

Characteristics of Families with Informal Supervision

Agreements in Santa Clara County

by

Emilia Tyminski

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## Abstract

This research examines the child, parent and case characteristics of families with Informal Supervision Agreements that result in petitions for child removal being filed in the Juvenile Dependency court. Specifically, this study utilizes a longitudinal retrospective research design to test the hypothesis that among families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County, family characteristics including ethnic minority status, single parent households, younger children and the number of children in the home or allegations of neglect are more likely to result in petitions filed for child removal in the Juvenile Dependency Court. The quantitative data sample will consist of 250 informal supervision cases from the 2004-2005 entry cohort be collected from the Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) administrative database. Using cross-sectional survey research methods, the study will also explore the frequency of parental substance abuse among families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County. Twenty to thirty self-administered questionnaires will be completed with social workers, social work supervisors, and professionals of community-based providers contracted to provide services to families with Informal Supervision Agreements. The research will be conducted entirely in Santa Clara County within the Department of Family and Children's Services. Expected findings will present critical information that can guide child welfare practice in Santa Clara County. Additional implications from a transcultural perspective, specifically dynamics of power, oppression and structural contexts, are also discussed.

## Introduction

The child welfare system works towards the goals of ensuring the safety and well-being of children and their families (Reed & Karpilow, 2002). Despite the fact that the system is charged with the mission of protecting children from harm, the intervention occurs once allegations of abuse or neglect have been made and families are often already in crisis. In an effort to address this service gap, many counties offer early intervention services to families in the form of Informal Supervision Agreements (ISA) or Voluntary Family Maintenance (VFM). Specifically, ISAs or VFM are offered to families with incidences of child maltreatment which warrant the involvement of child protective services, but are not severe enough to necessitate participation of the dependency court. Families with an ISA are offered a case plan, services and monitoring; families who successfully complete their ISA are then able to exit the child welfare system. Conversely, families who do not satisfy the requirements of their ISA become deeper embedded into the system which results in increased scrutiny, more intensive services, court involvement and in some cases the removal of a child from the family's home.

In Santa Clara County there were 14,256 child maltreatment referrals made to the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2005; subsequently, 22.6% of those referrals were substantiated (Needell et al., 2008). Informal Supervision Agreements are utilized throughout Santa Clara County, however little is known regarding the characteristics of families who effectively complete the ISA requirements versus families who progress deeper into the child welfare system. This research examines the child, parent and case characteristics of families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County that result in petitions filed in the Juvenile Dependency court for child removal.

### *Relevance to Social Work*

The results of this research study will contribute to the social work knowledge base by informing the profession of the characteristics and needs of families who enter deeper into the child welfare system through failed Informal Supervision Agreements. This knowledge can be utilized to improve and guide child welfare practice to better address the needs of families. Additionally, an understanding of family characteristics will allow Santa Clara County to engage appropriate service providers in supporting families as well as to potentially develop targeted prevention efforts. Lastly, the findings may highlight some of the dynamics of power and oppression as well as the structural contexts which create the environmental stressors that can contribute to the occurrence of child maltreatment.

### Literature Review

#### *Background on Families in the Child Welfare System*

During the 2005 fiscal year, almost 3.6 million children in the United States were involved in a Child Protective Services (CPS) inquiry and approximately 899,000 children suffered maltreatment. Of these children, three-quarters had no prior CPS history of victimization and neglect was the most common form of maltreatment affecting nearly 63 percent of children. The majority of sufferers were girls accounting for 50.7 percent of victims while the youngest (birth to three years) children had the highest incidence of maltreatment and nearly three-quarters were victims of neglect (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). Clearly, the national trends indicate that the youngest population is most vulnerable and neglect was more prominent than all other forms of maltreatment combined. Neglect is the allegation designated when parental substance abuse is affecting the well-being of children and/or the parents fail to provide for the basic needs (food, shelter, clothing) of their children. In

California, 37,599 children were placed in foster care from July 2004 to June 2005 and 30,206 or 80.3 percent of the entries dealt with allegations of neglect (Needell et al., 2008). For the same time period, Santa Clara County's Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) placed a total of 1,227 children in out-of-home care and approximately three-quarters of the placements were due to allegations of neglect; furthermore, the number of placements has increased in subsequent years (Needell et al., 2008).

