



State of Florida  
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist  
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth  
Secretary

**DATE:** January 16, 2008

**TO:** Angel Trejo, Circuit 2 Administrator  
Nicholas Cox, SunCoast Region Director  
John K. Cooper, Central Region Director  
Ann Berner, Circuit 10 Administrator  
Alan Abramowitz, Acting Circuit 15 Administrator

**THROUGH:** George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary for Operations  
David Fairbanks, Assistant Secretary for Programs

**FROM:** Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety

**SUBJECT:** Five county participation in the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) II

**Purpose:** As a follow up to the first National Study of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW I), the same five counties that originally participated in this study have been asked to participate in NSCAW II. These counties include Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Leon, Polk and Osceola. This study, sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, examines the characteristics and needs of children and families as they enter the system, their experiences while they are in the system and after they leave it, and their situations and outcomes throughout the study period. The study includes the analysis of administrative data sets, as well as interviews of case managers and clients receiving Child Protective and Child Welfare services.

**Action Required:** Local Department, Sheriff and CBC staff are being asked to support this study by participating in a 25 minute interview on each child selected for review. The number of children selected will be between 40 and 75 per county over a 12 month period. For those children receiving services, a follow-up interview may be scheduled at 18 months. Children and caregivers will also be interviewed, and incentives provided.

Starting in January 2008, NSCAW field representatives will be contacting local agency liaison's to provide more information and schedule interviews. Please review the attached documents which explain NSCAW II in detail, and provide the name and phone number of your agency liaison to Keith Perlman at keith\_perlman@dcf.state.fl.us by January 25, 2008. The agency liaison will be responsible for coordinating local activities between the NSCAW field representative and other department, Sheriff (where applicable) and CBC staff.

1317 Winewood Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0700

Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

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Please share this information with your CBC and Sheriff partners as appropriate.

**Contact Information:** If you have any questions, please contact Keith Perlman at 850-922-2195, or keith\_perlman@dcf.state.fl.us.

cc: Regional Directors

Attachments

## National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) II FAQs



### **Who is sponsoring this study?**

The study is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

### **What are the differences between NSCAW II and NSCAW I?**

NSCAW II will examine child welfare systems and outcomes, including changes in system and policy that have occurred since NSCAW I began, such as the full implementation of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) and the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA). NSCAW II will allow the project team to follow another sample, or cohort, of 5,700 children over the next few years. The project team will not only analyze the data collected from NSCAW II, but will also compare those data and findings with those from NSCAW I. Additionally, the design of NSCAW II reflects changing ACF research priorities that include a focus on the experiences and outcomes of children in late adolescence (e.g., ages 14-17), and an emphasis on improved measurement of service utilization, placements, and re-reports of abuse and neglect.

### **Who is carrying out this study?**

The study is being conducted through a contract with RTI International (RTI) and subcontracts with ICF Caliber and Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc (WRMA).

### **How were Child Welfare Agencies chosen to participate in the study?**

Agencies were selected using probability sampling methods to obtain a nationally representative sample of children and families in the child welfare system.

### **What will participating Child Welfare Agencies be asked to do?**

Agencies will be asked to:

- Provide agency-level information via a one-time interview with the agency director. NSCAW II will also use already existing agency data from data systems such as NCANDS and AFCARS in order to lessen the burden on administrators.
- Encourage and support participation by caseworkers whose cases are selected for the study;
- Encourage family participation in NSCAW II, if the family asks about the study;
- Provide identification numbers or other means to allow the data on children and families to be linked to other records, such as administrative data on placements or service utilization.

### **What are the benefits of participation?**

By participating in NSCAW, States and agencies have contributed to this major national effort to strengthen child welfare policies, programs, and services to children and families. Through direct interaction with those on the frontlines—caseworkers, family members, and children—the study team described the realities of the child welfare system; this will provide a basis for improving policy, program, and service planning and implementation at the Federal, State, and local levels. From the findings, the study team and researchers have developed reports and briefs that describe the characteristics, strengths, needs of the children and families, as well as the services they received. Attached is a synthesis of the research literature arising from the NSCAW findings and a website address to access them

**How many children from each agency will be included in the sample?**

In most agencies, approximately 40–75 children will be randomly selected over the course of 12 months. In some counties, however, the number of children selected will be larger in order to reflect growth in the number of national child abuse and neglect cases since the original sample was taken in 1999–2000 and to represent the 2008 child welfare population accurately.

**How will caseworkers be involved?**

The appropriate caseworker for each selected child will be asked to participate by answering questions about the child’s history in the child welfare system and the services s/he receives. The caseworker also will be asked to complete a short questionnaire about his/her work and background. Each selected child’s caseworker will be interviewed at baseline and then, at a minimum, 18 months thereafter (follow-up).

**How will children be involved?**

The extent of a child’s involvement will depend on his/her age. An RTI interviewer will administer standardized assessment tools with younger children to measure their development and language skills. The interviewer will ask older children about their development, family experiences, school, and friends. The project team will obtain prior consent from the child’s legal guardian.

