

The Relationship Between Substance Use and Foster Care: A Mixed Methods Study

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request

OMB No. 0990-0421

Supporting Statement – Section B

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Program Official/Project Officer

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Section B – Data Collection Procedures

1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

This study will seek to engage participants who work for child welfare agencies, substance abuse treatment providers, and other related organizations or systems that serve families struggling with substance abuse, including public health or mental health providers, law enforcement agencies, and local dependency courts. With input from other agencies within HHS and stakeholders, ASPE has identified 10 sites for the study and a few additional sites as backups. Sites may represent one county or several contiguous counties. The sites selected for the qualitative aspect of the study will be based on the results from the quantitative analysis that represent the variation of statistical relationships between substance use and foster care: 1) those counties with high rates of use and foster care, 2) those with high rates of use but low rates of foster care, and 3) those with low rates of use and high rates of foster care (see Attachment A. Mixed Methods Study Site Selection Criteria and Attachment B. Recruitment Plan).

To recruit participants, ACF regional child welfare leads will assist with initial efforts to identify and reach out to state or local child welfare administrators. We may also obtain similar recommendations and outreach assistance from SAMHSA’s regional administrators, who can assist with recruiting substance use treatment program administrators. Depending upon the local context, we will explore whether our first outreach will be with the child welfare agency or the substance use program administrators. In general, we plan to reach out to child welfare administrators first given the central focus of the study. We will primarily use a snowball sampling approach to solicit recommendations from interviewees of other possible study participants. Specifically, we will ask child welfare administrators to identify child welfare practitioners, administrators from related substance use treatment providers, and officials from local law enforcement and court systems who may be interested in participating in the study.

For each site, we expect to conduct two interviews or small group interviews with each of the three types of respondents from the related service systems—specifically, child welfare administrators or caseworkers, substance use treatment program administrators or practitioners, and other key service providers and interagency partners identified by the child welfare agency as having a key role with respect to this issue and the families affected.

2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

The contractor will conduct on-site visits for half of these sites (5 sites) and virtual site visits, via phone or webinar, for the other half (5 sites). The contractor will conduct at least 8 semi-structured individual interviews or small group interviews per site, for a total of 80 to 190 individual interviews and small group interviews across all sites. Interviewers will use semi-structured discussions guides to facilitate the interviews and small group discussions (see Attachments C-G. Discussion Guides). Most respondents will participate in individual interviews. We estimate that we will conduct three to four small group interviews across all sites. Small group interviews will be offered instead of individual interviews when there are numerous individuals that should be interviewed who can offer a range of perspectives. We anticipate most small group interviews will be used to solicit information from caseworkers or practitioners and will occur in higher population areas where there are more service providers. We estimate that individual interviews and small group interviews will last 60 to 120 minutes depending on the category of respondent (120 minutes for child welfare administrators and practitioners, 90 minutes for substance abuse treatment administrators and practitioners, and 60 minutes for partners from other systems). These interviews will elicit information and perspectives about the local context and relationship between substance abuse and the child welfare system, particularly foster care caseloads.

We plan to record and take notes during each interview and small discussion group. To maintain confidentiality of participants, before each interview or small group discussion, interviewer will ask participants for consent and redact transcriptions of the recordings. The contractor will provide the redacted transcripts to ASPE and prepare site-specific summaries using standardized templates to document key findings across participants, which will be analyzed to identify key themes with NVivo. The contractor will prepare a report for ASPE of up to 35 pages to summarize study findings. To ensure high quality, the site visit summary notes, analytic coding of these notes, and summary report will undergo internal review by the contractor, ASPE staff, and subject matter experts from ACF and SAMHSA. When writing the final report, we plan to name site locations, but will use generic language to describe administrative positions to keep identities confidential.

3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates Deal with Nonresponse

By engaging ACF and SAMHSA regional officials in the initial outreach, we expect that our initial response rate will be higher than if the contractor directly identified

and recruited program administrators. It is also our assumption that the snowball sampling approach will help to decrease the nonresponse rate during the outreach process. Once ACF or SAMHSA regional program leads have made the initial identification and outreach, the contractor will begin recruiting study participants through email. If the contractor finds that initial outreach emails are unsuccessful, the contractor will follow up one week later with the contact using a reminder email to solicit their participation. Finally, to maximize response rates, we will encourage participation by offering the informational fact sheet on site-specific information and statistics relevant to substance abuse and foster care caseloads. These fact sheets may provide information useful for program planning purposes. Once we obtain a response from study participants, we will confirm their participation in an email and send suggested times to schedule the interview or small group interviews.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

All contractor staff who will be leading and participating in interviews and discussion groups will receive training on the discussion guide protocols to ensure consistent interviews across sites. The project includes three two-person site visitor teams, where each team includes an experienced senior site visitor and a junior site visitor. The senior site visitor will lead interviews and small group discussions and oversee all documentation of findings for each site. The junior site visitor will assist with scheduling and lead note-taking for site visit interviews and small group discussions. Each team will conduct 3 to 4 site visits, for a total of 10 site visits. All senior site visitors have subject matter expertise in either the substance use or child welfare area, and each site visitor team has staff with expertise or prior experience in substance abuse and child welfare. Discussion guide protocols have been developed by the contractor in close coordination with ASPE, and have been reviewed by relevant subject matter experts in ACF and SAMHSA.

5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

Contractor staff include subject matter experts in substance use and child welfare with extensive experience with performing qualitative data collection. These experts are listed in the table below.

Individual	Affiliation and Position	Role
Elizabeth Weigensberg	Mathematica Policy Research, Senior Researcher	Project lead, senior site visitor
Matthew Stagner	Mathematica Policy	Project Quality Assurance

	Research, Senior Fellow	
Melissa Azur	Mathematica Policy Research, Associate Director	Senior advisor
Liz Clary	Mathematica Policy Research, Researcher	Senior site visitor
Jung Kim	Mathematica Policy Research, Senior Researcher	Senior site visitor
Deborah Chollet	Mathematica Policy Research, Senior Fellow	Interim project director of overall task order
Melissa Hafner	Mathematica Policy Research, Researcher	Deputy project director of overall task order

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS – Section B

Note: Attachments are included as separate files as instructed.

- Attachment A. Mixed Methods Study Site Selection Criteria
- Attachment B. Selected Sites and Their Characteristics
- Attachment C. Discussion Guide for Child Welfare Administrators
- Attachment D. Discussion Guide for Child Welfare Practitioners
- Attachment E. Discussion Guide for Substance Use Administrators
- Attachment F. Discussion Guide for Substance Use Practitioners
- Attachment G. Discussion Guide for Other Administrators and Practitioners