

Epworth Children's Home 2011 Performance & Quality Report

Introduction

The following narrative is intended to reflect progress made and challenges identified during the 2011 calendar year as monitored by Epworth's Administrative Review Committee (ARC). This committee meets weekly throughout the year, and is comprised of the President, program and operations managers, supervisors, line staff, interns, and invited guests. Performance measurement and improvement activities from all agency departments are reported to the ARC for review and feedback.

The report will be divided into two primary areas of agency function: Program Delivery (services to residents) and Client Impact (well-being), and Operations (risk management, finance).

Program Delivery and Client Impact

The Duke Endowment Outcomes Project with University of North Carolina-Charlotte's Institute for Social Capital

The 2011 year was especially significant in that it witnessed the conclusion of a massive outcomes effort begun in 2006 by The Duke Endowment (TDE) and carried out by the Institute for Social Capital at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC-C). Epworth began its participation in this endeavor in 2008. The primary goal of this project was to develop a long-term, flexible program of outcomes research that would produce sound data, support child-care agencies in leveraging data to meet client needs, and to maximize agencies' services. A total of 1,114 youth in residential care in 40 different agencies in North and South Carolina enrolled in the study. This project is one of only a few successful efforts to help providers conduct scientifically sound research in child outcomes as well as build their own research capacity.

During the years of data collection, each resident participating in the project was given a battery of seven (7) assessment tools during intake that were then repeated at pre-determined follow-up times. Included were instruments to monitor anxiety, levels of hopelessness, general functioning, coping skills, and self-esteem. Key findings that have been or are being incorporated into Epworth's practice include the following:

1. Data analyses revealed a clear need to examine outcomes separately for groups of children based on their level of psychological and behavioral health need, rather than look at all children in residential care as a single group.

Consequently, it was demonstrated that Epworth's residents, as in many other similar residential care facilities, entered care without clinical service needs. Success for such "lower need" groups will therefore look different than for more troubled children. Data analyses also revealed that most "clinical" assessment instruments were not very helpful in progress monitoring or need assessment for lower need residents.

2. Final analysis of data in 2011 that was collected for Epworth residents from 2008 through 2010 showed that the general functioning of Epworth residents was within "normal" levels at intake and continued to be positive at each follow-up time point. The UNC-C research team considered this finding to be a very positive outcome in light of the challenges that residents face when being in an out of home setting, and an affirmation of the quality of child care delivered at Epworth.
3. Data analysis also indicated that the vast majority of lower need youth and children were appropriately placed in lower level care settings, including Epworth. This finding is affirmative of the screening and referral process currently utilized at Epworth to make appropriate admission decisions.
4. As referenced above, the data indicated that for lower need youth who do not enter residential care with clinical symptomology, assessing more general outcome indicators is sufficient (such as educational attainment, criminal activity, or employment). Educational results at Epworth from 2011 will be shared below. However, in consultation with the UNC-C research team and with research staff from the Residential Child Care Project in the Bronfenbrenner Center for Translational Research at Cornell University, a proven instrument for use with lower need children/youth was identified, i.e., the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ). Epworth is now using this tool to identify needs, develop goals for service delivery, and monitor progress for each resident individually. Epworth staff started working with UNC-C and Cornell University research consultants in the fall of 2011 to develop a process for using SDQ findings to study service delivery and client outcomes campus-wide, and is expecting to complete this process for more global analysis in 2012. In addition, social service staff began using the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment tool in 2011 to identify and measure individual life skill needs for service delivery.
5. An overall finding from the TDE-UNC-C Project that affirms the work of Epworth and other high quality residential agencies is that youth in residential group care settings progressed at the same rate as youth in community-based settings regardless of their level of need at admission.

