagement	0.84 (0.07)*	0.78 (0.06)**	0.90 (0.08)
Mother-level Covariates			
Demographic			
Age (<i>17 years old used as reference</i>)	1.05 (0.03)	0.91 (0.03)**	0.98 (0.03)
Number of children	0.75 (0.17)	0.38 (0.15)*	0.94 (0.19)
Residence (<i>resident vs. non-resident</i>)	4.24 (5.85)	1.24 (2.14)	4.11 (5.40)
Perpetrator of maltreatment	19.29 (24.78)	6.34 (9.97)	0.00 (0.00)
Residence x Perpetrator	0.04 (0.06)	0.53 (1.04)	92517.83 (460)
Prior child welfare involvement (<i>reference group: No prior involvement</i>)			
Prior referral(s)	0.20 (0.26)	0.57 (0.70)	3.76 (3.92)
Prior investigation(s)	1.11 (0.75)	0.79 (0.63)	5.11 (4.57)
Prior substantiation(s)	3.25 (1.88)*	6.3 (3.58)**	8.85 (7.48)
Criminal justice involvement (<i>reference group: no involvement</i>)			
Probation/parole	0.29 (0.26)	1.14 (0.66)	2.42 (1.43)
Arrested	0.25 (0.28)	1.44 (0.97)	0.95 (0.70)
Incarcerated	2.27 (2.07)	0.64 (0.80)	4.80 (4.20)

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.001; †p = 0.05