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## Texas Region Two Crossover Youth Practice Model Proposed Pilot Study

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## ABSTRACT

The term *crossover youth* refers to children who have been abused or neglected, participated in delinquent behavior, and are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. The purpose of this study was to gain information about the current crossover youth population within Texas Region Two, who could potentially benefit from the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM). This proposed pilot study advocates for the implementation of the CYPM in Abilene, Texas, which is one of the counties in Region Two and a place that has not yet enacted protocols and specific services for the crossover youth population. This was a qualitative study in which qualitative data was collected and analyzed by running the appropriate parametric and non-parametric tests using SPSS Statistics software. Variables analyzed include the number of crossover youth receiving services from Big Country CASA, the demographic information of that crossover youth sample, and the number of times those youth experienced placement instability and recidivism. In addition, data was collected pertaining to number of children in both the Department of Family Protective Services and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Results support the need for a change in protocols when serving crossover youth, not only by identifying a need but also showing that crossover youth in Texas Region Two are facing similar problems that are reported in the literature, such as high rates of placement insecurity and recidivism. Action should be implemented within this region and the CYPM could be the answer to support the crossover youth population.

Texas Region Two Crossover Youth Practice Model Proposed Pilot Study

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Social Work

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the degree

Master of Science in Social Work

By

Erin Snider

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This thesis, directed and approved by the committee for the thesis candidate Erin Snider, has been accepted by the Office of Graduate Programs of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science in Social Work

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*Growth* can be used in a context that represents positive connotations, a sense of affirmative expansion and change. For the past decade, the number of children who were removed by Texas Child Protective Services has had significant growth each year in Region Two of Texas. In this context, the term *growth* is not connected to any form of positive connotations or affirmative change. This growth means more and more children are being abused or neglected by those who are supposed to be their caregivers and protectors. These children are then removed from their homes in order to keep them safe and away from their abusers but are, in conjunction, being thrown into a harsh and challenging welfare system.

Region Two of Texas is located in the western region of the state and covers a total of 30 counties. In the fiscal year of 2018, the number of children who were removed in Region Two of Texas was 1,007; in 2008, this number was 384 (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services [DFPS], n.d.). When comparing these statistics, the growth that has occurred within only a ten-year time span is shocking and incredibly worrisome. Children who are involved in Child Protective Services are more likely to face challenges and hardships that other children do not. In addition, these children have a higher probability to participate in delinquent behaviors and, in turn, are more likely to also get involved in the Juvenile Justice System (Center for Juvenile Justice Reform



[CJJR] et al., 2015). Youth who get caught up in the multisystem struggle face worse challenges and hardships than their peers.

Youth who are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems have just recently started getting recognized as a population that is falling between the cracks of the two systems (Herz et al., 2012). In order to help youth who are suffering the outcomes of being pulled between two systems, a new practice needs to be implemented within Region Two of Texas. This proposed pilot study advocates for the implementation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model in Abilene, Texas, which is one of the counties in Region Two and a place that has not yet enacted protocols and specific services for this population. Within the following literature review is supporting evidence for the recommendation.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Crossover Youth**

Unfortunately, youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system are just recently becoming recognized as a population that faces its own set of challenges, and a single definition to categorize and label these youth has yet to be created. In order to enact change and start implementing policies and practices to help meet the need of this population, a definition must be created. Recently, a task force has been created in Texas to not only advocate for youth who are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems but also to create a single definition and term to categorize the population (Asgarian, Kelly, Wexler, & Gilmore, 2019). Currently, several definitions are being utilized to describe these youths; the three most widely used terms include *crossover youth*, *dually-involved youth*, and *dually-adjudicated youth* (CJJR, 2015; Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010). The term *crossover youth* is defined as youth who have experienced any form of abuse or neglect, and have also participated in delinquent behavior. In this definition, the youth does not need to be involved in either the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system to be considered a crossover youth (CJJR et al., 2015; Haight, Bidwell, Marshall, & Khatiwoda, 2014; Herz et al., 2010; Herz et al., 2012; Wilkerson, 2013). *Dually-involved youth* is a term used to refer to youth who are involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system concurrently. In this definition, youth must be receiving services from both systems in any capacity (CJJR

et al., 2015; Herz et al., 2010; Herz et al., 2012; Wilkerson, 2013). The final term that is used in the literature is *dually-adjudicated youth*, which refers to youth who are currently being adjudicated by both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice systems (CJJR et al., 2015; Herz, Ryan, & Bilchik, 2010; Herz et al., 2012; Wilkerson, 2013). Without one single definition for youth who are involved in both the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems, problems can arise. These issues come to light when government systems and other organizations aimed at serving this population try to implement services and new practices to meet the unmet needs that are just now being recognized.

For this review and the further study, the term *crossover youth* will be used when referring to the population, as it is defined by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR) at Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy. To create the definition of *crossover youth*, the CJJR used and elaborated on a combination of definitions that are assigned to the three most commonly used terms within the literature: *crossover youth*, *dually-involved youth* and *dually-adjudicated youth*. The CJJR's definition of *crossover youth* refers to children who have been abused or neglected, participated in delinquent behavior, and are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system. In addition, children labeled as crossover youth by the CJJR can also fit the characteristics of a dually-adjudicated youth, based on what stage they are in within each system (CJJR et al., 2015).

