



# Evidence-based Neglect Prevention Model Shows *Effectiveness with American Indians* in a First of Its Kind Research Study

## About SafeCare®

Established in 1979, SafeCare is an evidence-based, parent-training curriculum for parents who are at-risk or have been reported for maltreatment. Through SafeCare, trained home visitors work with families who have children ages 0-5 in their home environment. SafeCare is well-suited to address child neglect, the most common form of maltreatment. SafeCare typically is provided in weekly home visits that last up to 90 minutes. The duration of the program is typically 15-20 weeks for each family, and the content for home visiting sessions is delivered in three separate modules.

Each module includes a baseline assessment, home-visiting sessions, and a follow-up assessment to monitor changes and progress in parenting skills over the course of the program. Providers also are trained to teach structured problem solving to parents on an as-needed basis. Oklahoma used SafeCare as part of statewide system of home-based services operated by community-based agencies under contract with Child Protective Services and agreed to a statewide trial of its effectiveness from 2003 to 2006.



## Findings

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In one of the only rigorous evaluations to examine the effectiveness of home-visiting among American Indian parents involved with child welfare, researchers found that SafeCare, an evidence-based intervention, was equally effective at reducing child welfare recidivism among American Indian parents as it was among other groups. In addition, American Indian parents receiving SafeCare reported reductions in depression and higher ratings of cultural competence, working alliance, and service quality and benefit than American Indian parents receiving services as usual. The study findings counteract concerns that manualized and structured evidence-based models may not be congruent with American Indian culture and, thus, not as effective as other approaches.

## About the Research

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This study is part of a larger statewide trial measuring the effectiveness of SafeCare for families receiving in-home child welfare services stemming from a child maltreatment report (other than sexual abuse). The trial used a complex 2x2 experimental design where regional agencies were randomly assigned to SafeCare or services as usual and home visitor teams within these groups were randomly assigned to an in vivo coaching enhancement as an additional quality control mechanism. The American Indian subsample consists of 354 parents. Outcomes examined included 6-year child maltreatment recidivism, depression, child abuse potential, working alliance, service satisfaction, and cultural competency.

## Implications

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This study consists of the largest American Indian sample in an experimental evaluation examining child welfare outcomes to date. The results demonstrate the effectiveness of SafeCare with American Indians, which counters some concerns about the cultural relevance of evidence-based interventions with manualized and standardized treatment approaches for this population. Given disproportionate representation of American Indian children in out-of-home placement, effective prevention models with this population are needed. This research contributes to that need and will hopefully stimulate greater attention to the spread and evaluation of evidence-informed and evidence-based programs with American Indian families.

## Research Partners

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This research was a collaboration between Casey Family Programs and the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. This project was also supported by National Institute for Mental Health grants R01MH065667 (M. Chaffin, PI) and R01MH072961 (G. Aarons, PI) from the National Institute for Mental Health. Additional in-kind support was provided by the Violence Prevention Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## More About Casey

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Casey's research goals are to document and disseminate promising approaches to preventing maltreatment and supporting families, consistent with the larger organizational strategic goals to significantly reduce the need for foster care. Casey's emphasis in Indian Child Welfare is to work closely with communities to reduce the disproportionate number of Native American children in foster care through development and improvement of tribal and state child welfare systems.

**Citation:** Chaffin, M., Bard, D., Bigfoot, D. S., and Maher, E. J. (2012). Is a structured, manualized, evidence-based treatment protocol culturally competent and equivalently effective among American Indian parents in child welfare? *Child Maltreatment, 17*, 242-252.