

A report of the
Department of Social Services
Commonwealth of Virginia

**ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN
RESEARCH
State Fiscal Year 10**

to the Governor and the
General Assembly of Virginia

October 2010



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Office of the Commissioner

Martin D. Brown
COMMISSIONER

October 1, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell
Governor of Virginia

The General Assembly of Virginia

FROM: Martin D. Brown

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin D. Brown".

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Human Research

I am pleased to submit the Department of Social Services' Annual Report on Human Research for State Fiscal Year 10, prepared pursuant to § 63.2-218 of the Code of Virginia. If you have questions or need additional information concerning this report, please contact me.

MDB/jms

Preface

Section 63.2-218 of the Code of Virginia (Code) requires the State Board of Social Services (Board) to adopt regulations regarding human research. The statute further requires the human research committee, referred to as the Institutional Review Board (IRB), to provide an annual report to the Governor and General Assembly on the human research projects reviewed and approved during the operating year:

The Board shall adopt regulations to effectuate the provisions of Chapter 5.1 (§ 32.1-162.16 et seq.) of Title 32.1 for human research, as defined in § 32.1-162.16, to be conducted or authorized by the Department, any agency or facility licensed by the Department, or any local department. The regulations shall require the human research committee to submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Commissioner at least annually a report on the human research projects reviewed and approved by the committee and shall require the committee to report any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.

This report on human research projects reviewed and approved by the IRB during State Fiscal Year (SFY) 10 is in response to the mandate in § 63.2-218.

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Executive Summary

In SFY 10, the Department of Social Services' (DSS) human research committee, referred to as the IRB, reviewed seven proposed research projects, one of which involved demonstrations at six separate sites. Five studies qualified for exemption review, and all seven qualified for expedited review. In addition, one ongoing study was approved for continuation.

Research involving DSS clients generally involves no risk of physical harm because it is not clinical research but observational studies of human behavior. The potential risk for DSS studies most often involves issues of client privacy and, to a lesser extent, psychological harm (for example, from surveys that include sensitive questions). The IRB has a responsibility to protect client privacy and, more generally, to minimize the risks of research activities to DSS clients.

Annual Report: DSS IRB, SFY 10

Report Mandate

The purpose of this report is to provide the Governor and the General Assembly with a summary of the activities of the DSS' IRB for SFY 10 (July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010). The IRB is charged with reviewing, approving, and monitoring research conducted or authorized by DSS, local departments of social services (LDSS), DSS contractors, and DSS licensed facilities.

Section 63.2-218 requires the IRB to “submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Commissioner at least annually a report on the human research projects reviewed and approved by the committee and shall require the committee to report any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.”

Introduction

Research involving DSS clients is not biomedical in nature. Typically, DSS clients participate in social or behavioral studies and in evaluations. Unlike medical studies, physical risk from this type of research is very rare. Most often, the potential risk in DSS-related studies involves privacy issues. DSS-related research projects may also include survey questions concerning subjects that are psychologically or sociologically sensitive.

The IRB reviews such research in advance to ensure that the rights of clients are protected and that the proposed research maintains the privacy and welfare of the participants.

Human Research Activities for SFY 10

The DSS Office of Research and Planning is responsible for administering the IRB and ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations regarding human subject research. The DSS Director of Research and Planning serves as chair of the IRB, and a senior research associate coordinates the administration of the IRB and proposal reviews. Appendix B contains a list of IRB members.

Major activities in support of the IRB for SFY 2010 included:

- Reviewing ideas for studies and the relevant IRB regulations and requirements with the principals;
- Reviewing research protocols submitted for review and determining whether they meet the criteria for IRB approval; and
- Requesting that annual Continuation Review forms be completed by principal investigators for studies planned for continuation beyond the approved one-year period.

Projects Reviewed

Study #: 2010-01/Os
Principal Investigator: Sheri Osborne
Director of Training
Child Development Resources
P.O. Box 280
Norge, VA 23127-0280

Title of Protocol: "Evaluation Plan: Virginia Infant and Toddlers Specialist Network"

Date Approved: July 24, 2009

Description of Study: This evaluation will provide research and educational training as part of DSS Contract # CCD-08-069, a contract with the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development. The evaluation is intended to yield output measures and address three main issues: (1) The extent to which the project is successful in implementing planned activities; (2) The extent to which caregivers/teachers/directors and the infant and toddler specialists perceive services as being useful and meeting their needs; and (3) The measurable results or benefits of the services provided by the infant and toddler specialists. Outcomes might include: increased quality of care and education; use of health, safety, and child development knowledge and skills when providing care; and the increased use of resources, services, and linkages with partners.

The IRB approved the evaluation plan and protocol as exempt from further review since it involves educational tests and gathering information from documents already available publicly. The Board required the principal investigator to fill out the exemption review form, sign an assurance of confidentiality, and provide a copy of the evaluation plan for the review.