### **Demographics of Crossover Youth**

Within the research conducted on crossover youth, certain demographic profiles have been identified as being prevalent in the majority of the population. In multiple studies, the gender breakdown of crossover youth was found to be within similar ranges;

three samples showed an average of 67% to 69% of crossover youth were male, and 31% to 33% were females (Center for Juvenile Justice Reform [CJJR] & American Public Human Services Association [APHSA], 2008; Halemba, Siegel, Lord, & Zawacki, 2004; Huang, Ryan, & Herz, 2012). Although females do not make up the majority of the crossover youth population, they have been found in many studies to be significantly more represented in the crossover youth population compared to the number of females involved in only the juvenile justice system (CJJR et al., 2008; CJJR et al., 2015).

The CJJR has found that there is also a significant over-representation of minorities, specifically African Americans, in the crossover youth population. The CJJR has published two studies where the majority of the samples identified as African American, representing 55% and 63% of the crossover youth, respectively identified as African American (CJJR et al., 2008; CJJR et al., 2015). An outlier to the majority of studies that look at demographic factors in the crossover youth population is a study conducted in Arizona, which reported as low as 12% of the studied sample being African American (Halemba, Siegel, Lord, & Zawacki, 2004). This contrary statistic was attributed to the difference in racial demographics of the study's location compared to other studies that have found opposing results (Barnett, Abbott, & Stewart, 2018).

### **Crossover Youth Histories**

Experiencing hardships is not a question of “if” for crossover youth but is instead a question of to what degree they will experience hardship. Crossover youth experience hardships due to their status, often before becoming involved in either the child welfare or the juvenile justice systems. The hardships faced by this population are somewhat connected and can build upon each other. The foundation of the challenges crossover

youth face in the future are often built upon hardships experienced in their past. It has been found that crossover youth have similar family histories that could be a factor in them becoming dually involved. Two similarly conducted studies found that the majorities of their crossover youth samples had substantial negative family histories, including a family history of substance abuse, crime, mental health problems, and domestic violence (Halembe et al. 2004; Herz et al., 2010).

Due to these findings, it is logical that crossover youth are more likely to become involved in the child welfare system prior to entering the juvenile justice system. Children who are in the child welfare system have been recorded to be at higher risk for participating in delinquent behavior, resulting in juvenile justice system involvement (CJJR et al., 2015). Approximately 47% to 50% of youth in the child welfare system crossover into the juvenile justice system (Coley & Jarrett, 2019; Herz et al., 2010; Thomas, 2015). One study found that within a sample of 1148 crossover youth, 92% were in the child welfare system prior to becoming dually involved (Huang et al., 2012). Due to such a large amount of crossover youth being in the child welfare system before entering the juvenile justice system, the majority of this population has experienced being removed from their homes by Child Protective Services (CPS) and assigned to at least one out-of-home placement. Research has seen that upwards of 84%, 98%, and 100% of samples participating in different studies were placed in at least one out-of-home placement prior to becoming categorized as a crossover youth (CJJR et al., 2008; Halembe et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2012). These challenges are just where most crossover youth start; as they become dually involved, they experience even more challenges that can impact them in the present and throughout their futures.

## **Harsher Outcomes**

Crossover youth have more challenges, stigma, and harsher outcomes than youth who are not dually involved in the child welfare and the juvenile justice system. This population is seen as a higher risk and, in turn, receives harsher punishment and consequences for their actions. Literature states that it is less likely for crossover youth to be diverted from entering the juvenile justice system than other youth. Instead, they are more likely to be detained in a correctional facility, even after a first offense. It has also been seen that crossover youth are less likely to receive probation compared to youth who are just involved in the juvenile justice system (CJJR et al., 2015). Ryan, Herz, Hernandez, Marshall (2014) found that rather than receiving probation, crossover youth were more likely to be held in placements such as group homes and correctional facilities instead of receiving probation. Looking at two samples, one consisting of crossover youth and the other youth just involved in the juvenile justice system, the following breakdown of orders were given by the court: for crossover youth 58% received probation, 21% were put in suitable placement such as a group home, and 21% were placed in a correctional facility. In comparison, For youth involved only in the juvenile justice system, received outcomes as 73% received probation, 11% were placed in a suitable placement, and 16% were placed in a correctional facility (CJJR et al., 2008).

Research has also indicated that crossover youth are charged with violent offenses more frequently while in a probation placement setting, such as a group home, compared to non-crossover youth on probation supervision. One study recorded that 42% of violent offenses, 48% of alcohol or drug offenses, and 61% of warrants and probation violations were committed in a group placement setting (CJJR et al., 2008). Crossover youth have

also been recorded to be detained and spend more time placed in a delinquent correctional facility, than their non-dually-involved counterparts (CJJR et al., 2015; Coley & Jarrett, 2019). One study found that after arresting youth in the child welfare system in Los Angeles County, 68% of youth were recorded to have officially entered the juvenile justice system and therefore could then be categorized as crossover youth (CJJR et al., 2008). With this entry, crossover youth not only cross systems but also crossed over in titles: once a victim of abuse or neglect is now seen as the perpetrator of a crime.