In light of the alarming rate at which children are entering the child welfare system (CWS), researchers speculate that certain family characteristics are salient and may predict the likelihood of entry into child welfare. Specifically, research addresses poverty, familial substance abuse, age of children, family size and structure, ethnicity, family dynamics, and domestic violence as factors in child maltreatment which may result in CPS involvement. However, the majority of research explores these family attributes in the context of risk factors for child abuse/neglect and initial involvement with child welfare. Additionally, current research explores family characteristics as they associate to outcomes such as reentry or reunification. For instance, studies indicate that living with a single mother, being of African-American descent, and allegations of neglect or dependency are correlated to a slower rate of reunification than observed among children with two parents, children of Caucasian descent, and children with allegations of abuse, respectively (Wells & Guo, 1999; Harris & Courtney, 2003). Further complicating the issue, many research findings regarding child welfare provide conflicting information, therefore making it difficult to draw conclusions as well as to accurately discern risk factors for maltreatment and/or predictors of successful outcomes. Some of these discrepancies in results can be attributed to different research methods, populations, variables

and study sites selected by researchers; differing local child welfare practices may also account for some of the inconsistencies of research findings.

Additionally, little research focuses on families who are engaged in early intervention services such as Voluntary Family Maintenance or Informal Supervision Agreements and the relevant family characteristics associated with successful outcomes or transition to more intense child welfare services. Bae, Solomon and Gelles (2007) suggest that the recurrence of neglect is more positively associated with CPS system factors of less intense investigation and more numerous contacts by child welfare workers rather than family aspects. Thus, it is possible that families receiving early intervention services may further progress into the system as a result of the intense scrutiny provided by CPS worker contact and a lack of thorough initial assessment, rather than due to family traits alone. Research is needed to address gaps in knowledge and to explore how the interplay of family systems and the child welfare system affect families receiving voluntary services through Informal Supervision Agreements or Voluntary Family Maintenance.

#### *Systems Theory and Families in the Child Welfare System*

Systems theory views “human behavior as the outcome of reciprocal reactions of persons operating within organized and integrated social systems” (Hutchinson & Charlesworth, 2003, p. 51). Hence, systems theory describes how members of a family can influence and affect each other as well as how families are influenced by the conditions and systems around them. The number of children in a household, their age, caretaker substance abuse, and family structure interact together and determine how family members relate and behave towards each other; a family’s ethnicity also affects how other societal systems respond and interact with the family system. Payne (2005) discusses the concept of entropy to explain that systems utilize energy to

maintain functioning and unless energy is received from outside, systems will run down.

Financial resources can be viewed as a type of energy that can help maintain a family system; families lacking sufficient funds often begin to break down and engage in unhealthy forms of discipline, inappropriate boundaries or are unable to provide for the basic needs of the family unit. Consequently, this shift in family dynamics may result in the involvement of the child welfare system. Changes in the family system, such as an unplanned pregnancy, disrupt the equilibrium, or stable state, and can also strain the family system resulting in detrimental family dynamics. The CWS offers services to assist in correcting negative family dynamics, can connect families to community resources or can disrupt the family system by removing a child until the system regains balance; occasionally children are permanently placed into a new family system to increase their likelihood of positive outcomes. The systems perspective emphasizes the need to understand family characteristics which may stress or unbalance the family system resulting in negative family dynamics, child maltreatment and a failure to thrive.

#### *Characteristics of Families in the Child Welfare System*

Although a limited amount of research is available on the characteristics of families at risk for entering or already immersed in the child welfare system, virtually no research exists exploring the characteristics associated with families receiving voluntary early interventions services in the form of informal supervision or family maintenance. The current body of research investigates race and ethnicity and documents the disproportionate representation of children of color in child welfare. Nationally, African-Americans comprised 41 percent of children in foster care while constituting only 15 percent of the child population in the 2000 fiscal year; Hispanic children represented 15 percent and white children composed 40 percent of the U.S. foster care population (Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, 2003). According

to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2005), African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander children experienced the highest incidences of victimization followed by White and Hispanic children; Asian children had the lowest rates of victimization. The disparity begins at the entry or investigative stage with disproportionate numbers of African American children being referred to child welfare by the community; conversely, white children are referred at rates slightly lower than their representation in the population (Fluke, Yuan, Hedderson, & Curtic, 2003).