Critical Incident Review and Tracking

Critical incidents are those events in which a resident engages in or is affected by an action that is endangering in some manner, such as physical aggression or running away, or that result in removal from the residential setting or from school. Each critical incident at Epworth is reviewed for appropriate staff response and fidelity to risk management protocol by four (4) senior level administrators and then the President before being brought before the Administrative Review Committee (ARC) for review and feedback. All critical incidents are reported to the residents' respective guardian via phone and via a written report. Critical incidents are also tracked on a quarterly basis to be aware of trends or patterns that may signal a need for administrative intervention, re-training of staff, or institution of changes to risk management processes.

Comprehensive tracking of critical incidents (CI's) began in July 2010 as a response to the 2010 accreditation review team's suggestions for improvement in service excellence. Comparison of critical incidents between the periods of July-December 2010 and July-December 2011 showed the following:

1. Total on-campus CI's increased from 37 in 2010 to 45 in 2011, or 1 every 4.9 days in 2010 vs. 1 every 4 days in 2011. There were no discernible trends among categories of critical incidents. The ARC noted that while the total campus population was almost identical at these times, there was an increase in age 13 to 18 year old residents from 63% of total in 2010 to 74% of total in 2011.
2. There was one (1) physical restraint used during the 2010 period vs. two (2) restraints during the 2011 period. This finding meets Epworth's goal of 3 or fewer restraints every six months. Epworth continues to move toward a "no restraint" environment. In this regard, Epworth has committed the resources to send 2 additional staff for updated crisis de-escalation training in 2012.
3. There were no critical incidents that resulted in injury requiring more than basic first aid.
4. Three cottage living units were identified in 2010 as the age groupings most likely to be off campus without permission after hours to engage in high risk behaviors. As a result, new alarm systems were installed in these living units in 2010-11. Coincidentally, overnight security personnel were added to enhance campus safety in 2011 as well. While a direct causal relationship could not be established, data from 2011 shows a 15% reduction in off campus without permission/high risk behavior incidents during the comparison period.
5. There were 16 off-campus school-based incidents requiring removal from school in 2010 vs. 10 such incidents in 2011, a decline of 38%. While the ARC could not identify causal factors, correlations were noted with the increase in campus-based tutoring services and additional incentives for academic performance provided in 2011.

Collaborative Performance Measures

In anticipation of forecasted state requirements for performance achievement in future contract agreements, Epworth joined over 20 other members of the SC Association of Children's Homes & Family Services (SCACHFS) in August 2011 for four (4) days of training in performance quality improvement and outcomes measurement with a senior consultant from the Child Welfare League of America. As a result of these meetings, the participating agencies agreed to collaborate in producing agency-level and state-level aggregate outcomes of immediate interest to the SC Department of Social Services (SC DSS): out of home safety, favorable discharges within 12 months, regular family/sibling visitation, and stability in placement. These outcomes are represented in the chart below. Additional outcome measures are anticipated from SC DSS in the fall of 2012.

Epworth and other SCACHFS members fully met three of the four primary goals identified by SC DSS throughout the last quarter of 2011 when data collection began. The failure to consistently meet the 9 to 12 month discharge goal to a less restrictive placement (Goal #2) was primarily a result of the emphasis at that time on first moving residents who had been in foster or congregate care for more than 17 months to more permanent settings.

Goal #1 measuring the safety of Epworth residents while in care was fully met. As noted above, Epworth added overnight security personnel trained in crisis prevention and de-escalation during 2011 to further enhance campus safety. Goal #3 and Goal #4 were met at a very high rate of achievement. In order to continue to support family and sibling visitation at a high level (Goal #3), Epworth's staff plan for 2012 was modified to include a full time staff member to provide additional transportation and visitation supervision as needed. The positive level of placement stability at Epworth is thought to be related to the ongoing commitment to and implementation of the C.A.R.E. model of residential child care practice as developed by the Residential Child Care Project at Cornell University, of which Epworth is considered a pioneer agency. This trauma-informed, developmentally focused practice model guides staff in creating a family-like, non-punitive environment where the focus is on teaching and learning. Because of their success in implementing this approach, Epworth staff members have been asked to present a sustainability workshop on this model of care at an international child care conference to be held in May of 2012.