### **Placement Instability**

When removing and placing a child in the child welfare system, best practice revolves around first finding the child an alternative placement to stay where they are safe and in which all of their needs are being met. Secondly, the goal moves to finding the child a permanent placement as quickly as possible in which they can remain safe and taken care of (Kolivoski, Barnett, & Abbott, 2015). Crossover youth often face greater challenges in the area of placement. Crossover youth face greater placement instability and longer period of time without a permanent placement. In a study conducted by Halemba et al., (2004), crossover youth had been in an average of 10.3 different placements. Another study found that out of the total study sample of 1148 crossover youth, 66% were placed in out-of-home placements. This statistic was further broken down and recorded as 23% being placed in group homes, 20% being placed in kin placements, 17% being placed in a foster home, and 6% being placed in other out-of-home placements (Huang et al., 2012). Research has found that youth who have been placed in multiple placements are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors and be charged with an offense (Kolivoski et al., 2015). Placement stability brings a sense of normalcy to children who are removed from

their homes and, in turn, can result in better outcomes. The crossover youth population often lacks this sense of normalcy due to significant placement instability and being involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system.

Multiple studies have found that the majority of their crossover youth samples had a history of running away from their placements. One study found 51% of the crossover youth sample had ran away, while another study recorded 50% of their crossover youth sample had run away (CJJR & APHSA, 2008; Halemba et al., 2004). Running away results in many repercussions when the child is found again. The act of running away is seen as an offense that indicates a need for supervision and can lead to the child being re-detained, or if no other placement option is available, the child may be charged with additional offenses or moved to a new placement (Office of the Attorney General, 2018). These adverse effects add to the layers of obstacles the youth must balance moving forward.

### **Recidivism**

Recidivism is one of the challenges that appears most prominently in research pertaining to crossover youth. Reoffending can have significant impacts on the youth and can further their risk of having poorer life outcomes as they age. The recidivism rates for crossover youth have been seen to be higher than youth who are just involved in the juvenile justice system. In addition, crossover youth usually have a longer and more frequent history of delinquent behavior. Halemba et al. (2004) found that 73% of the crossover youth sample within the study had an extensive delinquent history and that 62% of crossover youth recidivated.



In comparison, only 30% of youth only involved in the juvenile justice system had reoffended. Similar findings were seen in the Huang, Ryan, and Herz study (2012), which recorded that within a five-year period, 56% of crossover youth reoffended compared to 41% of youth only involved in the juvenile justice system. “A study of Rhode Island administrative data found that juvenile probationers with child maltreatment experience were 1.5 times more likely to recidivate as compared with non-maltreated youth 71% versus 46%” (Huang et al., 2012, p. 259). Continued delinquent behavior and recidivism adds to the risk of poor outcomes throughout life; as crossover youth enter adulthood, the risk and act of recidivism becomes even more damaging with the eligibility for being charged in the criminal justice system.

### **Education and Behavior/Mental Health**

With continued placement instability, running away, long periods of being detained, and having to deal with a history of abuse or neglect, crossover youth have been recorded to perform more poorly in school and have higher rates of behavior conduct issues and mental health disorders (CJJR et al., 2008; Halemba et al., 2004; Ryan et al., 2007). Huang, Ryan and Herz (2012) found that 51% of the sample were not attending school, 47% exhibited behavioral problems at school, and 49% were not performing well academically. Similar results were found where 59% of a sample of crossover youth were not performing well in school, 61% exhibited emotional or mental health disorders, and 27% reported having suicidal ideation or having attempted to end their lives (Halemba et al., 2004). Not attending or performing poorly in school can have long-term impacts on a youth's life and can result in not graduating high school, the inability of pursue higher education, and drastically impacting job and career opportunities in the future.

## **Parties Currently Involved with Crossover Youth in Texas Region Two**

Literature pertaining to crossover youth has repeated that youth involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems are at greater risk for overall poor life outcomes in the future. As mentioned above, crossover youth face their own set of challenges and needs that are currently not being addressed in many jurisdictions. Texas Region Two, where the number of children entering the child welfare system is steadily rising every year, is a jurisdiction that has not implemented policies and practices to support crossover youth. When caught between two government systems, one would think that crossover youth would have ample access to services, but due to each system having its own goals and lack of communication, this, however, is often not the case (CJJR et al., 2008).

## **System's Involvement with Crossover Youth**

There are a number of government systems and outside agencies that can step in if a child needs help. Each organization can assist children and their families in different or similar ways. The Department of Family and Protective Service (DFPS) is one of these agencies in Texas Region Two. DFPS is aimed with the goal of reunification, permanent placements, and keeping children from continued abuse or neglect (DFPS, n.d.). Another agency that helps children in Texas Region Two is the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD). This government agency handles the charging, supervision, and rehabilitation of juvenile offenders (Office of the Attorney General, 2018). As mentioned above, children who enter into the child welfare system are likely also to have contact with the juvenile justice system. Although these two systems may share information when going through

the proper channels, each judicial hearing, judge, court representative, and social worker is different.