Children of color are also disproportionately represented among the child welfare population in Santa Clara County. In 2005, African-American children comprised 2.2 percent of the county child population, but accounted for 36.8 percent of substantiated referrals and for 10.3 percent of entries into foster care; similarly, Hispanic children constituted 35.4 percent of the child population in the county, 38.3 percent of substantiations and 55.6 percent of the foster care population (Needell et al., 2008). For the same time period, Asian/Pacific Islander and white children were both under represented in out-of-home care relative to their population size (Needell et al., 2008).

Research also indicated that ethnic minorities have different predictors of reunification and outcomes in the child welfare system. A study of foster children in Ohio revealed that African American children accounted for 77 percent of foster care entries and reentered foster care at a rate 97.9 percent faster than that of Caucasian children (Wells & Guo, 1999). Single parent African American families are less likely to reunify when compared to Hispanic and Caucasian one-parent families; Hispanic two-parent families had shorter reunification timelines relative to their African American and Caucasian counterparts (Harris & Courtney, 2003). A study conducted in Santa Clara County revealed that mother's current employment related

positively to reunification for Latino children while maternal substance abuse was associated with non-reunification for African American mothers (Hines, Lee, Osterling, & Drabble, 2006). Overall, the family characteristics of married mothers, younger children at case opening, and allegations of neglect acted as predictors of reunification, especially for Caucasian families (Hines et al., 2006).

The association between single-parent households and risk of child maltreatment, entry into child welfare, and subsequent negative outcomes is well documented in the literature. Children living in one parent homes have a significantly increased risk of neglect and abuse (Bae, Solomon, & Gelles, 2007; Brown, Cohen, Johnson, & Salzinger, 1998); a higher risk of maltreatment as infants (Wu et al., 2004); are less likely to be reunified after out-of-home placement (Hines et al., 2006); reunify at slower rates (Wells & Guo, 1999); and experience less successful outcomes in family preservation (Bagdasaryan, 2005) than children in two-parent homes. Additionally, research suggests that a larger family size relates to an increased chance of CPS investigation among TANF applicants (Courtney, Dworsky, Piliavin, & Zinn, 2005) and former TANF families (Ovwigo, Leavitt, & Born, 2003); maltreatment as infants (Wu et al., 2004); experiencing neglect (Brown et al., 1998; Carter & Myers, 2007; Zuravin, 1991) and abuse (Zuravin, 1991). Overall, younger children had a higher likelihood of reunification, but among former TANF families younger children were also at increased risk of substantiated allegations of child abuse or neglect; this risk decreased as the child got older (Ovwigo et al., 2003). However, among substance abusing mothers with some treatment, older children had a slightly higher likelihood of being reunified (Rockhill, Green, & Furrer, 2007).

Research on neglect and its association with child welfare outcomes and risk factors is inconsistent; some research indicates that cases with neglect allegations have a higher likelihood

of reunification (Hines et al., 2006) while other research suggests that neglect cases reunify at rates slower than other types of abuse (Wells & Guo, 1999). Studies show that neglect is the most common form of maltreatment accounting for nearly 63 percent of child victims in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005). A Florida study of 25,504 families with at least one abuse or neglect report revealed that neglect was the most prominent form of maltreatment among the participants; furthermore, if repeated reports of maltreatment were made for a family, neglect allegations most often recurred as neglect (Bae et al., 2007). Additionally, as the number of risk factors such as poverty, mental health issues, single-parent households, poor parental involvement and mother's low level of education increase, the prevalence of child neglect and abuse increases drastically in families (Bae et al., 2007).

