

## Introduction

- Birth parents are typically highly committed to their children, and expect to have a life-long relationship with them.
- For children placed into out of home care, caregivers may vary in their commitment.
- Higher commitment in foster parents of infants is linked to higher likelihood of adoption or long-term placement (Dozier & Lindhiem, 2006).
- Out of home care sometimes takes the form of foster care, where children live with caregivers in a home environment.
- Sometimes out of home care takes the form of group care, where children live in groups with caregivers who live with them for a series of several days and then are replaced by other adults (cottage care), or who rotate through in shifts (shift care).
- Given that foster care represents a more home-like environment than group care, it was expected to be associated with higher levels of commitment than group care.

## Types of Care

### Foster Care

- Children live with foster parents.

### Group Care

#### Cottage Care

- Staff (sometimes referred to as house parents) work for a series of days and then take a series of days off.



#### Shift Care

- Staff members work shifts, typically with a 6-10 hour shift and are then replaced by other staff.



## Current Study

- This study examined commitment among foster parents, cottage workers, and shift workers for adolescents.
- We hypothesized that foster parents would display higher levels of commitment than caregivers in group care settings.

## Method

### Participants

- 31 foster parents, 28 cottage care workers, 18 shift care workers from a large southern state.
- Children ranged in age from 13 to 17 years old.
- Attempts were made to make groups similar in child gender and child age

### Procedure

- Interviews were completed over the phone and recorded for later coding.

### Measures

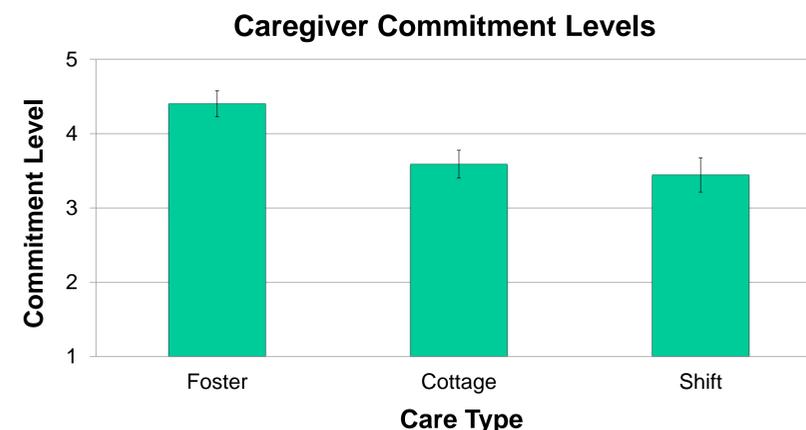
#### Primary Outcome: Commitment

- Commitment was assessed using the This Is My Child Interview.
- Commitment is defined as the degree to which the caregivers thought of the children as their own.
- Commitment was scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of commitment.

#### Covariate: Problem Behaviors

- Child externalizing behavior was assessed using the Brief Problem Monitor (Achenbach, McConaughy, Ivanova, & Rescorla, 2011).
- The BPM includes 19 items and measures externalizing (7 items), internalizing (6 items), and attention problems (6 items).

## Results



- There was a main effect for Type of Care (foster/cottage/shift), with foster parents showing higher levels of commitment than cottage care and shift care workers, ( $F(2, 74) = 7.36, p < .01$ ).
- The association remained significant when controlling for child externalizing behavior ( $F(2, 59) = 4.91, p < .05$ ).

## Discussion

- These findings support the hypothesis that foster parents feel greater commitment to their children than cottage and shift care workers.
- Commitment is expected to be especially important for vulnerable adolescents who have been placed into out of home care.
- These findings suggest the importance of placing children into foster homes when possible.

## Selected References

- Achenbach, T.M., McConaughy, S.H., Ivanova, M.Y., & Rescorla, L.A. (2011). *Manual for the ASEBA Brief Problem Monitor (BPM)*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Center for Children, Youth, & Families.
- Bates, B., & Dozier, M. (1998). "This Is My Baby" coding manual. University of Delaware: Unpublished document.
- Dozier, M., & Lindhiem, O. (2006). This is my child: Differences among foster parents in commitment to their young children. *Child Maltreatment*, 11, 338-345.