

# The Relationship Between Housing Instability During Specific Developmental Periods and Subsequent Child Maltreatment Among High-Risk Families

Meghan C. Evans,<sup>1</sup> Miguel Villodas,<sup>1</sup> and Kelly Cromer<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>San Diego State University, <sup>2</sup>Florida International University

## Objective

### HOUSING INSTABILITY AND CHILD WELFARE INVOLVEMENT

- Increased prevalence of housing difficulties among families under investigation for child abuse and neglect (Font & Warren, 2013; Fowler et al., 2013)
- Housing instability includes (Courtney, McMurtry, & Zinn, 2004; Dworsky, 2014):
  - Unsafe housing conditions
  - Housing mobility and eviction
  - Overcrowding and doubling-up with other families
  - Homelessness

### UNCLEAR ASSOCIATION

- Despite growing evidence of an increased prevalence of housing instability among child welfare-involved families, the direction and nature of the association is unclear

### PRESENT RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Does housing instability predict subsequent reports maltreatment?
- Is this association specific to developmental periods?

## Methods

### PARTICIPANTS

- 1354 caregiver-youth dyads who participated in the Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN):
  - A 25-year ongoing consortium of studies collecting data on at-risk youth from five sites in regions across the U.S. (Northwestern, Southwestern, Eastern, Southern, and Midwestern)
  - Examining the antecedents and consequences of childhood maltreatment

### PROCEDURE

- Caregivers annually reported four indicators of housing instability when youth were between 6 and 18 years old which were summed to create a Housing Instability Score:
  - Child and family moved together
  - Child moved separately from the family
  - Family evicted
  - Child homeless
- CPA records coded for maltreatment allegations in two-year intervals between birth and 18

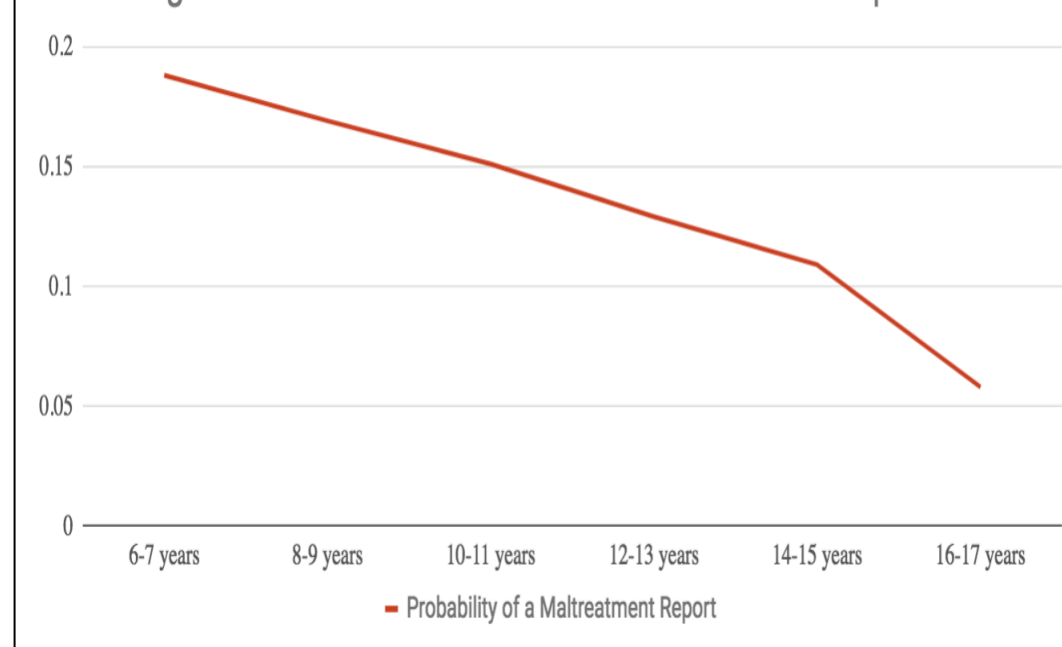
## Results

- Latent growth curve models were estimated to examine the time-varying cross-lagged relationship between housing instability in each two-year interval and risk for maltreatment during each subsequent two-year interval
- Controlled for time-invariant (i.e. early childhood maltreatment, child gender, and race/ethnicity) and time-variant (i.e. family income and number of people in the household) factors

Table 1: Demographics of Sample

	n	Total Sample
Female	(%)	51.5%
Race		
Caucasian	(%)	26.1%
Black	(%)	53.2%
Hispanic	(%)	7.2%
Mixed race	(%)	11.9%
Other race	(%)	1.6%
Family Income		
<=\$14,999	(%)	58.7%
\$15K-\$24,999	(%)	19.2%
\$25K-\$39,999	(%)	11.3%
\$40K-\$49,999	(%)	3.2%
\$50K or more	(%)	5.1%
Maltx Prevalence at Baseline (between birth and age 6)		
Physical Abuse	(%)	28%
Sexual Abuse	(%)	11%
Emotional Maltx	(%)	29%
Physical Neglect	(%)	50%
Supervisory Neglect	(%)	38%

Figure 1. Prevalence of maltreatment across development



## Results

Table 2: Conditional Intercepts and Slopes

	Maltreatment	
	Intercept	Slope
Female (vs. Male)	-.2*	.09*
Race		
Black (vs. White)	-.08	-.05
Other (vs. White)	-.13	.02
Prior Report	.61*	-.07*

Table 3: Relationship between Housing Instability and Maltreatment

Effects of housing instability on Maltrx at:	OR [95% CI]
6-7 years	1.22 [1.1, 1.35]
8-9 years	1.17 [1.07, 1.3]
10-11 years	1.27 [1.12, 1.45]
12-13 years	1.19 [1.04, 1.36]
14-15 years	1.15 [.98, 1.37]
16-17 years	1.01 [.84, 1.2]

- More housing instability significantly increased the risk of child maltreatment over time between ages 6 and 14, but not between ages 14 and 18
  - Odds ratios were initially significant but did not remain significant over older developmental periods

## Conclusions

- Housing instability places children at increased risk for maltreatment during childhood and early adolescence
- Vulnerability during these time periods may be heightened due to limited autonomy, independence, and capacity for self-protection
- Housing instability could limit caregivers' capacity to properly supervise children
- Stress associated with housing difficulties could increase frustration and conflict with children
- Investigators should consider the broader context of housing instability in determining children's safety
- Provision of family services, in addition to housing assistance, could prevent maltreatment