Parental substance abuse is another family characteristic often witnessed amongst families in the child welfare system; studies report substance abuse to be a factor for one-third to two-thirds of substantiated child maltreatment reports (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Substance abuse is more prevalent in reports involving infants and younger children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Children with substance abusing primary caregivers have double the likelihood of substantiated neglect; thus, the presence of a substance abusing primary caregiver is a strong predictor of physical neglect (Carter & Myers, 2007). However, one study found families with substance abuse to be as likely as their non-abusing counterparts to have successful outcomes in family preservation, hence substance abuse was not a strong predictor linked to outcome (Bagdasaryan, 2005). Berger (2005) found maternal alcohol use to be associated with increased family violence and the probability of abuse in both one and two-parent families. Children of single mothers who were opiate or cocaine users, had lower education, had more risk factors and more children in out-of-

home care, tended to stay longer in foster care (Rockhill, Green, & Furrer, 2007). Though, substance abusing, married mothers with higher education levels and current employment were more likely to successfully reunify with their children (Rockhill, Green, & Furrer, 2007). Interestingly, research indicates that in the period following the implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA), mothers commenced substance abuse treatment faster and stayed longer when compared to pre-AFSA cases (Green, Rockhill, & Furrer, 2006). Unfortunately, families with more risk factors such as domestic violence, mental health and poverty took longer to begin treatment and spent less time in treatment; having multiple risk factors was also correlated to poorer treatment outcomes (Green, Rockhill, & Furrer, 2006).

#### *Hypothesis and Research Question*

As the number of children in child welfare continues to increase and disproportionate racial/ethnic representation remains a salient issue, it is imperative to examine the characteristics of families who enter and subsequently immerse deeper into the child welfare system. Studies suggest that families experiencing more hardships and risk factors have an elevated risk of investigation for maltreatment and of having children removed from home (Dworsky, Courtney, & Zinn, 2007). The family characteristics described are observed either as risk factors and precursors to involvement in child welfare or as predictors of outcome for families immersed in the system. Due to the lack of research on families receiving early intervention services, it is unclear if these attributes are also indicators of outcome for voluntary services. Utilizing quantitative methods, the research will examine family attributes among families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County. It is hypothesized that among families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County, family characteristics including ethnic minority status, single parent households, younger children and the number of children in the

home or allegations of neglect are more likely to result in petitions filed for child removal in the Juvenile Dependency Court. Also using quantitative methods, the study will explore the frequency of parental substance abuse among families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This quantitative study will utilize a longitudinal retrospective research design to collect data over the three year time frame of the study in order to address the research hypothesis. The Child Welfare System/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) data will be utilized to determine what proportion of informal supervision cases result in a petition filed for child removal. Also, the data will be used to collect information on child, parent, and case characteristics in order to identify any significant demographic differences or predictors in the types of cases that result in a petition. To explore the frequency of parental substance abuse among families with Informal Supervision Agreements, a cross-sectional survey research design will be implemented. Child welfare social workers, supervisors and community-based service providers will complete self-administered questionnaires to provide information on family characteristics which are not currently tracked through the CWS/CMS data system.

### *Sample*

The research study will utilize a sampling frame of the entry cohort of informal supervision cases for the 2004-2005 fiscal year in Santa Clara County to explore the relationship between family characteristics and petitions filed for child removal. Depending on the size of the entry cohort, simple random sampling or the entire entry cohort will be used to establish the approximate sample size of 250 informal supervision cases. This entry cohort was selected to

allow for longitudinal exploration of data and outcomes subject to current policies. The data set for the cohort will be obtained from the CWS/CMS analyst at the Department of Family and Children's Services; the data will be in aggregate with no identifiers present.

The non-probability sampling method of selecting key informants will be implemented to explore the frequency of parental substance abuse among families with Informal Supervision Agreements. The sampling frame will consist of all social workers and the social work supervisor in the Informal Supervision Unit; professionals of community based providers contracted to offer services to families with Informal Supervision Agreements will also be included. These key informants were selected due to their professional knowledge, experience and contact with families who have Informal Supervision Agreements. Specifically, key informants (respondents to the self-administered questionnaire) will be obtained by a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. The IS Unit supervisor and social workers will be contacted to explain the study and recruited to participate. Information on current community-based service providers will be requested from the IS Unit supervisor; the service providers will also be contacted and enlisted to participate in the study. It is anticipated that some individuals will be reluctant to take part in the research; thus yielding an anticipated sample size of 20 to 30 key informants for this portion of the study.