This can create an environment where information is not shared, important factors are missed, and opportunities are lost, all resulting in the poor outcomes that are often seen in crossover youth. This environment, which is supposed to be helping children and families, is struggling to do just that. The segregation of cases and personnel related to each individual case has been recognized as a problem for crossover youth by the TJJD. New recommendations to the family code and the creation of a task force are some of the interventions that have been proposed by the TJJD (Kolivoski et al., 2015).

### **Big Country CASA's Partner Involvement With Crossover Youth**

These two systems are not the only parties that are involved in the case; outside parties like Big Country CASA (BCC) also advocate for and represent children in Texas Region Two. BCC's aim is to provide a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) to every child who is removed from their home and enters into the child welfare system. These children can, and often do, include crossover youth. CASAs are volunteers that have been recruited, trained, and are supervised by the organization to advocate for the best interest of children in court. The judge appoints these partners in the case to act in the capacity of guardian ad litem for the child(ren). The CASA volunteer accomplishes this by monitoring the case, being an advocate in the courtroom, being a positive influence, and connecting the child to needed resources. In some jurisdictions, if a child is involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice system, a CASA volunteer can be appointed to both cases; however, this is not always the case (Lenhoff, Jones-Kelley, & Abbott, 2017). Currently, BCC serves a number of children who can be categorized as

crossover youth but only have the ability and authority to advocate for the child in areas that are involved in the child welfare system. The segregation of all of the systems and partners, who are ultimately all looking for the best outcome for the child, instead further hinders the effort to serve this population.

### **The Crossover Youth Practice Model**

The Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) was created by the CJJR. This model, if implemented and conducted properly, was created using research-based practices in order to aid the crossover youth population. The model helps identify why these youth are more susceptible to crossing over between systems and helps to redefine collaboration between the juvenile justice system, child welfare system, and other organizations that serve crossover youth. With this collaboration, the needs and challenges faced by crossover youth can be better addressed by all parties involved in the case (CJJR et al., 2015). Presiding Juvenile Court Judge Stacy Boulware Eurie, in Sacramento, California, stated that this model allows all parties involved in the case to look at the situation holistically, allowing each system to look at not only at the goals and contributions of its own systems, but also other systems and organization involved. In addition, the strengths and contributions of the family and the child can be seen in order to best serve that child's needs (CJJR, 2017). Macon Steward the senior program manager of CJJR, explains that improving the service efficiency and accuracy that the crossover youth population is receiving can have an extensive impact on the outcome of the youth's case and their overall outcomes in life (CJJR, 2017). CYPM was first developed after seven pilot programs that focused on improving collaboration within the child welfare and juvenile justice system were conducted. Following the implementation

of the pilot programs, the CYPM was created as a guide for policies and practices that address the specific challenges and characteristics that are associated with crossover youth (CJJR, 2017). This model has shown to improve the services crossover youth are receiving and address some of the challenges that they are facing.

The CYPM helps organizations that are already involved with crossover youth improve practices and procedures (Herz et al., 2012). The key elements of the CYPM are focused on improving the communication, cooperation, and engagement of the child welfare system, the juvenile justice system, the court, the family, and other organizations who are serving the child. The model has designated a set of values that the model is based on that includes having strong family involvement, utilization of all available data in decision making, and having appropriate training for all parties involved (CJJR et al., 2015). In addition to these values, the CYPM focuses on changing a set of seven themes that apply to crossover youth. These themes are highlighted in the effort of improving crossover youth services and meeting the unmet needs of this population. CYPM's key themes include increasing family engagement, increasing permanency, decreasing disproportionality of crossover youth who are minorities, decreasing the disproportionate difference in females that are represented in crossover youth population compared to the non-crossover youth in the juvenile justice system, increasing information sharing between systems, increasing coordinated case management and increasing the knowledge of how each system gets resources and funding by patterning systems (CJJR et al., 2015). With this foundation, the CYPM is set up to fulfill its goal of improving the outcome and services provided to crossover youth.

## **Implementation of CYPM**

Preceding the implementation of the CYPM, factors must be put in place to make the transition successful. Support from employees and community members from the variety of organization and government systems are needed to create this much-needed change. Therefore creating a team made up of judiciary members, juvenile justice staff, child welfare staff, education providers, mental health providers, substance abuse treatment providers, youth, parents, law enforcement, attorneys, and court-appointed special advocates can aid the implementation process in all these different areas in which the CYPM will have an effect. To help this team proceed in the correct direction during the beginning stages of implementation, on-site training and assistance can be arranged with the CJJR as well as contact with other jurisdictions who have implemented the model (CJJR et al., 2015). With leaders supporting the identification and collaboration of all parties involved, the first phase of the model can begin.

