

Research Proposal:

Parenting trajectories of homeless parents in Early Risers intervention

#1. Background of the research project

Homeless parent's life stressors include negative parenting, and high risk of exposure to child maltreatment, violence, mental illness and substance use (Gewirtz, Hart-Shegos, & Medhanie, 2008). The behavioral and emotional problems of children in homeless family are greater than children with low socioeconomic status and those in permanently housed communities (Lee et al, 2010). Positive parenting practices of parents who experienced homelessness are essential to protect their child and from threats to healthy development. Therefore, improving homeless parent's parenting practices is critical to promoting positive child adjustment and mental health under a high-risk environment. However, many parenting interventions for high-risk families demonstrate modest effectiveness with considerable variability in response. Also, empirical research examining these interventions, especially on parenting in homeless families, is limited in scope. The purpose of this study is to examine intervention effect and identify what family characteristics predict differential responses to the parenting practices outcome in a preventive intervention.

The secondary data of 137 parents with 223 children (age 6-12) from 15 supportive housing agencies in Midwest was collected through randomized effective trial of the Early Risers intervention. Early Risers, a multicomponent, evidence-based preventive intervention for high-risk children, was delivered over 2 years with two child-focused components and two parent-focused components. Their parenting outcomes were collected across four waves of data collection, total of 4 years from baseline to a year follow-up after intervention, through repeated observational assessment of structured Family Interaction Tasks (FITs), which strengthens the uniqueness of this study from research examining this population. To distinguish different parenting trajectories, Growth Mixture Modeling (GMM), using ML estimates, will be used to identify number of subgroups (classes) with different patterns of parenting practices outcomes over time. The GMM analysis is person-centered approach which focus on the relationship among individuals than variables to classify individuals into subpopulation based on similar response patterns (regarding unique variance and covariate), and allows for differences in growth parameters across unobserved subpopulation. Therefore, the analysis is recognized for identifying different growth trajectories of homogeneous groups within larger heterogeneous population. Then to examine critical factors in response to the parenting outcome for families exposed to homelessness, predictors such as dosage, executive functioning (BASC-2-PRS), child behavior problems (BASC-2-PRS), parental depression (BSI 18), parenting self-efficacy (PRQ), and parent-child attachment (PRQ) will be investigated on each membership group.

#2. Contribution to translational research

Examining membership in different response classes and associated factors in longitudinal data will help to explain variability in treatment response over time. By determining characteristics of subpopulations that differentially predict parenting outcomes following preventive interventions, this research will further our understanding of for whom the evidence-based program is most effective. Furthermore, this research may provide valuable evidence of which predictors that are limited and inconclusive in understanding intervention response. Overall, this research will contribute to literature on regarding optimizing the effects of intervention programs and improve parenting in high-risk homeless families.

#3. Anticipated outcome

With a support from 2017 Translational Research Summer Fellowship, this intervention research will provide important data for intervention adaptation of Early Risers program for homeless population through (a) conference presentation such as Society for Prevention Research (SPR), and next (b) submitting the manuscript in a journal.

#4. Mentoring relationship

My mentor in ITR faculty is Dr. Timothy Piehler, who is a faculty member in Family Social Science department and my advisor. We have discussed our research topic and what statistical methods are appropriate in 2017 Spring semester. In 2017 summer, we plan to focus on analyzing the data and writing the manuscript. We will conduct weekly meetings during the course of the summer to discuss ongoing progress on the project.

Reference:

- Gewirtz, A. H., Hart-Shegos, E., & Medhanie, A. (2008). Psychosocial status of children and youth in supportive housing. *American Behavioral Scientist, 51*, 810 – 823.
- Lee, S. S., August, G. J., Gewirtz, A. H., Klimes-Dougan, B., Bloomquist, M. L., & Realmuto, G. M. (2010). Identifying unmet mental health needs in children of formerly homeless mothers living in a supportive housing community sector of care. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 38*, 421– 432.