#### *Study Site*

The study will be conducted in Santa Clara County, California. Specifically, research will be conducted at the Department of Family & Children's Services and at agencies which are contracted to provide services to families with Informal Supervision Agreements in Santa Clara County. To ensure respondent's confidentiality, the questionnaire will be administered in private office or conference room at each participating agency.

### *Variables and Measures*

This research will explore the relationship between the independent variables of family characteristics (ethnic minority status, single parent household, presence of younger children, number of children, type of allegation) and the dependent variable of number of petitions filed for child removal. The race/ethnicity of families will be categorized as follows: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American; this breakdown is consistent with options for classifying race/ethnicity in the CWS/CMS data system. For the purposes of this study, a single parent household will be defined as a male or female head of household who cares for one or more children without the assistance of another parent or step-parent in the home. To establish the number of children in the home, a child will be described as any minor residing in the home under the care and supervision of the parent(s); a younger child will be characterized as any child below the age of six years. The type of allegations will be categorized as neglect (general and severe), physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and other; this classification of allegations is consistent with potential maltreatment designations in CWS/CMS. The “other” category will serve to capture allegations such as caretaker incapacity/absence, exploitation, substantial risk and at-risk due to sibling abuse. Also, the dependent variable of petition filed for child removal will be characterized as a formal petition filed in Juvenile Dependency Court for the purpose of removing a child from the home; the outcome of the petition will not be addressed by this study. All family characteristics and the number of petitions filed will be derived from the CWS/CMS data set for the selected cohort of informal supervision cases under investigation. As the data set is subject to entry and worker error, the data will be prepared to correct errors and filter out inconsistencies before beginning analysis. The preparations will increase the reliability and validity of the data set.

Measurement of the frequency of substance abuse among fathers and mothers with an ISA will be conducted through a self-administered demographic and expert opinion survey questionnaire specifically designed for this study (see Appendix B). For this portion, “participants” are defined as key informants or respondents comprised of IS Unit staff and community-based professionals contracted to provide services to informal supervision families; the participants will be completing the questionnaire. The survey instrument consists of four separate sections; the first section solicits demographic data such as age, ethnicity, educational level and gender for each of the survey respondents. The second portion inquires about the prevalence of common problems witnessed among families in child welfare; the participants will be asked to check boxes indicating their opinion regarding the occurrence of issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health among mothers and fathers with Informal Supervision Agreements. Sections three and four address the prevalence of common challenges experienced by children in child welfare and service delivery to families, respectively. Face validity will be used to establish validity for this survey instrument. Prior to commencing the study, the researchers will present the questionnaire to experts in the child welfare field and solicit input regarding whether the instrument appears to measure what is intended. If the survey does not receive the experts’ approval, it will be restructured and subjected to another face validity test.

#### *Human Subjects Considerations*

Data from CWS/CMS will be utilized to obtain information on family characteristics and to determine what proportion of informal supervision cases result in a petition filed for child removal. The data for the cohort under investigation will be obtained in aggregate with no identifiers.

Informed consent for the self-administered questionnaire portion of this research study will be obtained directly from the key informants. The researchers will meet face-to-face with each individual, explain the context and procedures of the study, and have each respondent sign an informed consent form (see Appendix C). Additionally, the researchers will explain to the key informants the protocols for establishing and maintaining confidentiality. Completed consent forms and questionnaires will be stored separately in a locked file cabinet in the principal investigator's office; the cabinet and office will be locked when not in use and only the principal investigator will maintain the keys and access. Questionnaire data will be collected in aggregate and no participant identifiers or information will be present in the data set or any written documents.

Key informants will not directly benefit from participation in this study. Also, the study will involve minimal risk and discomfort to the participants; the probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than the respondents' daily life encounters. Risks of participation may include emotional discomfort from answering the questionnaire. There will be no compensation for participation in this study. Throughout the duration of the study, respondents will be protected from harm by having the option to exit the research without fear of repercussions.

Finally, the researchers will address any questions voiced by key informants and will provide the principal researcher's contact information should any concerns arise in the future. Consistent with protocol, the research proposal will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review and approval before data collection begins.