**How will parents and caregivers be involved?**

Interviewers will ask parents or caregivers (foster parents, relative caregivers, or others) about the child’s development, including his/her learning skills, behavior, health, and social functioning. Interviewers will also ask families about the services they receive, their environment, support systems, involvement with school and community activities, interaction with the children, and their attitudes on child rearing. The interviews will be conducted at the families’ homes or another convenient, private location.

**How long will the interviews take? Do research participants receive any compensation?**

The following are estimates for baseline and follow-up interviews:

Respondent	Baseline		18-Month Follow-up	
	Minutes per Interview	Incentive Amount	Minutes per Interview	Incentive Amount
Caregiver	90	\$50	90	\$50
Child	60	\$10 gift certificate for age 10 years and younger and \$20 gift certificate for age 11 years and older	60	\$10 gift certificate for age 10 years and younger and \$20 gift certificate for age 11 years and older
Caseworker	25	n/a	50	n/a

**How will the confidentiality of the information be maintained?**

All information provided by caseworkers, caregivers, parents, and children will be kept confidential. All responses will be entered into a computer and labeled with a case identification number. The names will not be reported with any of the information provided by respondents; the information will be reported in summary form. All NSCAW II staff are committed to

confidentiality and will sign a Confidentiality Pledge. Additionally, RTI has obtained a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality for this study to protect the identity of the research subjects.

There are two exceptions to these procedures:

- Interviewers may report, in accordance with State law, any cases where they observe things in the home that suggest risk of imminent harm to the respondent, or to another person in the household.
- The project team may report suspected serious and ongoing abuse that is based on responses from the child and caregiver interviews. Procedures for these reports will be developed in consultation with agency staff.

**Whom should we contact for additional information?**

Federal Project Officer

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RTI NSCAW Project Director

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# National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) II Project Description



## Background

Child abuse and neglect affect children, families, and communities throughout the United States. According to 2005 data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS):

- An estimated 899,000 children were victims of abuse or neglect.
- Over 3 million referrals of abuse or neglect, concerning approximately 6 million children, were received by child protective services (CPS) agencies.<sup>1</sup> Almost 62 percent of those referrals were accepted for investigation or assessment.
- Nationally, 64.8 percent of child victims were neglected (including medical neglect), 16.6 percent were physically abused, 9.3 percent were sexually abused, and 7.1 percent were psychologically maltreated. Additionally, 14.3 percent of victims experienced “other” types of maltreatment, including abandonment and congenital drug addiction. (Note: the percentages total more than 100 percent because a child may have experienced more than one type of maltreatment.)<sup>2</sup>

There are more than 500,000 children in out-of-home care, with nearly 60 percent of them being in foster care for more than 1 year. Approximately one-quarter of children in foster care reside with relatives. Of the children exiting foster care, 54 percent were reunited with their parents or primary caretakers, 11 percent were living with other relatives, 18 percent were adopted, 9 percent were emancipated, 4 percent entered into a guardianship, and the remainder were transferred to another agency, ran away, or died.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, many children are in foster care during crucial stages of cognitive, physical, and social/emotional development, and agencies are struggling with limited staff and resources to meet investigation and service needs.

## NSCAW I and II

In 1996, Congress directed the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a national study of children who are at risk of abuse or neglect or are in the child welfare system.<sup>4</sup> Congress mandated that the study include a longitudinal component to follow cases for a period of several years and collect data on the types of abuse or neglect involved, agency contacts and services, and out-of-home placements. In response, the Administration for Children and Families has undertaken NSCAW I.

NSCAW I was the first study to make available nationally representative longitudinal data drawn

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<sup>1</sup> This increase is largely due to the inclusion of data from Alaska and Puerto Rico for FY 2005.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). (2007). *Child maltreatment 2005* [On-line]. Available: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/pubs/cm05/index.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ACF. (2006). *The AFCARS report* [On-line]. Available: [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats\\_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/stats_research/afcars/tar/report13.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Sec. 429A, National Random Sample Study of Child Welfare (P.L.104-193).

from first-hand reports from children, parents, and other caregivers, as well as reports from caseworkers and teachers and data from administrative records. It also was the first national study to examine child and family well-being outcomes in detail and to relate those outcomes to family characteristics, experiences with the child welfare system, community environment, and other factors. The study data describe the child welfare system and the experiences of children and families who come into contact with the system.

Funding has now been provided for a new round of data collection (NSCAW II) that will (1) follow a new cohort of 5,700 children; (2) address crucial program, practice, and policy issues regarding the dynamics of the child welfare system and outcomes for children and families; and (3) compare the findings between NSCAWs I and II. The major research questions the study continues to address include the following:

- Who are the children and families who come into contact with the child welfare system?
  - What are their backgrounds and characteristics? What are their prior histories? What strengths and problems do they bring?
  - How do the characteristics, experiences, and needs of children and families differ by the ways they come into contact with the system? What effects do agency, State and Federal policies and programs have on the characteristics of those who enter the system?
- What pathways and services do children and families experience while in the child welfare system?
  - What placements and services do they experience while they are in the child welfare system? What determines the different pathways, placements, and services they experience?
  - How do child welfare services interact with other services and supports for children and families involved with the child welfare system?
- What are the short- and longer-term outcomes for these children and families?
  - How do the children and families change during the time they are in contact with the child welfare system? How do they change after they leave the system?
  - How do child, family, system, community, policy, and other factors affect child and family functioning? How do these factors affect placement and services? How do these factors affect subsequent child welfare system involvement?

