



# The SACHS CHRONICLE

Volume XVIII

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## SACHS MEETING February 15-16, 2007

Special Event: SACHS/LIA Luncheon

Topic: TANF/CalWORKS

Speakers: County Representation

Special Guest: Kevin Gaines (CDSS)

Location: Embassy Suites Hotel, Brea, CA

## Review of Research on TANF Sanctions

As with other areas of sanction research, much of what is known about outcomes for sanctioned clients, and how they compare to nonsanctioned recipients, is based on a small number of studies. The following summarizes a number of studies that does suggest some summary conclusions about individual, family, and child outcomes among families who have been sanctioned.

On most dimensions, families who are sanctioned fare worse than those who are not sanctioned in terms of employment, hardships, health, and various other outcomes. However, no randomized experiments with which to reliably test the contribution of sanctions to poor outcomes has been conducted.

Research consistently finds that TANF clients who leave welfare due to sanctions are less successful than those

who leave for other reasons in obtaining employment. When they do work, sanctioned leavers tend to earn less than non-sanctioned leavers.

Comparison of employment outcomes between TANF recipients who were sanctioned at the time of exit and those who left for other reasons find large differences in subsequent employment. Across several studies, rates of employment for sanctioned leavers were

*For a copy of this article, or any other article in the Chronicle, please contact a SACHS Staff Member.*

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about 40 percent and those of non-sanctioned leavers about 55 percent soon after leaving the program. Differences were similar in earnings: sanctioned leavers earned between \$1,400 and \$1,600 in their first quarter after exiting, in contrast to about \$2,200 earned by non-sanctioned leavers.

A large proportion of all welfare leavers report experiencing material hardships and there is evidence that sanctioned respondents face more hardship than recipients who are not sanctioned. Studies comparing rates of self-reported hardship between sanctioned and nonsanctioned families, sanctioned families more frequently experience trouble paying housing costs, having their phone service cut off, and seeking help from a church/charity more often than nonsanctioned respondents.



Some studies suggest that the type and number of hardships may change over time along with TANF recipients' needs and circumstances. Examining cases that remained in partial sanction over time in one California county found that the number of sanctioned cases reporting earned income increased, and the proportion reporting child care or transportation barriers decreased, with time after a sanction was imposed.



Evidence of worse outcomes for children in sanctioned families raises particular concerns. A survey of over 2,700 families in six cities who received welfare since 1996 found evidence that children in families that were sanctioned suffered higher levels of material hardship than those in other families on welfare; infants and toddlers in sanctioned families also had a 30 percent greater risk of having been hospitalized since birth and a 90 percent greater risk of being admitted to the hospital when visiting the emergency room.



An important caveat in interpreting research about outcomes for sanctioned clients is that they are often based on incomplete samples. Sanctioned individuals, like TANF recipients and leavers more generally, are often difficult to locate, resulting in low and potentially biased response rates. Clients in the most difficult circumstances may be the hardest to locate and interview, biasing measures of hardship downward. Across a number of studies, researchers find that a substantial share of TANF leavers have no observable earnings or other sources of support.

Myers, M., Harper, S, Klawitter, M. & Lindhorst, T. (2006). [Review of Research on TANF Sanctions: Report to Washington State WorkFirst Sub Cabinet](http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/about/sanction_literature_final.pdf). West Coast Poverty Center. Available from: [http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/about/sanction\\_literature\\_final.pdf](http://www.workfirst.wa.gov/about/sanction_literature_final.pdf)

## Transfer of Learning: Creating a Receptive Climate

Many organizations, including SACHS, realize that in a dynamic, demanding environment the organization must continually adapt and change to meet the needs of clients, policy makers, and others. Leaders in Action is giving particular attention to transfer of learning as a way to ensure that the valuable knowledge and skills gained by participants are applied in their work settings. To assist in transfer of learning, each SACHS Chronicle will feature an article on this subject. We begin this series with an article that focuses on a key aspect of the transfer of learning: creating and maintaining a *learning culture* in a *learning organization*.