#### *Procedures and Data Collection Techniques*

Upon receipt of the IRB approval, the data collection process will begin. A request will be submitted to the CWS/CMS analyst at the Department of Family and Children's Services for data pertaining to the 2004-2005 cohort of informal supervision cases. Once the requested information arrives in the form of an aggregate data set with no identifiers, the researchers will prepare the data by correcting errors and filtering out inconsistencies. After the data is primed, the researchers will begin the statistical analysis to test the relationship between family characteristics and petitions filed for child removal.

For data collected via the self-administered questionnaires, the researchers will contact the IS Unit supervisor and social workers to explain the study as well as to recruit for participation in the research. Also, information on current community-based service providers who work with IS families will be requested from the IS unit supervisor; the service providers will also be contacted and enlisted to participate in the study. Once survey participants are recruited, individual meetings will be scheduled at each prospective respondent's convenience. The meetings will take place in a private office or conference room at each respective agency; only the researcher and questionnaire respondent will be present during the meeting. During the meeting, the researcher will explain the context of the study, protocols, informed consent and address any of the respondent's questions. Following the explanation, the questionnaire will be administered to the key informant; it is estimated that completion of the survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes. As previously described, the questionnaire seeks demographic information on and the expert opinion of social workers and professionals involved with informal supervision cases

#### *Proposed Analysis of Data*

At the univariate level, the researcher will test all the variables on the demographic questionnaire (see Proposed Analysis Outline in Appendix A). The categorical variables of gender, ethnicity, education level, current position, as well as frequency of substance abuse among father and mothers will be quantified by percentage and frequency. The continuous variables of age and length of time in current position will be described using standard deviation, mean and range.

At the bivariate level, the chi-square statistical test will be used to answer the research hypothesis and analyze the association between the independent variables of family characteristics (ethnic minority status, single parent household, presence of younger children, number of children, type of allegation) and the dependent variable of number of petitions filed for child removal.

Data analysis at the multivariate level will utilize binomial logistic regression with dummy coding to estimate the probability of the dependent variable, petition filed for child removal, occurring based on the independent variables of family characteristics. The statistical test of binomial logistic regression will analyze the relationship between the combined influences of the independent variables on the dependent variable, as well as, the relationship of each individual independent variable on the dependent variable (petition filed for child removal) after controlling for the influence of the other variables in the model.

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## Appendix A

## Proposed Analysis Outline

<b>Univariate/Descriptive Statistics</b>	
<b>Variable and Level of Measurement</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Date of Birth/Age (continuous, interval/ratio)	Mean, Standard Deviation, Range
Gender (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency
Race/Ethnicity (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency
Educational Level (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency
Current Position (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency
Length of Time in Current Position (continuous, interval/ratio)	Mean, Standard Deviation, Range
Frequency of substance abuse among mothers with an Informal Supervision Agreement (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency
Frequency of substance abuse among fathers with an Informal Supervision Agreement (categorical, nominal)	Percentage, Frequency

<b>Bivariate Statistics &amp; Tests</b>		
<b>Independent Variable &amp; Level of Measurement</b>	<b>Dependent Variable &amp; Level of Measurement</b>	<b>Statistic &amp; Test</b>
Ethnic Minority Status (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Chi-square test
Single Parent Household (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Chi-square test
Younger Children (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Chi-square test
Number of Children in the Home (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Chi-square test
Type of Allegation (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Chi-square test

<b>Multivariate Statistics &amp; Tests</b>		
<b>Independent &amp; Control Variables &amp; Level of Measurement</b>	<b>Dependent Variable &amp; Level of Measurement</b>	<b>Statistic &amp; Test</b>
Ethnic Minority Status (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Binomial Logistic Regression with dummy coding
Single Parent Household (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Binomial Logistic Regression with dummy coding
Younger Children (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Binomial Logistic Regression with dummy coding
Number of Children in the Home (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Binomial Logistic Regression with dummy coding
Type of Allegation (categorical, nominal)	Number of Petitions Filed for Child Removal (categorical, nominal)	Binomial Logistic Regression with dummy coding