### **Phase One of the CYPM**

The CYPM is broken down into three phases. The first phase addresses how the model implements policy changes in the areas of arrest, identification, detention, and decision-making processes concerning crossover youth. Identifying crossover youth as quickly as possible when they enter into the juvenile justice system is the first key element in phase one of the CYPM. Jurisdictions that are implementing the model would achieve this by developing a set of assessment tools, resources, and surveys that can be used when youth are first detained. This includes a protocol that would determine if youth who are being processed through the first stages of the juvenile justice system are also in the child welfare system. If it is found that the child is in both systems, it would

then be required that the child welfare social worker be informed of their child entering the juvenile justice system (CJJR et al., 2015). Information between the child welfare and the juvenile justice caseworkers should be shared, and both should attend and keep up with the hearings and decisions of the partnering system. In addition to the communication and collaboration between the social workers, the family and other concerned parties to the case would be brought into the team assessment, planning, and decision-making processes (CJJR et al., 2015).

The CYPM suggested that in this stage, decisions about charges that are applied to crossover youth should be reevaluated or changed in ways that are aimed at the goal of avoiding dual system involvement. This discussion will allow the parties of the case to learn the damages that occur when a youth becomes dually involved and why such alterations are needed when possible. Crossover youth are more often detained and for longer periods of time due to their status. The reengineering of decision making would simply help “level the playing field” between youth solely involved in the juvenile justice system and crossover youth and aid in better outcomes for the youth (CJJR et al., 2015).

### **Phase Two of the CYPM**

The second phase of the CYPM explains how the model joins the assessment and planning phase between all of the parties involved in the case. The CYPM is unique in that it gives jurisdictions different options and models that can be implemented to improve services for crossover youth. The practice model recognizes that some jurisdictions are more equipped and willing to change their practices than others, so it gives two court structure options that can be implemented. The two models include the dedicated docket or one judge/one family court structure (CJJR et al., 2015). The

dedicated docket model is designed around having a single court that includes having all court personnel who hear every case involving crossover youth. Within this model, it is also expected that both the child welfare and juvenile justice system caseworkers attend all hearings that involve the crossover youth whom they are assigned (CJJR et al., 2015). The one judge/one family model is designed so that there is one judge that hears both sides of the crossover youth's case. In addition to the chosen court structure, pre-court coordination should occur, which entails all parties involved with a crossover youth coming together before court hearings in order to share information and create an agreed-upon case plan for the child. This practice also recommends scheduling the separate juvenile justice hearing and the child welfare hearings in succession to reduce the burden that is placed on the youth and family to miss school or work to appear at each court hearing (CJJR et al., 2015). This phase implements practices that hold all involved parties more accountable to communicate, plan, connect valuable resources to the child or family, look beyond their own system, and assess holistically what the child is faced with. Joint assessment and planning results in consistent and unduplicated services that are received by the client.

### **Phase Three of the CYPM**

The third and final phase of the practice model focuses on changes that impact ongoing case management, assessment, and how to deal with planning youth permanency, transportation, and case termination. During this phase, the child welfare system, juvenile justice system, and other parties involved in the case create processes that involve all working together to carry out the plans and care that have been collaboratively decided. The reunification of the child and the family is the main goal



moving throughout a case until proven impossible. While planning for reunification, the team will also have a concurrent plan in the event that reunification is not possible. Either outcome will result in the youth needing a support system and a plan for when they exit the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. During the life of the cases, the crossover youth will also be provided with resources and skills that are needed for the child to be self-sufficient. These services will be organized and orchestrated by the members in the multidisciplinary team who are connected to the specified youth (CJJR et al., 2015).

### **How the CYPM Addresses Crossover Youth's Needs**

Although this practice model is relatively new and in its beginning stages of implementation in the few jurisdictions that have chosen to adopt it, positive results are being seen. For example, one study looked at three samples including the recidivism rate between youth in a jurisdiction after the implementation of the CYPM, recidivism rates of youth in that same jurisdiction when CYPM was not in effect, and recidivism rates of youth in surrounding jurisdictions in which the practice model was not adopted. The report found that crossover youth in the jurisdiction that adopted the CYMP showed reduced numbers in recidivism compared to past records of that jurisdiction and the surrounding areas (Haight, Bidwell, Choi, & Cho, 2016). Another study that interviewed members of a CYPM team resulted in responses that highlighted the improvements seen with the CYPM implementation, such as better decision making, communication, collaboration and insight into cases (Asgarian et al., 2019).

The implementation of the CYPM shows significant improvements and outcomes when addressing needs that are connected to crossover youth. The practice model includes elements that are needed to better services given to this population and result in

better outcomes for crossover youth, elements including its emphasis on collaboration, communication, and family engagement. These additions can help reduce the harsher outcomes that are often applied to crossover youth and not to youth only involved in one government system (Herz et al., 2012). Currently, multiple jurisdictions have implemented or are now in the process of implementing the CYPM. Jurisdictions such as Prince George's County, Maryland; Yavapai County, Arizona; and Mahoning County, Ohio, have at some level started implementing the CYPM in order to serve the youth in their communities better. These jurisdictions have recorded that the practice model is not only achievable but also implement practices that are in the best interest of children involved in both the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system (Barnett et al., 2018). These are only a few jurisdictions that have started adopting the CYPM around the United States as crossover youth becomes more apparent as a population that is not receiving the services needed to address the challenges that they face. With the implementation of the CYPM, crossover youth can acquire the necessary services and have better outcomes throughout and after this challenging time in their lives.