The Epworth ARC will continue to monitor the discharge goal achievement rate (Goal #2) in 2012. It is expected that this outcome will trend more positively as the residents who have been in care for longer periods of time are moved by DSS to more permanent settings and replaced by residents for whom shorter stays in foster care are more intentionally sought from the time of initial placement.

Comparison of Epworth Children's Home and the SCACHFS Aggregated Data
Performance Based Outcomes for DSS Residents
October, November, December 2011

	Epworth October	SCACHFS October	Epworth November	SCACHFS November	Epworth December	SCACHFS December
Total Agencies Reporting	XXXXX	23	XXXXX	24	XXXXX	22
Total Number of Clients Served	69	898	56	662	56	814
Total Number of Discharged Clients	14	135	4	80	12	101
99.68% of children/youth will not have any substantiated abuse or neglect while in care	Epworth October	SCACHFS October	Epworth November	SCACHFS November	Epworth December	SCACHFS December
Percentage of children with no substantiated abuse or neglect	100 (0/69)	99.89 (1/898)	100 (0/56)	100 (0/662)	100 (0/56)	100 (0/814)
Outcome Met?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
65-75% of children/youth will be discharged to a less restrictive or permanent family setting within 9 to 12 months of admission <small>(evaluation of discharged DSS residents)</small>	Epworth October	SCACHFS October	Epworth November	SCACHFS November	Epworth December	SCACHFS December
Percentage of children discharged to less restrictive placement within 9-12 months	79 (11/14)	84 (113/135)	0 (0/3)	64 (51/80)	50 (6/12)	63 (64/101)
Outcome Met?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
80-90% of children/youth will visit regularly with families and siblings in other placement settings in accordance with their care plans and, if in the best interest of all <small>(evaluation of DSS residents with a visitation plan)</small>	Epworth October	SCACHFS October	Epworth November	SCACHFS November	Epworth December	SCACHFS December
Percentage of children with regular visitation with family and other siblings	98 (43/44)	83 (351/423)	95 (39/41)	86 (349/406)	98 (43/44)	86 (461/534)
Outcome Met?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
75-85% of children/youth in a placement will remain stable	Epworth October	SCACHFS October	Epworth November	SCACHFS November	Epworth December	SCACHFS December
Percentage of children/youth who remained stable <small>(instability=runaways + disrupted placements)</small>	99 (68/69)	80 (870/898)	98 (55/56)	96 (634/662)	98 (55/56)	96 (782/814)
Outcome Met?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Quality of Staff-Resident Interaction

During the initial years of implementation of the C.A.R.E. model in 2007-08, Epworth staff designed and began to utilize a resident survey instrument in order to gauge implementation progress from the resident point of view. Residents were asked to confidentially respond to questions that attempted to identify the degree to which staff were respectful, helpful, good listeners, teachers, and family-like. Researchers at Cornell University liked this approach, and using the Epworth survey as a foundation, began to develop and pilot a more comprehensive, computer based instrument that would provide even more details about the quality of support given by residential staff wherever the C.A.R.E. model was being implemented.

This new survey, called the Youth Perception Survey or YPS, was used to establish a benchmark at Epworth in November of 2011 following two years of development and piloting in multiple agencies by Cornell staff. While still subject to further refinement, the capacities of this tool are promising, and the benchmark results for Epworth are very positive. For example, the following chart explains the basic categories for which youth perceptions were sought. It is then followed by an aggregate chart showing how Epworth staff were measured in these areas by residents. This aggregate data as well as dis-aggregated data for each shift was received in January 2012 as reports for 2011 were being prepared. The ARC plans to share these findings with relevant stakeholders, especially residential staff and supervisors, and then use them as a guide for on-going training emphases and staff development in 2012 prior to the next administration of the YPS in the fall of the year.