## **Features of the Study Design**

*Contract and Data Collection Schedule.* NSCAW I is being carried out over a 10-year period from October 1997 through December 2007. NSCAW II data collection will begin in March 2008 and will have at least one round of follow-up data collection, scheduled at 18 months after the close of the index investigation. Both children who remain in the system and those who leave the system will be followed for the full study period.

*Sample.* The new NSCAW II sample, which represents the population of children and families that enter the child welfare system, will include 5,700 children (ages 0 to 17 years) from approximately 100 child welfare agencies nationwide, with the sample being drawn from closed investigations/assessed cases during a one-year period. It will include cases with on-going services and those not receiving subsequent services through CPS, as well as children being served in their

homes and in out-of-home care. The sample design will allow in-depth analyses of subgroups of special interest (e.g., infants and young children, children in foster care) and also provide national estimates for the full population of children and families entering the system. The NSCAW II study will use the same sampling frame of population sampling units (PSUs) from NSCAW I in order to provide a longitudinal analysis over a decade of data collection, including the many challenges that agencies have and do face and the effects that agencies have on children's lives.

*Instrument Development and Data Collection.* The study will collect child- and family-level data from children in the child welfare system, their parents, other caregivers, teachers, and caseworkers. Follow-up face-to-face interviews or assessments will be conducted at 18 months. Data on school engagement and performance will be obtained through questionnaires sent to teachers. Agency- and system-level data will be collected from caseworkers and State and agency administrators, as well as from pre-existing data, such as the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS), in order to reduce agency and caseworker burden.

An instrument design team, which included members of the child welfare research and policy communities, determined the data to be collected and how to measure child and family functioning and well-being, service needs and utilization, and agency- and system-level factors that are likely to be related to child and family outcomes. Child outcomes of interest include health and physical well-being, cognitive and school performance, mental health, behavior problems, and social functioning and relationships. The selected measures take into account variances in participating children's developmental levels and their cultural and linguistic diversity. Additionally, the measures were selected to maximize the continuity of measurement over the study period and beyond, to be appropriate for use by field interviewers in large-scale surveys, and, where possible, to allow for comparison with findings from other studies including NSCAW I.

## **Data Availability**

After being stripped of all identifying information, data sets from NSCAW I have been made available to the larger research and policy communities to encourage secondary analyses that will support additional research and timely policy decisions. The study stimulated research activities that go well beyond the scope of this project. The NSCAW II data files will also be made available within a few months after the completion of each round of data collection.

## **Project Team**

### ***RTI International***

RTI International (RTI) is an independent, nonprofit research institute that carries out studies for government and other clients in child and family well-being, public health and medicine, public policy, environmental protection, advanced technologies, and other areas. Founded in 1958, RTI was created as the initial research and development center of North Carolina's Research Triangle Park by our three founding universities: Duke University in Durham, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University in Raleigh. RTI headquarters is located in Research Triangle Park, NC. The company also has research facilities in Washington, DC; Rockville, MD; Hampton, VA; Cocoa Beach, FL; Atlanta, GA; Waltham, MA; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA; and at project locations as needed in the U.S. and abroad.

### ***ICF Caliber***

ICF Caliber, which headed up the agency recruitment for NSCAW I, provides innovative program, applied research, evaluation, technical, professional, and information technology services for government; private, nonprofit; and corporate clients. ICF Caliber focuses largely on government social programs, including child abuse and neglect treatment and prevention, child welfare services, substance abuse treatment and prevention, family and youth services, juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, and welfare reform. ICF Caliber headquarters are located in Fairfax, VA. The company also has offices in Albany, NY; Baton Rouge, LA; Charleston, SC; Dallas, TX; Dayton, OH; Houston, TX; Lexington, MA; Los Angeles, CA; Middletown, PA; Ogden, UT; Oklahoma City, OK; Orange County, CA; Research Triangle Park, NC; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; Washington, DC; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Toronto, Canada; New Delhi, India; Moscow, Russian Federation; and London, United Kingdom.

### ***Walter R. McDonald & Associates, Inc. (WRMA)***

WRMA has a national reputation for combining social sciences research and evaluation capabilities with information systems and technological expertise. This combination enables WRMA to assist health and human service providers in the areas of policy formation, strategic planning, implementation, evaluation, organizational management, and management information systems. WRMA headquarters is located in Sacramento, CA. The company also has offices in Washington, DC; Princeton, NJ; Wilmington, DE; Springfield, IL; Los Angeles, CA; and Florida.

### ***NSCAW II Consultant Group***

Due to the complexity and scope of the NSCAW projects, we continue to use the group assembled for NSCAW I to provide advice and consultation on various aspects of the project, including policy and research priorities, research design, methods and operations, and strategies for analysis and dissemination of results.

### **Information on NSCAW**

For more information on the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, contact either of the following:

#### **Federal Project Officer**

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