### **Supporting Theories**

Within the human service professions, such as the ones that work with crossover youth, there are a number of theories that can help explain practices. While examining the CYPM, the two theories that significantly support this model include systems theory and trauma-informed care theory. Systems theory is based on examining many different factors or looking at the whole picture when analyzing something like human behavior (Yawson, 2012). When able to look past one factor and instead examine all factors that could be leading to a behavior or an outcome, it can change the view of the beholder. The

CYPM integrates systems theory in its practice by emphasizing the need for systems and people to work together, share information, and understand the entirety of the child's two cases before making decisions that have the potential to alter their crossover youth's lives (CJJR et al., 2015). The CYPM wholistic practice can teach service providers the importance of looking past their system or organization and examining other factors. Factors such as negative family history, prior delinquent behavior, or circumstances for entering into the child welfare system have all been reported in the literature to be common in the crossover youth population.

Another theory that can be seen in the CYPM is the practice of trauma-informed care. This theory is centered around being aware of the people who are showing signs of trauma as well as those who may not show it outwardly but may be experiencing trauma. With the awareness gained by the trauma-informed care theory human resource service providers are better equipped at adapt services to accommodate for people with severe trauma (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012). With the utilization of systems theory, the CYPM considers a multitude of individual, family, sociocultural, environmental, and historical factors that influence behavior. This allows service providers a broader and more wholistic perspective to identify, assess, and intervene in client situations more comprehensively. In addition, such an approach contextualizes reported trauma and other risk and protective factors in the child's history and may increase interagency communications. With a heightened sense of awareness, assessment, interagency connectedness and service provider engagement, opportunities to better serve youth increase. Ultimately, a systems perspective and systems theoretical approach allows

providers in the CYPM to plan and make adaptive care decisions based on accurate and comprehensive information available to them.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the literature, the discussed population of crossover youth is in need of new practices to help them through these very difficult situations. The CYPM can be the start of identifying and assisting children before they get lost between the child welfare and the juvenile justice systems. This practice model, if implemented in Texas Region Two, can better address the needs of the youth in the community who are not even now being identified as crossover youth and who are having to deal with two systems on their own. Due to the information found within the literature and the growing number of children already entering the child welfare system within this region it is recommended that action be taken and that a pilot study of the CYPM be conducted.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The proposed pilot study is a quantitative study in which quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. The study advocates for the implementation of a pilot study to be conducted in Abilene, Texas, located within Texas Region Two. Quantitative data from pre-existing databases was utilized in the study, including the private Big Country CASA (BCC) database and the public online Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) and Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJJ) databases.

Quantitative data was obtained from the private BCC database with the organization's Program Director's approval (see Appendix B). Data within this source already exists and was collected for this study. Information within the BCC database does contain identifiable information; however, the report utilized for this study did not include any private information and was kept confidential. Data collected from the BCC database included the number of children who are currently receiving services from BCC and the TJJJ, as well as the age, gender, recidivism rate, and the number of placements of each individual child indicated to be crossover youth. Additional quantitative data was collected and used from both the Texas DFPS and the TJJJ public online records. Information used from these independent sources includes the number of cases each department has had during a given fiscal year.

All data collected was analyzed by running the appropriate parametric and non-parametric tests using SPSS Statistics software. The overall goal for the results of the data is to inform the needed departments and organizations who would be involved in starting the CYPM in Abilene, Texas, about the crossover youth in their region. These departments and organizations, including, Big Country CASA, DFPS, TJJD, and judicial officials. All variables indicated above will be able to help accomplish getting this current snapshot of the crossover youth in Texas Region Two.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Big Country CASA Data**

Given that the nature of this project was to identify the numbers of individuals appropriate for the proposed CYPM, there was limited data for review. As of March 2020, BCC serves nine crossover youth ( $n=9$ ) who are involved in both the juvenile justice system and the child welfare system categorizing them as crossover youth. After conducting parametric and non-parametric tests, the results indicated the following conclusions for the demographic profile of the sample (see Table 1). Of the sample of nine, the majority, six (66.7%) were female, and three (33.3 %) were males. The mean age of the group was 15.8 years old, with a range of 13-18 years old. Within the sample of nine crossover youth, four (44.4 %) identified as Hispanic/Latinx, two (22.2%) as Caucasian, two (22.2%) as African American, and one (11.1%) as Multi-Race.