Introduction

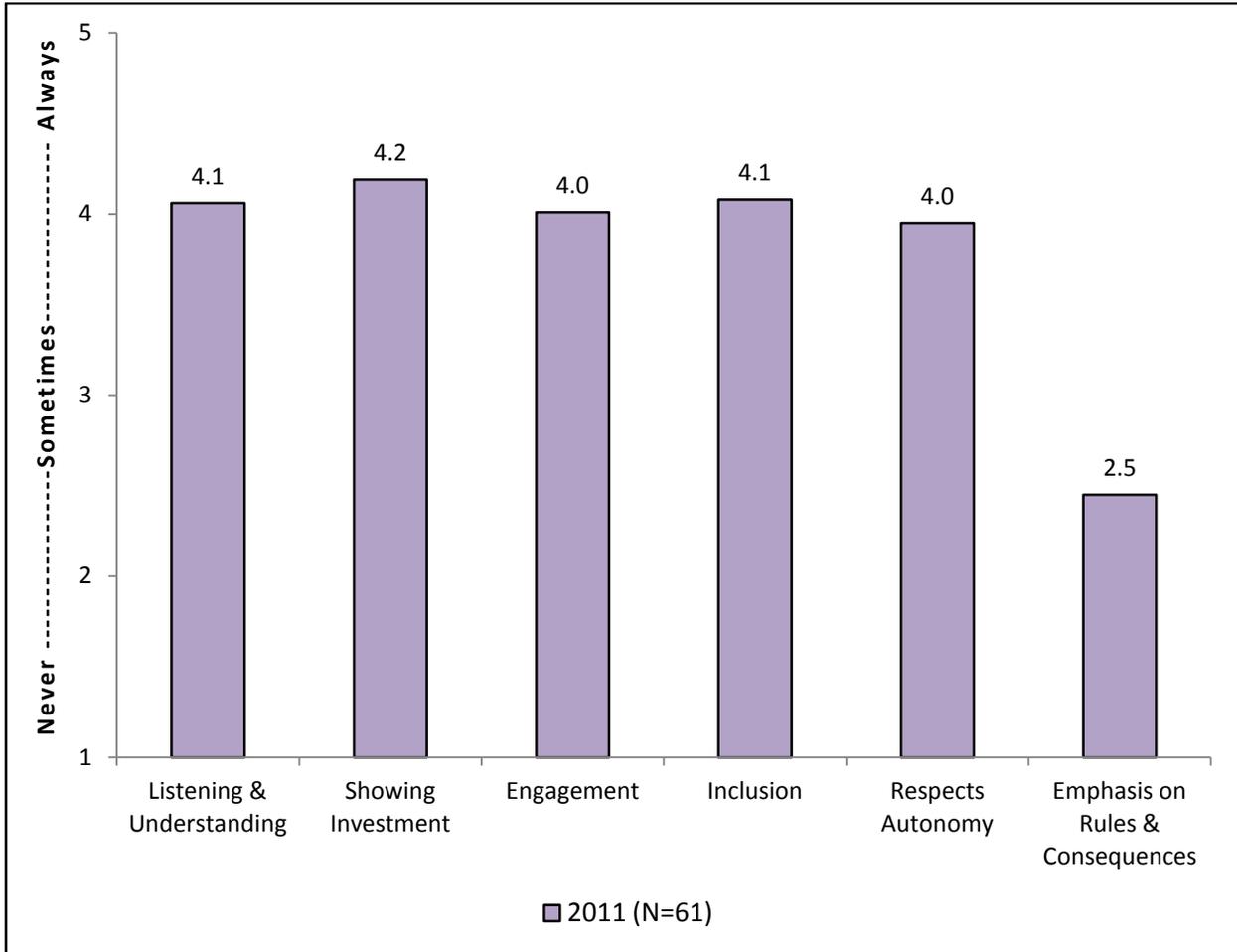
The graphs show how youth responded to several survey questions on the Youth Perceptions Survey (YPS). The YPS presents some common scenarios that come up in residential care and lists several ways that staff might respond. Youth indicate how often staff respond in the ways listed.

