

Life course approach to children with disabilities: What evidence for better practice?

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Overview

- Some background realities
- Interface between disability and child protection work
- Across the life course
 - Intervention at birth
 - Placement in care
 - Care arrangements
 - Transition from care
- Discussion

Some background realities

- Lack of research around children with disabilities and child protection
- Many authorities do not collect data on children with disabilities who are maltreated
- Methodological weaknesses
 - Differences across definitions of disability
 - Differences in how statistics are collected.
- Little known about:
 - risk factors
 - interventions and outcomes

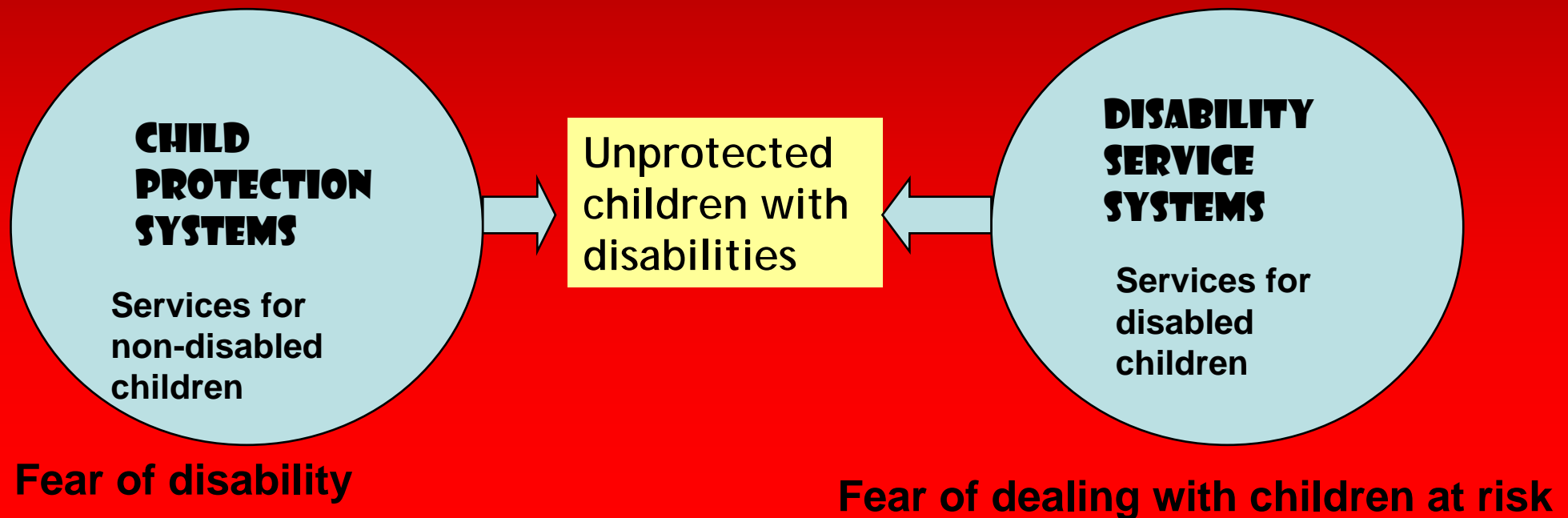
Interface between disability and child protection

Two main populations

- Children with disabilities at risk
- Children of parents with disabilities who are at risk (some of these children also have disabilities)

Historical position disability and child protection systems

(After Middleton 1999)



Current position

- Increased awareness of the vulnerability of children with disabilities to abuse and neglect
- Increase in evidence about prevalence
- Some modest increases in evidence about numbers of children with disabilities in child protection systems
- Still need stronger evidence about risks, interventions and outcomes

Current position

- Queensland working towards DSQ/DCS collaboration on data
 - In 2005–06, there were 133 children subject to substantiations who also received a CSTDA specialist service during the year.
 - 139 in 2004–05.
- **Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. (2006). Views of Children and Young People in Care**
 - The Commission's survey found that the rate of disability reported by children and young people in care was: 22.5% for 5–8 year olds; and 20.8% for 9–18 year olds.