Study #: 2010-02/K
Principal Investigator: Dongshin Kim
Doctoral Student
Virginia Tech.
Blacksburg, VA [by e-mail]

Title of Protocol: "CPS Program Staffing in Virginia Local Departments of Social Services"

Date Approved: March 4, 2010

Description of Study: This research identified the present number of Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers and supervisors in LDSS. The investigator was also interested in talking with several CPS staff members and was given permission, provided he first obtained the approval of the director of the LDSS whose staff he planned to contact. A final issue raised was whether local non-profit groups are also involved in CPS in the Commonwealth. The answer is no; CPS is a state program and responsibility.

The IRB considered this project exempt from further review since it involved only staff members in the LDSS and not their clients.

Study #: 2010-03/R
Principal Investigator: N. Dickon Reppucci, Professor
Department of Psychology, University of Virginia
102 Gilmer Hall, P.O. Box 400400
Charlottesville, VA 22904
Title of Protocol: “Risky Relationships and Teen Dating Violence among High-Risk Adolescents”
Date Approved: March 10, 2010
Description of Study: This two-year grant will examine the prevalence rates and risk factors associated with dating violence among a sample of high-risk adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years old. The goal of this comprehensive examination of dating violence is to develop a better understanding of how to promote positive relationships for youth most at risk for initiating, maintaining, and reengaging in unhealthy romantic relationships. The study will explore risk factors associated with: (a) remaining in relationships after abuse has occurred, and (b) continued victimization and/or perpetration of violence as youth move between relationships. It will also investigate protective factors associated with involvement in healthy romantic relationships among adolescents who are at risk of becoming involved in low-quality relationships. Finally, the study will test whether relationship-level characteristics (e.g., unequal power dynamics, age differences, sexual activity, and substance abuse) relate to dating violence among high-risk youth.

Participants in this study will be recruited from agencies in Charlottesville that serve high-risk adolescents, with recruitment centralized through the LDSS. In addition to the consent form signed by the first 220 – half male, half female – consenting adolescents, participants were provided with an interview packet. Identifying information to be collected will include names, telephone numbers, addresses, and other contact information. All identifying information will be stored in an electronic statistical package for social screening (SPSS) file that is on a secure, password-protected network drive.

The IRB approved this study on an expedited basis, after receiving signed agreements from the principal investigator and research team to meet specified data confidentiality and safety conditions, including assurances of confidentiality, assent and consent forms to use with study participants. The principal investigator also submitted a plan to destroy identifying client information as soon as the study is finished with the client-linking information.

Study #: 2010-04/C
Principal Investigator: Jackie Collins
Doctoral Dissertation
Capella University
Capella Tower
225 South 6th Street, 9th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Title of Protocol: “Examining the Relationship between TANF Work Activities and Employment Outcomes: A Correlation Study”

Date Approved: May 17, 2010

Description of Study: This research is designed to identify the legitimate barriers to the employment required of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) clients, who are required to participate in a work activity as part of their TANF assistance. It is also designed to identify the percentage of these TANF clients who participate in Virginia Initiative for Employment not Welfare (VIEW).

The data to be analyzed are VIEW clients with the barrier code(s) used to record their verified barrier(s) to employment, for SFYs 08 and 09. The client numbers were modified numerically before being provided to the principal investigator and were not actual client numbers.

The IRB approved this study as exempt from further review, considering the data with modified client numbers as administrative data, and required the principal investigator to sign an assurance of confidentiality form.

Study #: 2010-05/S

Principal Investigators: Wenda Singer, DSS Project Manager, and 6 Site Project Coordinators (by location): Charlottesville, Franklin, Harrisonburg, Newport News, Richmond, and Williamsburg

Title of Protocol: “Six Pilot Community Projects: Infants/Toddlers and the Development of Additional Community Resources”

Dates Approved: April 20, 2010 through July 12, 2010

Description of Study: This research is designed “...to increase the competence of child care providers to promote the social, emotional, and behavioral development of infants and toddlers (birth to 36 months of age).” The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funded project has two goals: “(1) Improve the access of child care providers to community resources to support the healthy social, emotional, and behavioral development of infants and toddlers, especially those at risk, and (2) Increase the capacity and competence of child care providers to recognize and address the social, emotional, and behavioral development of infants and toddlers in their care.” The funding is provided with the specific intent that the six pilot communities develop models that can be replicated in other communities.

Where child data will be collected at several of the six sites, these data will focus on “... infants and toddlers in child care settings who have challenging behaviors or are at-risk for social/emotional/behavioral difficulties.”

The IRB approved all six pilot demonstrations, with four approved as expedited reviews – all involving either surveys and/or the collection of confidential information on their participating families and children, and two as exempt reviews, whose projects focused on the providers and increasing community resources available to them. All project

coordinators signed the assurance of confidentiality form. Several sites approved as expedited reviews submitted the assent and consent forms to be used in their demonstrations.