Table 1

#### *Demographics*

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Range
Age			15.8	13-18
Gender	6	66.7	-	-
Female	3	33.3	-	-
Male				
Race				
Hispanic/Latin X	4	44.4	-	-
Caucasian	2	22.2	-	-
African American	2	22.2	-	-
Mixed Race	1	11.1	-	-

Crossover youth face many obstacles, two of which are the number of placements to which they are assigned and the recidivism rate of the child (see Table 2). The information gathered shows the mean number of placements ( $\bar{x} = 5.6$ ) that the sample were placed in, with a range of 2-15 placements over the periods of time the youth has been receiving services from BCC. Data collected showed that the majority of the sample, eight out of nine, had only been incarcerated once for a singular incident with an outlier of one crossover youth being incarcerated three times for three separate incidents. Therefore, the collected and analyzed data indicated that the sample was incarcerated an average of ( $\bar{x} = 1.2$ ) times within a range of 1-3 incarcerations due to separate incidences.

Table 2

*Number of Placements*

	Mean	Range
Total Placements	5.6	2-15
Incarcerations	1.2	1-3

**Texas DFPS and TJJD Data**

Within the fiscal year 2019, the DFPS public database reported serving a total of 2,982 children within Texas Region Two. Data pertaining to the number of children served by the TJJD in Texas Region Two was not available and therefore could not be collected. Previous literature found that approximately 47% to 50% of children in the child welfare system that crossover into the juvenile justice system (Coley & Jarrett, 2019; Herz et al., 2010; Thomas, 2015). With the total number of children served in Texas Region Two from the DFPS public database and the percentages found in the literature, it can be estimated that the number of crossover youth in Texas Region Two is approximately 1402 to 1491 children.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

Currently, there is limited information pertaining to crossover youth and the CYPM. This is due to the crossover youth population just recently being recognized as their own individual vulnerable population, as well as the CYPM being a relatively new practice. The purpose of this study was to gain information about the current crossover youth population within Texas Region Two who could potentially benefit from the CYPM. This information can now be utilized to understand why Texas Region Two is in need of the CYPM and how many children it could potentially benefit.

The variables that were analyzed included the demographic information of a crossover youth sample and the number of times those youth experienced placement instability and recidivism. Additional information was gathered to examine the last recorded number of children served by the DFPS within the 2019 fiscal year. Overall, the results support the need for a change in protocols when serving crossover youth, not only by identifying a need but also showing that crossover youth in Texas Region Two are facing similar problems that are reported in the literature, such as high rates of placement insecurity and recidivism.

The demographic profile indicated that the majority of the sample (44.4%) identified as Hispanic/Latinx, followed by Caucasian (22.2%), African American

(22.2%) and Multi-race (11.1%). These numbers reflect what has been found in previous studies where the majority of crossover youth samples were minorities (CJJR et al., 2008; CJJR et al., 2015). Out of the nine-crossover youth sample, 66.7% were female, representing the majority of the sample. Research has found that females in the juvenile justice system were more frequently dually involved compared to males who were more likely to be involved in one system or the other (CJJR, 2008; Halemba, et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2012). The ages of the sample ranged from 13-18 years old, with the average age being 15.8 years old. Collected demographic information can not only be used to compare with previously created demographic profiles of this population but can aid in Texas Region Two's effort to better indicate who is most at risk of becoming categorized as crossover youth and in need of CYPM services.

Previous studies have found that crossover youth experience high rates of placement instability, highlighting it as one of the most reported hardships they face (Halemba, et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2012). Within the sample of nine crossover youth, it was found that on average, the children were placed in 5.6 different placements, with the highest number of placements being 13 and the lowest being two. Numbers found in this study pertaining to placement instability are astronomical and have the potential to impact the youth in severe and negative ways. From the sample only one of the participants had been incarcerated multiple times. This youth had been charged and incarcerated on three separate occasions. Higher recidivism rates have been identified as a factor that impacts crossover youth (Halemba, et al., 2004; Huang et al., 2012). Although only one of the participants in the study had been incarcerated multiple times, it still shows that this is a factor that can be linked to crossover youth.

From using the data collected from the DFPS database and what has been found in other studies, it was estimated that there are 1402 to 1491 crossover youth in Texas Region Two. With the implementation of the CYPM, the estimated 1402 to 1491 beneficiaries of the model have the potential to reap the positive outcomes that have already been seen when using this practice model. The CYPM would change the current protocols in which crossover youths' juvenile justice and child welfare cases are being held. Keeping the two cases separate leads to mistakes, misunderstandings, and ultimately worse outcomes for the youth and hinders the process of successfully serving the crossover population. The changes that would be made with the implementation of the CYPM would allow Texas Region Two the ability to identify and serve crossover youth in a manner that has been found to lead to better communication, collaboration, and outcomes for youth and their families. Another way in which the CYMP has been shown to benefit crossover youth is it leading to a reduction of recidivism among the youth by servicing them in a holistic and more informed way (Asgarian et al., 2019; Haight, et al., 2016).

Texas Region Two does have youth that can benefit from the CYPM, and further steps should be taken to implement the practice model. Already, the CYPM has gained the interest of the child welfare judge for Texas District Two, Judge April Propst (personal communication, March 19, 2020) who recognizes the benefit of coordinating resources and stated that by more collaboration the systems have the opportunity to provide the best possible outcomes for the whole child all in one process. Judge April Propst continued by stating:

I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I do believe the concept of one judge, one family is a step in the right direction. Likewise, having one attorney appointed to represent the child in both the juvenile matter and the child welfare matter is also an ideal practice. When hearings or meetings are held on either the juvenile issue or the child welfare issue, the child welfare caseworker and the probation officer should be involved. Providing continuity of the key participants and the equal sharing of information between those participants should serve to eliminate manipulation of the systems, maximize the efficiency of the resources available to the youth, and, ultimately, provide a successful outcome for the child and the family. I know there is more work and maybe better solutions than these, but with baby steps, we will hopefully find the right model.

