

P01-335

STRESS AND TRAUMA IN CHILDREN IN FOSTER AND INSTITUTIONAL CARE

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Current studies show that individuals who were in foster or institutional care experience higher rates of physical and psychiatric morbidity than the general population. Children in foster care have a higher probability of having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and deficits in executive functioning, anxiety as well other developmental problems. These children experience higher degrees of incarceration, poverty, homelessness, and suicide. Recent studies show alarming occurrence of trauma and high stress load in children in institutional but as well as foster care.

We have conducted an extensive study (n=360) monitoring occurrence of trauma in history of children in foster care (n=120), in institutional care (n=120) and in functional biological families (n=120). We have also evaluated levels of social emotional development and occurrence of child psychopathology.

The results of the presented study showed that children in institutional and foster care show substantially higher occurrence of trauma in their history, higher incidence of reactive psychopathology (i.e. depression) and their level of social emotional development is substantially lower comparing to children from functional biological families ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The study proposes that children in foster and institutional care require substantial psychosocial support and attention.

SUPPORTED BY THE RESEARCH GRANT GK MPSV-01-202.