Study #: 2010-06/P
Principal Investigator: Stephon Proctor
Doctoral Dissertation
The Penn State University
547 Moore Building
University Park, PA 16802-3103
Title of Protocol: “Decision-Making and Child Welfare in Select Local
Departments of Social Services”
Dates Approved: June 10, 2010

Description of Study: This study will examine three issues:
(1) Whether stereotypes and attitudes about hypothesized parents with intellectual disabilities, attributions about their parenting behaviors, and emotional reactions are related to each other, and whether they predict participants’ assessments of risk to the parents’ child, recommendations about how to intervene (e.g., decisions about removal), and willingness to help. If so, it will examine whether a causal relationship exists between these variables.
(2) Whether decisions, willingness to help, attributions and emotional reactions differ when participants who read vignettes about parents with intellectual disabilities are compared to participants who read vignettes about parents without intellectual disabilities.
(3) Whether perspective-taking moderates (i.e., reduces the effect of) the relationship between participants’ stereotypes, attributions, and emotions on participants decisions.

The IRB approved this study on an expedited basis, requiring a change in the informed consent form before acceptance and the principal investigator’s signature on the assurance of confidentiality form. The change in the consent form addressed that the information being collected involved workers’ attitudes toward hypothesized parents with intellectual disabilities and potential attributions about their parenting behavior.

Study #: 2010-07/R-H
Principal Investigators: Miriam Raskin and Sunny Rome Harris
Department of Social Work
George Mason University (GMU)
4400 University Drive, Mail Stops 1F7 and 1F8
Fairfax, VA 22030
Title of Protocol: “Aging Out of Foster Care: The Initial Transition
Experience”
Dates Approved: August 2, 2010
Description of Study: This two-year study is designed to provide child welfare professionals, judges, researchers, advocates, and policy-makers with an understanding of how youth aging out of the foster care system experience their first year of independence.

Using a carefully structured protocol, researchers from George Mason University – partnering with the public child welfare agencies in Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax, Prince William, and Loudoun counties in Northern Virginia – will access relevant data and conduct interviews with 25–30 youth, ages 17-22, as they leave the child welfare system and progress through their first year after leaving foster care.

The study will measure trends in the first-year transition experience by interviewing the youth monthly during this one-year period, to ascertain changes in their living situations and other indicators of achieving self-sufficiency.

The IRB approved the research on an expedited basis, after reviewing the research protocol submitted to and approved by GMU; the assent and consent forms used in the study; the list of questions prepared for interviewing the youth; and required signed copies of the assurance of confidentiality form by each principal investigator.

Continuation Reviews and Modifications

One ongoing project completed an annual Continuation Review during the fiscal year, in conjunction with making minor modifications to its research design to increase the recruitment area to two additional comparison neighborhoods and make minor changes to the assent and consent forms being used. In each neighborhood, 150 households were targeted, with the expectation that the final sample size per neighborhood would be 75 households.

(1) “Building Community-Level Social Capital,” Kevin W. Allison, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, July 31, 2009, covering research activities through July 30, 2010.

Significant Changes to Approved Projects

There were none.

IRB Meetings

The IRB did not hold a meeting of the full board during the fiscal year. Subsets of IRB members, however, did meet several times during the year to discuss individual studies requiring review, modification, or the application of federal and state regulations to specific data-related issues.

Results of Completed Research

Chapter 413 of the 2007 Acts of Assembly amended and reenacted § 32.1-162.19, relating to human research review committees, by adding a new sub-section E that states:

Each human research review committee of a state institution or agency shall ensure that an overview of approved human research projects and the results of such projects are

made public on the institution's or agency's website unless otherwise exempt from disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (i.e., § 2.2-3700 et seq.).

In compliance with this legislative mandate, the results of all completed IRB-approved research studies are listed on the IRB Internet web site by year of approval, under the heading "Results of Approved Projects." The address of the IRB Internet web site is <http://www.dss.virginia.gov/about/irb.cgi>.

Appendix A

Code of Virginia Mandate

§ 63.2-218. Board to adopt regulations regarding human research.

The Board shall adopt regulations to effectuate the provisions of Chapter 5.1 (§ 32.1-162.16 et seq.) of Title 32.1 for human research, as defined in § 32.1-162.16, to be conducted or authorized by the Department, any agency or facility licensed by the Department, or any local department. The regulations shall require the human research committee to submit to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the Commissioner at least annually a report on the human research projects reviewed and approved by the committee and shall require the committee to report any significant deviations from the proposals as approved.

(1992, c. 603, § 63.1-25.01; 2002, c. 747.)

Appendix B

DSS IRB Membership

| VDSS Institutional Review Board, 2005-10 | | |
|---|--|--|
| Name | Qualification for Service | Institutional Affiliation |
| Erik Beecroft, Chair | Ph.D., Economics Director of Research | Department of Social Services Division of Community and Volunteer Services |
| Mary Disse | B.A., Psychology Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Information Systems | Department of Social Services Division of Information Systems |
| Kathy Hoke | Ph.D., Mathematics Associate Dean for Research Support Director, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences | University of Richmond |
| Robert Pyndell | B.A., Business Administration Financial Analyst | Department of Social Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development |
| James Nesmith | Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) Urban Minister | West Broad Church of Christ Richmond, Virginia |