

Research to Practice Summary Chris Newlin

ARTICLE:

Block, S. D., Oran, H., Oran, D., Baumrind, N., & Goodman, G.S. (2010). Abused and neglected children in court: Knowledge and attitudes. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 34(9), 659-670.

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this study was to examine maltreated children's knowledge of, attitudes about, and perceived participation in dependency court and to identify predictors of their legal knowledge and attitudes.

Subjects/Design:

All of the subjects in this study were between the ages of 7-10 and were interviewed as they emerged from the dependency courtroom. This included 85 children from an ethnically and gender diverse population. Approximately one-third of the children had experienced either neglect, sexual abuse, or physical abuse. All of these children had been removed from their homes and were wards of the court. In 82% of the cases the biological parents were in the courtroom for the proceedings.

The children completed:

1. Children's Court Questionnaire (CCQ) – a structured interview created to assess children's knowledge, attitudes, and perceived legal participation.
2. State Anxiety Inventory for Children – widely used standardized questionnaire consisting of 20 questions focused on state anxiety.
3. Demographic information form – self-explanatory

All interviews were conducted by one of two specially trained interviewers in a quiet hallway of the court's shelter-care area. The interviewers were blind to abuse status, demographic factors, and family history. Only one child who was approached did not agree to participate.

Findings:

1. Being older was significantly associated with having more dependency court knowledge
2. Minority children held more positive attitudes than Caucasian children toward dependency court
3. Higher scores on state anxiety were significantly associated with more negative dependency court attitudes
4. 37% of the children did not feel they were believed or listened to in the court proceedings

A total of 71% of the children wanted to return home either immediately or eventually

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