Prevalence

- Many early studies - small scale (Sobsey, 1994; Westcott, 1993; Westcott & Jones, 1999)
- Crosse, Kaye & Ratnosfsky (1993)
Children with disabilities 1.7 times more likely to be maltreated than children without disabilities

Prevalence

- **Sullivan & Knutson, 2000**

Study conducted in Omaha Nebraska.
Retrospective approach which merged data bases from schools, social services and law enforcement.
The findings showed:

Children with disabilities 3.4 times more likely to be abused or neglected than children without disabilities.

Summary

Type of maltreatment	Crosse Kaye & Ratnofsy	Sullivan & Knutson
Neglect	1.6 times more likely	3.8 times more likely
Sexual abuse	1.8 times more likely	3.1 times more likely
Physical abuse	2.1 times more likely	3.8 times more likely
Emotional abuse	2.8 times more likely	3.9 times more likely

Prevalence

- Horner – Johnson. W. and Drum. C. 2006. Prevalence of Maltreatment of People with Intellectual Disabilities: A review of recently published research. In *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*. 12. Pp 57 – 69.
 - Reviewed studies 1995-2005 USA
 - Only 5 studies provided maltreatment estimates for people with ID.
 - Limited data but suggests maltreatment more prevalent for people with ID than non-disabled
 - Maybe higher for people with ID than other disabilities

Evaluation of child protection agencies

- Shannon. P and Agorastou. M. 2006. Identifying Children with Developmental Disabilities Receiving Child Protection services: A National Survey of Child Welfare Administrators. In *Families in Society*. 87 (3). Pp 351 – 357.
 - 50 state child welfare administrators – USA
 - Ability to identify children with disabilities (<50%)
 - Ability to provide services to them
 - Training of CPS workers (20 of the 50 states do require training)

Intervention at birth

- Most children with disabilities are not removed at birth- though history of leaving children at hospital (pathway from Mater – Xavier)
- Main issue here is for parents with Intellectual disability
- For parents with intellectual disabilities often intervention from child protection authorities before the birth of the child
- Traumatic for mother may continue to have children in hope that they can keep one

Intervention at birth

- **McConnell. D and Llewellyn. G. 2002. Stereotypes, parents with intellectual disability and child protection. In *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*. 24(3). Pp 297 – 317.**
 - Allegations of child abuse being perpetrated by parents with ID are quite rare
 - High prevalence of co-morbidity in this parent population.
 - A history of deprivation and social disadvantage often marks the lives of these parents