### Part 3: Expert Opinion Questions on Challenges Experienced by CHILDREN

Item 12.	<p>In your opinion what percentage of <u>CHILDREN</u> with an Informal Supervision Agreement has a <u>mental health problem</u>? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	
Item 13.	<p>In your opinion what percentage of <u>CHILDREN</u> with an Informal Supervision Agreement has an <u>academic problem</u> (such as, poor grades, behind in grade level, learning disability, truancy)? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	
Item 14.	<p>In your opinion what percentage of <u>CHILDREN</u> with an Informal Supervision Agreement has a <u>substance abuse problem</u>? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	
Item 15.	<p>In your opinion what percentage of <u>CHILDREN</u> with an Informal Supervision Agreement is currently involved with the <u>criminal justice system</u>? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	
Item 16.	<p>In your opinion what percentage of <u>CHILDREN</u> with an Informal Supervision Agreement experience <u>two or more of the challenges listed above</u>? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	

### Part 4: Expert Opinion Questions on SERVICES Provided to Families with an ISA

Item 17.	<p>In your opinion, <u>what should be more important</u> when planning services for a client (please select one answer below):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> That social workers follow standard procedures</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> That social workers apply their own judgment based on personal expertise</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify: _____)?</p>	
Item 18.	<p>How would you rate, from 1-10, the <u>adequacy</u> of the standard procedures for service planning?</p> <p>Please fill in your answer: _____</p>	

Item 19.	<p>How would you rate, from 1-10, the average level of <u>personal expertise</u> in your department regarding availability and suitability of the services in your area?</p> <p>Please fill in your answer: _____</p>	
Item 20.	<p>In your opinion, is there a <u>gap</u> between service planning <u>procedures</u> and <u>practice</u>?</p> <p>Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes                      <input type="checkbox"/> No                      <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure</p>	
Item 21.	<p>In what percentage of cases would you say there is a <u>difference</u> (however small) between the <u>services delivered</u> and the services that <u>had been planned</u>?</p> <p>Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	
Item 22.	<p><u>How often</u> do you typically perform <u>progress evaluations</u>* (not to confuse with safety evaluations) during service delivery? Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once per case                      <input type="checkbox"/> Once every three months                      <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Once a week                      <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify _____)</p>	
Item 23.	<p>What is the percentage of cases that having received <u>favorable reports</u> in their progress evaluations <u>end up having their children removed</u>?</p> <p>Please select one answer below:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 - 9%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 10 - 24%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - 49%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 50 - 74%                      <input type="checkbox"/> 75 - 100 %</p>	

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

\* Progress Evaluations measure changes in the conditions and behaviors that contributed to the risk of child maltreatment, as well as any progress made towards goal achievement.

## Appendix C

### Agreement to Participate in Research

**Responsible Investigators:** Kathy Lemon-Osterling, Emilia Tyminski (SJSU student), Katia Radillo (SJSU student), and Teresa Sims (SJSU student).

**Title of Protocol:** Exploring Characteristics and Outcomes for Families with an Informal Supervision Agreement within the Child Welfare System

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the characteristics and outcomes for families who have an Informal Supervision Agreement (ISA) with the Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) in Santa Clara County. Findings from this study will result in useful child welfare practice information that will be disseminated to the Santa Clara County Juvenile Court, the Santa Clara County DFCS, and students, faculty, and field faculty at the School of Social Work at San Jose State University.
  2. You will be asked to answer some questions from a questionnaire first, followed by a few other questions that will be presented in an interview format. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes; the interview should take around 45 minutes. Both will be carried out in a private room at the site of the participating agency on a date and time previously determined. All interviews will be audio-taped.
  3. No risks to you are foreseen at this point other than a possible emotional discomfort during the interview.
  4. No direct benefits to you are expected from the research.
  5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. In order to maintain confidentiality, your questionnaire and interview responses will be assigned a numerical code that will substitute your name. Your name will only appear in a separate code list that will be kept locked at the principal investigator's office at all times, and only the investigators named above will have access to this list. All the materials utilized during this research will be destroyed upon its completion.
  6. You will receive no compensation for your participation in this research.
  7. Questions about this research may be addressed to Kathy Lemon-Osterling, ph. # (408) 924-5845. Complaints about the research may be presented to Peter Allen Lee, Ph.D., MSW Program Coordinator, (408) 924-5850. Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at (408) 924-2427.
  8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study.
  9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with the Santa Clara County DFCS and Juvenile Court.
  10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.
- **The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.**
  - **The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the below named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature Date