New knowledge and skills are much more likely to be applied and used if the agency has a culture which supports learning. The recent classic work on learning organizations, *The Fifth Discipline*, by Peter Senge provides a framework for implementing learning organizations. In addition, Mike Austin, Staff Director of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium, and Karen Hopkins at the University of Maryland, have edited a book on implementing learning cultures in human service organizations.

To establish a culture of learning, a learning organization must be committed:

- to information gathering and problem solving by reviewing data and using data to follow-up and evaluate implementation,
- to constantly experimenting to find better ways to do things; and
- to learning from the past as veteran staff are valuable sources of institutional knowledge.

Agency executives can provide leadership in initiating tasks to create a learning organization through designing “learning settings.” A simple way to build this in to daily activities is to incorporate knowledge sharing, critiques, and dialogue about learning in staff meetings. For example, LIA participants can be encouraged to share new knowledge and skills with their colleagues. Employee surveys, management audits, and outcomes assessments are also effective mechanisms.

An essential aspect of creating a culture of learning is to establish a climate of trust, risk taking, dissent, mutual support, and open communication. Managers and supervisors must lead the process through questioning and listening as well as demonstrating personal investment in the process through openness to new perspectives, an awareness of personal biases, and humility. Being eager to learn creates an environment in which all staff can make valuable contributions to improving the organization.

Austin, M. and Hopkins, K., Eds. (2004). *Supervision as Collaboration in the Human Services*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Doubleday Currency.

## SACHS' Five Years Celebration



## Study on Racial Disproportionality in Foster Care Placements Released

The following is an abstract of a report released by Chapin Hall's Center for Children at the University of Chicago. The full report can be accessed from [http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1440&L2=61&L3=130](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1440&L2=61&L3=130)

Although the rate of racial disproportionality in foster care placement is relatively low in Tennessee when compared to other states, African American children are nevertheless overrepresented in Tennessee's foster care system. Tennessee is a large and geographically diverse state with significant local variation in the use of foster care. The study seeks to analyze that variation to better understand disparities in the use of foster care and to point to strategies that may bring greater equity to the delivery of child welfare services.

The study is based on Tennessee children first placed in foster care between 2000 and 2005 (inclusive). The first part of the analysis focuses on entry rates and differences in the likelihood that children will enter foster care. Disparity ranges from nearly none in some regions to other regions where the African American placement rate is almost four times the white rate. The report also examines how entry rate disparities at the county level vary in relation to characteristics of the local population. African American placement rates are closer to white placement rates in counties with higher concentrations of adults without a high school degree and female-headed families. The second part of the report examines exit patterns in order to assess how length of stay and exit type influence disproportionality. After adjusting for other attributes, among children who are either reunified or adopted, white children exit more quickly. Among children discharged to a relative's care, African American children move more quickly even though children placed with relatives stay longer than children in other placement settings, regardless of race.

Wulczyn, F., Lery, B., & Haight, J. (2006) Entry and Exit Disparities in the Tennessee Foster Care System. Chapin Hall: Center for Children, University of Chicago. Available from: [http://www.chapinhall.org/article\\_abstract.aspx?ar=1440&L2=61&L3=130](http://www.chapinhall.org/article_abstract.aspx?ar=1440&L2=61&L3=130)

### SAVE THE DATE!



#### EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE: A UNIVERSITY/AGENCY PARTNERSHIP FOR CALIFORNIA



<b>When:</b>	June 27, 2005   Time: TBA
<b>Where:</b>	Southern California Region Specific Location: TBA
<b>Who:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• County Human Services Agency Directors</li><li>• Researchers interested in partnering with Human Services Agencies</li><li>• Teaching and research faculty at California's School's of Social Work</li><li>• Other Human Services Leaders</li></ul>