

(I prefer: POSTER presentation)

Treating Trauma: Analysis of Florida's Implementation of Evidence-Based Clinical Interventions for Child Welfare Involved Families

Dr. Amy Vargo¹

¹University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, USA

E-mail: avargo@usf.edu

7702 Grasmere Drive

Land O Lakes, Florida 34637

Abstract

Background: This study assesses the implementation of several evidence-based practices (EBPs) within Florida's child welfare system, mandated by the Families First Prevention and Services Act (FFPSA). The state has integrated five clinically focused EBPs: Parent Child Interaction Therapy, Multi-Systemic Therapy, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Motivational Interviewing. The goal is to shift from crisis-driven to prevention-focused care.

Methods: To evaluate the implementation, a statewide stakeholder survey (n=888) and in-depth interviews (n=45) were conducted over three years. The survey was distributed through a five-wave mailing strategy to maximize participation. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, targeting leadership at state, regional, and local levels. Interview transcripts were coded and analyzed using ATLAS.ti via code structure adapted from the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) framework.

Findings: Data will be presented by emergent theme categories: Shared Vision, Leadership, Readiness and Capacity, Organizational Capacity, Improvement Cycles, and Local Environment/Contextual Variables. Key findings include the impact of each EBP on addressing the needs of children and families, current waitlists, referral likelihood, and perceived positive outcomes. Additionally, stakeholders provided insights into the capacity and resources required for each EBP, along with challenges, advantages, and areas needing enhancement. The study also examined the utility of implementation science in reducing the gap between research and practice when transferring EBPs to community settings. **Conclusion:** The integration of these EBPs offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the complex mental health needs of vulnerable children and families in Florida's child welfare system. Critical factors include provider training, client eligibility, treatment fidelity, and the sustainability of funding. The results have implications for designing and implementing clinical EBPs in child welfare systems nationwide. This research was funded by the

Administration for Children and Families through a contract with the Florida Department of Children and Families.

Keywords

Trauma; child abuse; children's mental health; adolescent mental health; evidence-based interventions; Parent Child Interaction Therapy; Multi-Systemic Therapy; Functional Family Therapy; Brief Strategic Family Therapy; Motivational Interviewing.

Biography

Dr. Vargo is a Research Assistant Professor at USF's Department of Child and Family Studies, with 24 years of experience in evaluating child welfare and behavioral health services. She currently leads the evaluation of the FFPSA initiative for the Florida Department for Children and Families and the C.A.R.E.S. Model Program, while also serving as a Co-Investigator for SAMHSA's Project Aware TISS initiative. Her extensive work includes co-leading evaluations for federal programs such as the National Institute of Justice's STOP Program, the National Child Welfare Leadership Institute, and the Western and Pacific Child Welfare Implementation Center. Dr. Vargo's research primarily aims to improve care for vulnerable children and families within the child welfare system, focusing on the implementation and fidelity of evidence-based practices to enhance service outcomes. Her career is dedicated to bridging research and practice to better support at-risk populations.

Presenting Author Details and Photo

Full Name: Dr. Amy Vargo

Email ID: avargo@usf.edu

Phone No: 813-310-2971

Research Website: [Child Welfare Research & Training Alliance | Home \(childwelfareresearchandtrainingalliance.org\)](http://childwelfareresearchandtrainingalliance.org)

Dept. Website: [Amy Vargo, PhD | Faculty & Staff | Department of Child & Family Studies | CBCS | USF](#)

Recent Photograph:

