

DID YOU know...?

In 2022 Boys Town Youth Care had **16** publications and presented or co-presented **19** papers, posters, and symposia at conferences

Boys Town 2022 Youth Care publications appeared in **15** journals and presentations were given at **13** conferences

RESEARCH notes

The TRC publishes an annual Applied Research Bibliography summarizing Boys Town Youth Care publications to-date. The most recent version contains **579** citations and is categorized according to the major types of youth care service programs offered by Boys Town:

- Residential Treatment Center
- Intervention & Assess Services
- Family Home Program
- Foster Family Services
- In-Home Family Services
- Aftercare Services
- Community Support Services ... and more!

To download a copy, go to: www.boystownhospital.org/research/translational-research/publications

Translational Research Center Annual Report

THIS PAST YEAR IN THE Translational Research Center (TRC) can best be described by the word “action” – participatory action research to be more specific. Participatory action research seeks to find solutions to problems by involving those most directly impacted by the problems as active participants in the research process. In this way, researchers collaborate with participants who have the best understanding of the problem, and then they work together to find solutions that can be used by participants. This approach is fundamental to what Fr. Flanagan envisioned when he referred to Boys Town as “*an experimental station in youth work...from which adults can gain a better knowledge of the problems of youth*”. We continue to apply this tradition today by partnering with youth, families, staff, and educators in the research we do. Below, read about three recent studies that demonstrate this approach.

Youth Resilience Study. Rates of trauma exposure and symptoms are especially high for youth who receive services in residential programs. Yet, youth also demonstrate positive adaptation through protective factors that reduce risks and promote resilience. We conducted a study with youth in the Boys Town Family Home Program to gain a better understanding of resilience. Youth completed surveys and shared their ideas in focus groups on ways that they have overcome

adversity, and different family and cultural traditions that have helped them. As a result, the ideas youth shared were used to develop a new, brief questionnaire called, “Healthy Activities for Raising Resilient Youth”. This questionnaire measures the degree to which youth report using various healthy activities to deal with difficult situations. Identifying underutilized healthy activities can help strengthen resilience for youth at Boys Town.

Family-Teacher Retention Study. Retaining caring and talented staff is critical to sustaining the quality services that Boys Town provides to youth and families. This year the TRC was asked by Boys Town leadership to conduct a research study to better understand the factors related to retention of Family-Teachers at Boys Town. Family-Teachers are the essential caregivers and practitioners for youth who reside in Boys Town’s Family Home Programs across the United States. Current and former Family-Teachers volunteered for the study and completed surveys and focus groups to identify challenges (e.g., balancing work and family) and helpful techniques (e.g., being organized and protecting time) related to longevity in the position. The results of the study were then shared with Family-Teachers, consultants, trainers, human resources, and administrators across the organization to better support current and future Family-Teachers.



by **Patrick Tyler**
Senior Director
Translational Research Center

Educator Perspectives Study. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the emotional and behavioral needs of students have risen substantially. We received a federal grant from the U. S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences to explore solutions to this problem. This study included elementary and middle school teachers from rural and metropolitan schools across the United States. Electronic surveys were used to collect teachers’ views on school climate (e.g., student relationships, school safety, parent involvement) and social emotional learning (e.g., confidence in teaching social skills, administrative support). Focus groups were conducted to gather teacher perspectives on specific challenges they were facing in the classroom, and techniques they found helpful to address these challenges since COVID-19. Results will be shared with participants, published in journals, and presented at educator conferences so other teachers can benefit from the ideas shared by these teachers.

As you read on, this issue will describe other action-oriented research projects that are currently underway. Projects are organized within our DO BETTER framework, which outlines research activities that emphasize practitioner, researcher, and consumer involvement.

Determine the Problem

Identify program needs based on views from practitioners and consumers using surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Study 1: Family-Teacher Retention Study

(see page 1). Project leads: Patrick Tyler (TRC), Angela Powers (Home Campus).

Ongoing Data Collection

Create systems for ongoing data collection so program quality improvement is done routinely and efficiently.

Project 1: Youth Voice

Check-In. The Family Home Program serves youth in a family-style home where they receive social skills instruction and care from Family-Teachers. A new initiative is underway to capture youth's perspective on their experiences, abilities, and how they think about life. This "Youth Voice Check-In" survey covers

a variety of protective and risk factors. Protective factors include relationship with Family-Teachers, problem solving, faith, hope, resilience, and school engagement; risk factors include a trauma symptom screen and attitudes about delinquency and substance use. Survey results provide insight on ways to enhance protection and reduce risk for youth in our care.

Project leads: Beth Chmelka (TRC), Natalie Hansen (Home Campus).

Build a Team

Identify practitioners, consumers, and researchers who can collaborate to help solve the problem.

Study 1: Executive

Control. Deficits in executive control (EC), a set of cognitive abilities for directing attention and behavior, have been proposed as important and modifiable contributors to adolescent

problem behaviors, including substance use as well as co-occurring externalizing and internalizing problems. This project addresses these issues by extending an ongoing study of young children and their parents followed during preschool and the elementary school years by collecting new data each year at ages 14-18. Study results indicate that EC deficiencies in preschool are associated with 1) increased relational aggression in elementary school and 2) harsh parental discipline in adolescence, both of which, in turn, are related to increased adolescent substance use.

Project leads: Alex Mason and Timothy Nelson (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Irina Patwardhan (TRC).

Study 2: Youth Resilience Study

(see page 1). Project leads: Patrick Tyler and Chanelle Gordon (TRC), Angela Powers (Home Campus).

Study 3: Educator Perspectives Study

(see page 1). Project leads: Patrick Tyler and Kristin Duppong Hurley (TRC), Susan Lamke (National Training).

Explore Solutions

Get different perspectives on the problem and potential solutions from the practitioners and consumers and merge this information with expert opinions and theories.

Project 1: Alumni

Follow-Up. The purpose of this project is to design and implement an ongoing survey of alumni who left the Home Campus Family Home Program before 2022. Information from the follow-up survey will help identify areas of need for Boys Town alumni that will

be used in developing Alumni Association services. Results will also be used for marketing and advocacy purposes.

Project leads: Jon Huefner and Jada Loro (TRC); Tony Jones, Gail Page, and Kari Machal (Successful Futures).

Project 2: Successful Futures Model

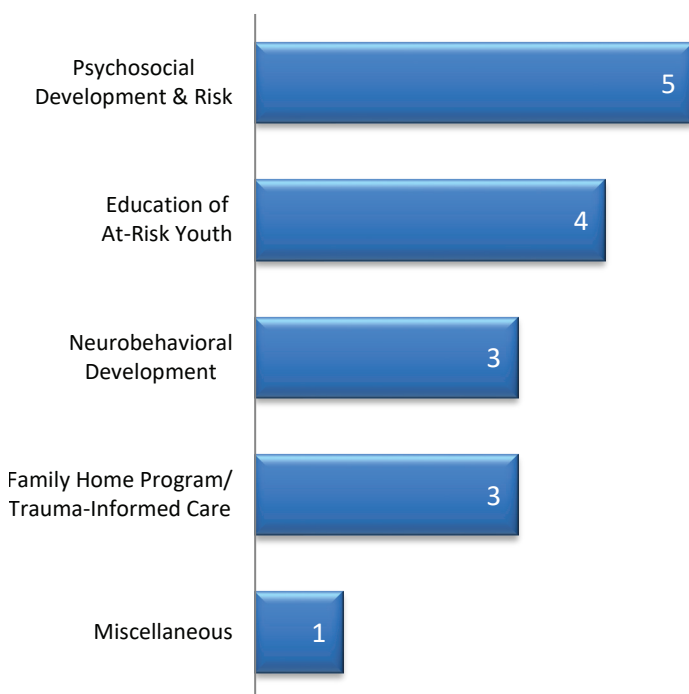
The TRC is assisting Boys Town's Successful Futures program in determining the supports graduating seniors need as they transition from the Family Home Program to adulthood. The project is focused on developing a model to determine the additional supports needed by each senior in the following areas: Independent Life Skills, External Social Support, and Personal Motivation. Preliminary findings have shown that seniors report overall increases in all three areas from fall to spring. For a majority of seniors, at least one of these areas meaningfully changed from "needs improvement" to "a strength". This model has been successfully integrated into the youth senior plan and aftercare plan.

Project leads: Chanelle Gordon and Patrick Tyler (TRC), Tony Jones and Michelle Tauber (Successful Futures).

Project 3: Successful

Futures Check-In. This is a follow-up survey of graduates occurring at regular intervals during the first five years after leaving the Family Home Program. This check-in provides insight into the most pressing issues for graduates by tracking their progress in various domains (e.g., work, education, health, finances). Successful Futures specialists monitor responses and use this information to provide

2022 Publications by Category (n=16)



appropriate intervention to graduates in need and for use in program development.

Project leads: Josh Day and Jon Huefner (TRC), Michelle Tauber (Successful Futures).

Try it Out

Design and pilot the program and make adaptations based on practitioner and consumer feedback.

Project 1: CUES & SSS.

The CUES School System is partnering with Boys Town to implement the School Support Specialist (SSS) program in three of their schools in Omaha, NE: All Saints, Holy Name, and Sacred Heart. School Support Specialists are school personnel who work with students, staff, and families to decrease negative student behaviors while increasing positive behaviors. During the 2022-23 school year, 228 students were impacted, representing almost

600 service hours. Of this, almost 50% of the SSS's time was dedicated to one-on-one student interactions, reflecting the program's proactive teaching focus. Outcome data indicate that the most at-risk students had the highest rate of absences in the fall, but their absentee rate was not statistically different from other students in the spring. Further, for the most at-risk students, increases in grades were positively related to the number of small group social skills lessons they received.

Project leads: Patrick Tyler, Jay Ringle, and Josh Day (TRC); Jasney Cogua (Program Quality), Tania Gonzalez (Site Administration).

Project 2: LIFT Multisite.

LIFT Together with Boys Town is a community service array that includes parenting education, family consultation, and school intervention. One program within LIFT is the School Support Specialists

(SSS) program which works with students, staff, and families to ensure wrap-around support and consistency for at-risk students. During the 2022-23 school year, more than 7,000 students were impacted representing approximately 11,000 hours of direct service, including more than 5,500 hours of dedicated one-on-one student interactions. Teacher satisfaction with the SSS's performance was positively associated with school climate, particularly student peer/adult relations.

Project leads: Mariana Santa-Maria and Jasney Cogua (Program Quality), Josh Day and Jay Ringle (TRC), Eli Escrogin (Site Administration).

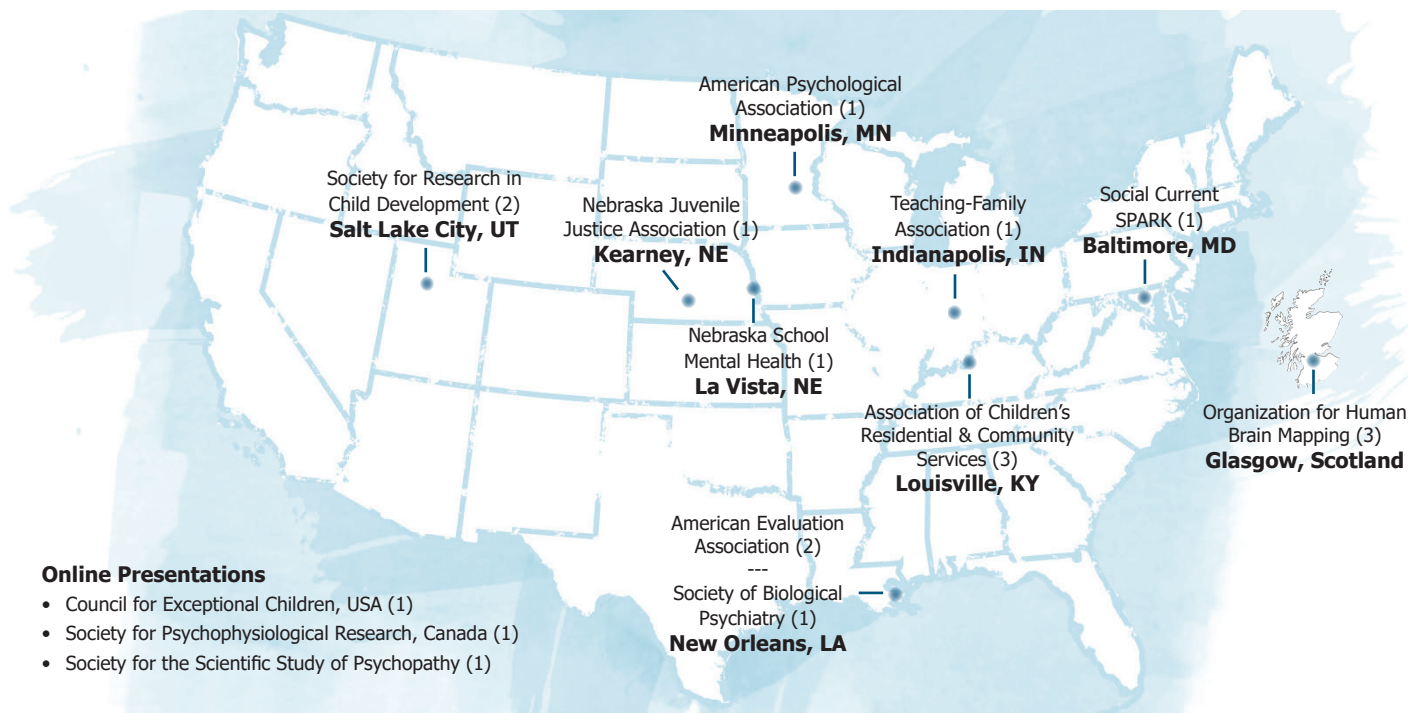
Test the Program

Conduct a rigorous evaluation of the program using randomized controlled trials or high quality quasi-experimental designs to determine program effectiveness with

practitioners and consumers in real-world settings.

Study 1: Well Managed Schools & ISU. The TRC partnered with Iowa State University to conduct a randomized controlled trial of the Well-Managed Schools (WMS) program. WMS is a universal classroom management program designed to help teachers build positive relationships, teach and reinforce school success skills, and respond to inappropriate behavior in their interactions with students. In this study, teachers of students in grades 1-5 in school districts across the USA were recruited and randomly assigned to either a WMS program condition or a no-intervention (usual classroom practices) control condition. Both teachers and students completed assessments on classroom climate, teaching skills, and student behavior and performance. The study is in the final year of data

2022 Conference Presentations (n=19)



analysis, and results will be disseminated in 2024. The study is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences.

Project leads: Tricia Neppel (Iowa State University), Alex Mason (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Patrick Tyler (TRC), Courtney Dealy and Susan Lamke (National Training).

Study 2: Big Bad Boo Curriculum. Training prosocial skills through media such as animated cartoons has been used to prevent violent and aggressive behaviors in students. In this study, we combined the 1001 Nights animated social skills curriculum developed by Big Bad Boo Studios with social skills teaching by Family-Teachers and Assistants to evaluate the impact on social skills and violent behaviors of youth in the Family Home Program. Family-Teachers watched the cartoons with youth in their homes and taught the associated social skills such as problem solving, resolving conflicts, dealing with peer pressure, and making moral decisions. Preliminary findings showed social skills increased for youth, and more frequent use of social skills were related to lower frequency of violent behavioral incidents. The final results will be reported later this year.

Project leads: Aly Jetha and Nikki Whaites (Big Bad Boo Studios), Natalie Hansen and Dan Atkinson (Family Home Program).

Execute Implementation

Provide training, consultation, and data systems to practitioners so they can deliver the manualized program to consumers and the program can be evaluated based on fidelity and expected outcomes.

Project 1: External Agency IHFS Consultation.

Boys Town has trained three agencies in Nebraska to use our In-Home Family Services (IHFS) model. We developed a database system for these agencies to enter their family consultant activity data to monitor IHFS intervention implementation, dosage, and outcomes. Boys Town trainers review agency data monthly to provide implementation feedback for these external consultants. Helping agencies implement high quality services helps ensure families receive excellent care and achieve the best outcomes possible.

Project leads: Patrick Tyler and Rob Oats (TRC), Jen Bell and Michelle Hughett (National Training).

Project 2: Internal IHFS Implementation Log.

Working directly with Omaha and Nevada Boys Town sites, a short In-Home Family Services (IHFS) Implementation Log was refined for routine use with families receiving services. The goal of the Log is to monitor implementation of parenting skills and family life skills with a focus on using Boys Town teaching strategies and connecting families to resources. To support service delivery, all IHFS supervisors have access to real-time implementation reports. During spring of 2023, use of the Implementation Log was expanded to include all Boys Town IHFS sites.

Project leads: Kristin Duppong Hurley, Josh Day and Jay Ringle (TRC), Scott Mitchel (Program Quality), Crystal Summers and Samantha Kendrick (IHFS Program).

Reach More Youth and Families

Disseminate program information to promote scale-up and sustainability of the program so practitioners can help more youth and families in different locations and agencies.

Project 1: Evidence-Based Registry Status of Programs.

Ongoing Youth Care program development, research, and implementation support enables Boys Town to establish our programs and services on evidence-based practice registries. These efforts help us compete successfully for service contracts while we also continue to improve the quality of our service delivery for children and families. Based on positive outcomes from published studies, three Boys Town programs received status updates on two national evidence-based practice registries.

The Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse rated the On the Way Home aftercare program as having Promising research evidence in the area of Child Permanency: Out-of-Home Placement; and rated the Common Sense Parenting-School Age program as having Promising research evidence in the area of Mental Health Programs & Services.

The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare rated In-Home Family Services as having Promising research evidence in two areas: 1) Home Visiting Programs for Child Well-Being, and 2) Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (Secondary) Programs. To learn more, go to: www.boystown.org/trc and click the Evidence-Based Registry Status button.

Project leads: Patrick Tyler and Rob Oats (TRC).

ABOUT THE **author**

Patrick Tyler has over twenty-five years of clinical, administrative, and research experience in residential and community-based treatment services for children and families. He earned his doctorate from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in Education with an emphasis in emotional and behavioral disorders and is an Independently Licensed Mental Health Practitioner and Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Nebraska. He began his career in 1995 in Arizona as a clinician and started at Boys Town in Nebraska in 2001. Prior to his research positions, Dr. Tyler served in several clinical roles at Boys Town, including Clinical Director in the Family Home Program and Director of the On the Way Home® aftercare program. His research experience includes both basic and applied research at Boys Town with a specific interest in translating research into practice to improve the design, implementation, and dissemination of effective treatment interventions for children and families.

DATA NEWS **you can use!**

Is produced by the Translational Research Center. Our purpose is to conduct and disseminate applied research, provide clinical data support, and advance knowledge and practice in child and family services.

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