Placement in care

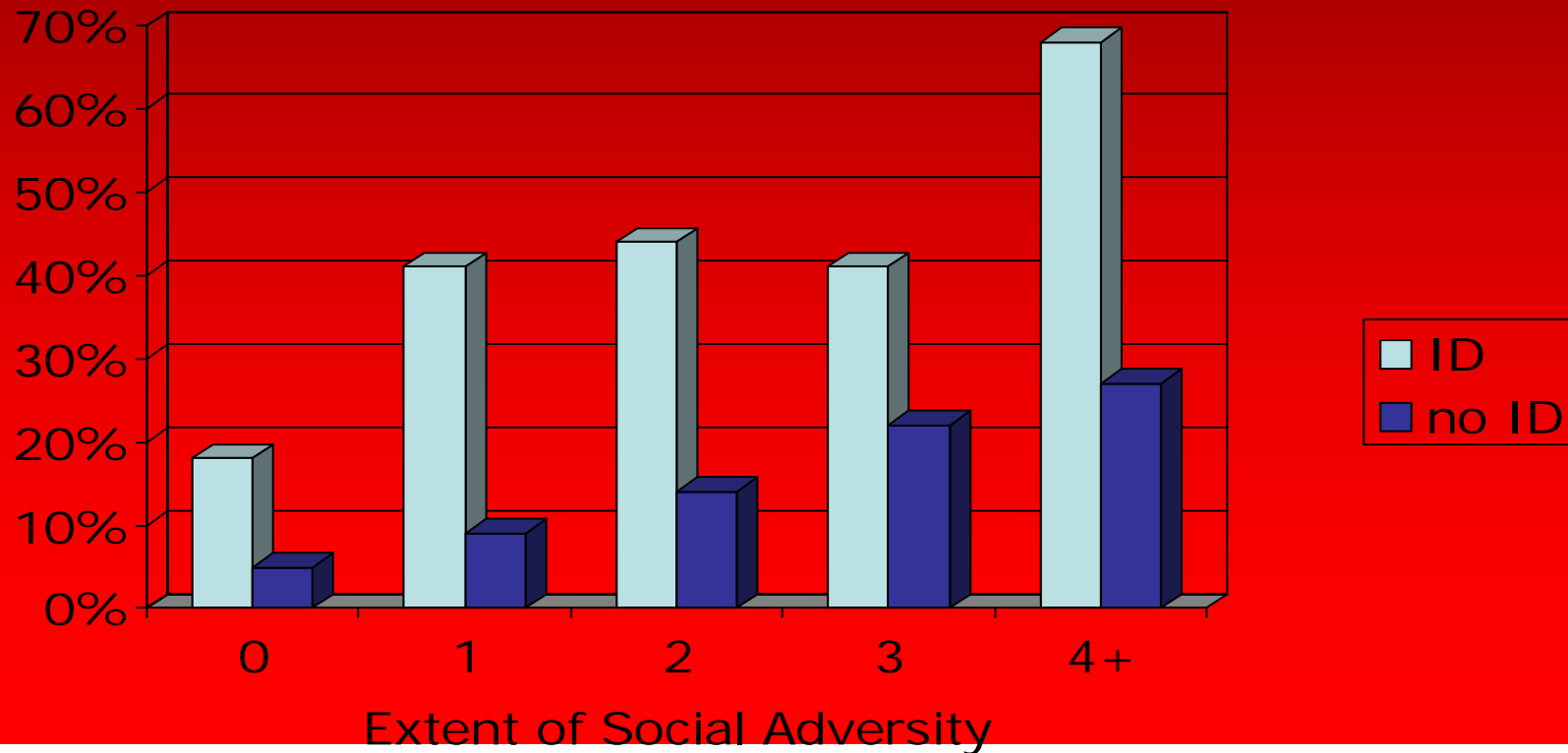
Different pathways into care

- Children found to be abused or neglected
- Parents who run out of options and relinquish care

Risk factors

- Society level – negative attitudes, assumptions (Sobsey, 1994; Middleton, 1999)
- Family level – stress, attachment, socioeconomic factors, poverty (Emerson & Hatton, 2007)
- Child level – communication, personal care, unable to resist or report (Miller, 2005)
- Inadequacies in service provision – family support, disability services (Miller, 2005)

Problem Behaviours in Australian Children (age 4-5) (from Emerson, 2007)



Interventions

- Baldry. E. Bratel. J., Dunsire. M. and Durrant. M. 2005. Keeping Children with a Disability Safely in their families. In *Practice*. 17(3). Pp 143 – 156.
 - NSW study
 - Mixed methods pre/post 0/6/12months
 - Families in crisis & workers
 - Families' levels of well being and functioning increased
 - family focus rather than child specific; availability of the programmes; telephone availability of the workers; ensuring child safety

Care arrangements

- Out of home placements
- Foster carers
- Shared care
- Host families
- Residential –group homes etc