The CYPM has the capacity to implement all of the changes Judge Propst believes would help serve the crossover youth population in Texas Region Two. In addition to the judge, the Big Country CASA (BCC) Program Director Lauren Anderson (personal communication, March 18, 2020) communicated that BCC is very interested in helping start the CYPM and believes there is a need for change. She explained that BCC would implement more curriculum into their training to equip their volunteers to be a successful advocate for both a child's juvenile justice and child welfare cases. The Program Director L. Anderson (personal communication, March 19, 2020) also stated that CASA has worked with youth who are currently in CPS care and on probation and have run into some difficult situations. As an example, she has seen cases in which there has been miscommunication and confusion when it comes to making decisions concerning the placement of that child. She explained that with these cases, it has been difficult to

determine who has jurisdiction over placement decision and has been impossible for CASAs to communicate with the child's judge, who is the person who can make decisions in the child's juvenile case. With the support of these two community leaders, Texas Region Two has already started the creating its needed team in order to implement the CYPM in the court system located in Abilene, Texas.

The implementation of the CYPM in Texas Region Two would create the change that is needed to switch to a holistic process of serving crossover youth in the Abilene, Texas, court system. In order to continue toward implementation of the CYPM, Texas Region two has the ability to follow the detailed and necessary steps to adopt the CYPM within their region. This study aids Texas Region Two in identifying the needs of their crossover youth, which along with the support from local organizations, is the beginning of implementing a change like the CYPM. From there, the CYPM phases of implementation can be followed, and training from the CJJR can be requested, all in an effort to better services for up to an estimated 1402 to 1491 crossover youth (CJJR, 2015).

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the need for the implementation of the CYPM in Texas Region Two by looking at a sample of current children categorized as crossover youth and determining the number of children who could benefit from this model. As identified in the findings, there is a large estimated number of children, approximately 1402 to 1491, within the targeted location of Texas District Two that could benefit from the CYPM services and protocols. While examining the BCC sample of crossover youth, many similarities were seen when compared to previous literature, similarities including demographic information such as race and gender, as well as in the hardships crossover youths face like placement instability and recidivism. The CYPM use of collaboration, communication, and diversion from the juvenile justice system when appropriate, can help crossover youth interact and successfully move through the child welfare system and juvenile justice system. If implemented, the impact of the CYPM on this population could be immense and have life-changing impacts.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations that may have impacted the study include the BCC databases the limited number of identified crossover youth, the different durations each youth has been with. BCC, and the inability to get more detailed information from the DFPS and the TJJD databases. Only a limited number sample was able to be obtained from BCC private database due to the category of crossover youth just recently being added as a descriptor.

This meant that only current cases had been categorized as either crossover youth or non-crossover youth, limiting the study to only analyzing current BCC cases. Another limitation pertaining to the sample obtained from BCC is the fact that information about the youth has only been collected since they have been receiving services. It is unknown whether the crossover youth sample had been in additional placements or incarcerated more times while not receiving services from BCC. In addition, the sample of crossover youth in this study have been receiving BCC services for different amounts of time. This time inconsistency means that the numbers collected for placements and number of incarcerations could be higher or lower due to the length of time BCC has been giving them services and tracking those variables. The final limitation that could have impacted the results of the study is the fact that information about children in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system is kept very confidential. Due to this, the study was unable to collect a concrete number of children served by the juvenile justice system within Texas Region Two. These limitations had the potential to impact the results found in this study.

### **Implication for Further Research**

Further research should be done to continue adding to the knowledge surrounding crossover youth and the impact of the CYPM. More specifically, studies should be conducted using the information analyzed from this study while furthering its perspective on Texas Region Two's financial ability to implement the CYPM, and organization's support for the CYPM. In further studies, additional variables should be examined that have been previously reported in the literature concerning crossover youth's needs. Variables such as past histories, placement instability, recidivism, education, mental

health, frequency of running away, and future outcomes should be included. Due to the CYPM being in its beginning stages in the majority of the jurisdiction where it was adopted, continuous monitoring of its benefits and outcomes should be reported. To move forward with implementation in the court system within Texas Region Two in Abilene, Texas, more research examining the region's financial ability and levels of support from key members for the implementation of a CYPM pilot study.



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## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**  
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885



Dear Erin,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

(IRB# 19-161 )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

*Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.*

APPENDIX B

Big Country CASA Signature Approval Form

SIGNATURE APPROVAL FORM

I, Lauren Anderson give Erin Snider permission to use information gathered from Big Country CASA's data bases for educational writing purposes.

Lauren Anderson  
Big Country CASA Program Director

3/31/2020  
Date