The questions are grouped into several content areas that relate to C.A.R.E. principles.

YPS Content Areas	Youth Perception	Example
Listening & Understanding	Adults try to understand their needs and perspectives and respond to them accordingly.	Times when youth misbehaved: “They listened to me and tried to understand why I acted that way.”
Showing Investment	Adults are personally invested in their well-being and genuinely want to help.	Times when youth needed help: “I felt they were happy to help.”
Engagement	Adults are actively engaged in trying to help youth and interact with them.	During activities/field trips: “They got involved and had fun with us.”
Inclusion	Adults create an atmosphere that makes youth feel part of the community, and where youth are not excluded from the group.	When there were activities: “Staff made me feel like I was an important part of the group.”
Respect for Autonomy/Individuality	Adults respect the youth as individuals, each with a unique point of view and the need for some independence.	“They accept me as I am.”
Emphasis on Rules & Consequences	Adults rely on rules and consequences to resolve problems with youth.	When they don’t like my behavior: “They gave me consequences that seemed too strict.”

Average YPS Scores in Each Content Area

(Please note that in the area “Emphasis on Rules & Consequences,” a lower score represents more positive results, i.e., staff are not relying on rules and consequences to promote order, but rather the power of a positive, nurturing relationship. In the other five content areas, higher scores are more positive)



Family Therapy Satisfaction Results

All families with children or youth at Epworth are urged to participate in systems oriented family therapy. In collaboration with the University of South Carolina's Counselor Education Program, Epworth provides such therapy without charge, as many families come to Epworth with limited economic resources. This unique partnership between USC and Epworth has existed for over a decade. At the end of each fall and spring, family members complete a satisfaction survey that is used as a measure of effectiveness. The chart below reflects key results from 2010 and 2011 for comparison. A threshold score of 80% or above is considered acceptable for this subjective indicator. The results are also reviewed by the USC supervising professor from the Counselor Education Program. The professor uses this data to evaluate and improve the services the Counselor Education Program provides to Epworth and its client families.

	<u>Spring 2010</u>	<u>Fall 2010</u>	<u>Spring 2011</u>	<u>Fall 2011</u>
Improved Communication	75%	100%	100%	86%
Improved Conflict Resolution	62.5%	100%	92%	100%
Considered Therapy Helpful	87.5%	100%	100%	80%

The majority of participants in 2010 and in 2011 expressed overall satisfaction with the family therapy offered at Epworth through the University of South Carolina. Semesters in which parents fully participated in family therapy resulted in satisfaction levels meeting and/or exceeding established thresholds for performance.

Residential & Early Intervention (EI) Service Averages

Comprehensive changes in the child welfare system at the federal and state levels have created a very dynamic environment for congregate care in South Carolina since the beginning of 2011. While Epworth has remained stable in its service profile, continued changes are expected in 2012 that may impact service delivery. As indicated in the comparisons below, changes in the state's qualifying criteria for home-based services in the early intervention context affected the number of children who could be served in 2011.

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>
Year End Residential Population	79	71
Year End Independent Living Students	8	9
Average Residential Population for Year	78	76
Total Residential Children Served for Year	141	156
Average Residential Stay	29 months	20 months

Residential Gender Averages (Female%/Male %)	67%/33%	60%/40%
EI Preschool Children	25	21
EI Home-Based Children	85	37
EI Children in Respite Program	17	17

Early Intervention External Quality Assurance Reviews

Epworth’s Early Intervention Center (EEIC) was scheduled for a quality assurance review by the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) in January 2011. The overall score prior to corrective action was 93.1%. The only errors cited related to 4 documentation errors which were easily remedied. There were no administrative or quality of care deficiencies.

