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The Privatization of Child Welfare Services: Issues and Efforts at the Federal Level
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There has been significant interest in privatization in child welfare, as in other sectors, from officials within the federal government and in some states. This article identifies several policy issues raised by privatized child welfare systems within federal child welfare programs, and describes two federal efforts to understand state and local child welfare privatization initiatives. These efforts are intended to provide information to those who may be considering privatization as a path to child welfare systems reform.

Knowledge Development and Transfer on Public/Private Partnerships in Child Welfare Service Provision: Using Multi-Site Research to Expand the Evidence Base
Crystal Collins-Camargo, PhD, Jennifer Hall, MSW, Chris Flaherty, PhD, Karl Ensign, Teri Garstka PhD, Brian Yoder, Allison Metz14

Quality Improvement Centers (QIC) were established by the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to promote knowledge development and the effective transfer of that knowledge into practice in the child welfare field. An area identified as in need of research and resources is the privatization of services that have traditionally been provided by the public child welfare agency, as some states have begun to move in this direction. This was identified as a topic in critical need of research based on a knowledge-gaps analysis conducted by the QIC PCW. This article describes the purpose and preliminary data collected by the National Quality Improvement Center on the Privatization of Child Welfare Services (QIC PCW) regarding the nature of public/private partnership in this field. It also outlines a multi-site research initiative testing the impact of innovative performance-based contracting and quality assurance systems on organizational and client outcomes in three states.

Striving for Excellence: Extending Child Welfare Performance-Based Contracting to Residential, Independent, and Transitional Living Programs in Illinois
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Performance-based contracting for foster care case management services has been in effect in Illinois since 1997. It is credited with reducing the number of children and youth in out-of-home placement by over 65% in the last decade. Despite the success of this initiative in moving over 34,000 children into permanent homes, Illinois failed to achieve substantial conformity on any of the seven child welfare outcome measures in its 2003 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). This article discusses the history of performance-based contracting in Illinois; lessons learned from foster-care case management contracting; the challenges in expanding this initiative to residential, independent living, and transitional living programs; the planning and implementation process used; and the proposed evaluation design.

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Maintaining Positive Public-Private Partnerships in Child Welfare: The Missouri Project on Performance-Based Contracting for Out-of-Home Care

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For many years, the State of Missouri Children’s Division has worked in conjunction with private agency service providers and with the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Social Work to improve the quality of service delivery to children and families in the state. After an introductory, brief review of the recent movement for privatization and the use of performance-based contracting in child welfare service delivery, this article provides a conceptual overview of *The Missouri Project on Privatization of Out-of-Home Care for Children*, which builds on the past public-private collaborations in Missouri. The article discusses earlier research on the initiation of performance-based contracting and presents the rationale for the current project. This project examines both process needs of public-private partnerships for successful maintenance, including the renegotiation of performance-based contracts for out-of-home care, and the case-outcome results of the privatized service delivery. The Missouri project’s relationship to the two other projects selected by the University of Kentucky Quality Improvement Center’s project on Performance-Based Contracting and Quality Assurance in Public Child Welfare are delineated.

Improving Practice and Outcomes through Collaboration and Performance-Based Contracting in Florida’s Child Welfare System

David DeStefano, Jean K. Elder, PhD, John Cooper, and Cynthia A. Schuler, JD.....58

This article describes the first six months of the Florida QIC-PCW demonstration project between the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Kids Central, Inc., a private agency contracting with DCF to provide child welfare services. The goal of this project was to demonstrate how to create a vision of service and performance expectations shared by DCF and the agencies that DCF contract with in a local child welfare network, utilizing performance-based contracting and financial incentives. This shared vision was developed by creating contractual performance-based measures through an inclusive planning and consensus-building process. We anticipate positive outcomes for children and families. Preliminary results indicate that case-management agencies are ready to incorporate performance-based outcomes and to establish front-line practice strategies.