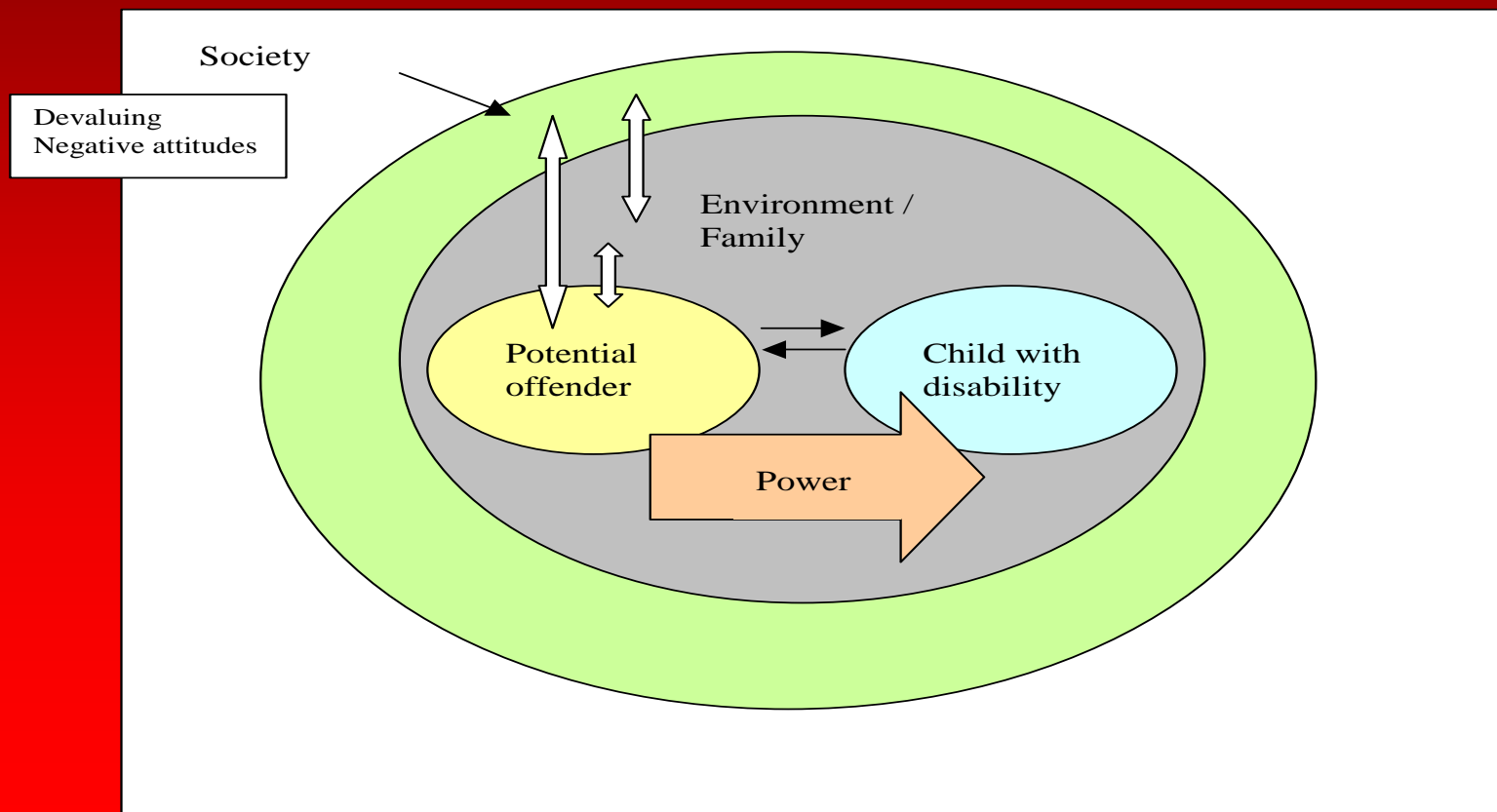
Care arrangements

- Schormans. A. Coniega. M. and Renwick. R. 2006. Placement stability: Enhancing Quality of Life for Children With Development Disabilities. In *Families in Society*. 87 (4). Pp 521 – 528.
 - Placement stability contributing factor to quality of life
 - importance of meeting the child's needs; provision of a family environment; and supporting the parents to support the child.

Transition from care

- Poor outcomes for many young people leaving care
- This is exacerbated for young people with a disability
- *Journeys of Exclusion* report 2006
 - Homelessness
 - Criminal justice system
 - Victims of crime, exploitation
 - Poor educational outcomes
 - Become parents themselves

Sobsey's Ecological Model of abuse & disability (Sobsey 1994)



Summary

- Children with disabilities have same risks and issues around child protection as children without disabilities
- What we know works for all children will also works for children with disabilities
- However, there are factors that exacerbate risks for children with disabilities
- Prevention of abuse and expressed need for out of home placement can be addressed through better family support
- We need to be working with families earlier
- This requires both disability and children's services and researchers to collaborate to work though joint solutions
- Need to strengthen evidence base for better practice

Future Questions & Comments

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