The EEIC was also inspected by the SC Department of Social Services in March 2011 in an unannounced visit. The Center received a score of 99%, and the single error cited was a documentation error easily corrected. This review involved achieving standards for staff qualifications and development, health and safety, nutrition and food service, and staff/parent interaction.

Educational Care and Intervention Services

Residents at Epworth are able to benefit from attending three award-winning public schools in Richland County School District One: Dreher High, Hand Middle, and Brennen Elementary. High school age students who have unique educational needs for acceleration or learning in a smaller setting are able to attend the campus-based SC Whitmore High School, an accredited distance learning school developed by the State of South Carolina. The campus after-school tutorial program, the Barnes Learning Center, is fully staffed by certified teachers and exists to support students who may struggle in school or need assistance with major projects, study skills, or homework assignments. Qualified volunteer tutors are also placed in cottage living units to assist students during study hall times.

School comparative data is collected on the basis of the academic year, so information provided here is based upon the end of the 2010-2011 school term. At school’s end in May 2011, 96% of Epworth residents were promoted to the next grade, 56% had earned academic achievement recognition and/or honor roll status, and 92% showed improvement in one or more classes. Also, 100% of eligible students completed high school successfully and entered post-secondary educational institutions. In regard to school conduct, 77% of residents had no behavioral referrals, and another 14% had two or fewer referrals. Reading assessment data showed that 34% of Epworth students improved their reading proficiency by more than one grade level, while 48% improved more than one grade level in math. These statistics compare favorably with or exceed the performance of the general school district population.

Operations

External Audits

The annual independent audit of Epworth Children's Home was conducted in the fall of 2011. The auditors rendered an unqualified opinion of the financial statements and found no control deficiencies or material weaknesses, made no significant audit adjustments, and had no disagreement with management.

Additional audits were conducted in 2011 by the SC State Department of Education regarding meal service, the City of Columbia, SC regarding grant compliance, and the SC Workers' Compensation Insurance Commission regarding payroll integrity. There were no significant deficiencies found during these external reviews.

The SC State Fire Marshall inspected the campus in June of 2011 and found no fire violations, a finding that is consistent with past performance. The SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) also conducted their annual health and sanitation inspection in June, 2011. They found minor deficiencies such as the absence of glass awareness stickers and low light intensity in some areas, all of which were corrected within 60 days. SC Department of Social Services Licensing consultants completed their annual review of all agency operations in August 2011 following these earlier inspections and issued no citations for deficiencies.

Additional Operational Improvements

Within the risk management arena, Epworth took the proactive step of contracting with a professional security firm to provide overnight security on campus seven days each week. The security personnel were also trained in non-violent crisis intervention and de-escalation skills to support residents and staff when needed and in order to function in a manner that is consistent with the agency's child care model. Long's Long Term Care Pharmacy also began to conduct monthly audits of campus medication administration practice in order to provide a regular source of external accountability in collaboration with the Epworth campus nurse.

From an accounting perspective, and in concert with an independent auditing firm, Epworth changed its fiscal year end from September 30 to December 31 in the fall of 2011. This was done to coincide more easily with other agency functions, such as development operations, as well as to increase accounting efficiencies. The grounds and maintenance department work schedule was also reorganized in 2011 in order to improve the balance of time assigned to maintenance vs. grounds related functions.

Summary

Epworth sought to be increasingly proactive in its commitment to improving performance and quality in 2011 across all functional areas. It is expected that state expectations for positive outcomes, especially in service delivery and client well-being, will be an area of growing emphasis and opportunity. In 2012 Epworth expects to add additional capacity to evaluate client well-being and program effectiveness through its on-going collaboration with researchers at Cornell University and through its participation in the SC Association of Children's Homes and Family Services. Epworth is committed to applying data at the individual, unit, and agency level to improve client outcomes. Progress has been made in building a more consistent agency culture of understanding and applying the principles of service excellence.

Respectfully submitted,



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