RESEARCH PLAN

1. State question/curiosity in general terms.

OK – this is your observation – and I saw the same thing except that I did not see the FFA element. I'm thinking this is additional data from either CH or Berkeley websites. It is great to note it – you will want to include in your analytic results if it relates to your hypothesis.

I observe that of all the children in My County, who entered care between 2010 and 2013, and exited to reunification/relative within 12 months, reentry within one year in more likely for;

- Children under 1 year old than it is for older children.
- African American children compared to White and Latino children.
- Children with a last placement type of FFA compared to those placed in Kinship setting.
- Children who exited to reunification compared to those who exited to guardianship.

This may be because parenting children under 1 is more demanding and leads to higher stress. Children in this age group are more vulnerable and so reports of maltreatments are substantiated at higher rates. Some parents may have problems transitioning to their parenting role and coping skills may not have been learned. Also, I think if parental substance abuse is involved, and is the primary reason for removal, and the children are in out of home for a short period of time, and then maybe there was not sufficient time to address all of the families' needs, particularly families with multiple needs. Families with multiple problems may also be at greater risk for re-entry.

OK – this is your hypothesis – and it seems to relate primarily to the age of the entrants. The last placement type may also come into play. Developing your hypothesis in relation to the two underlined observations seems like a good place to focus. I think that small cells sizes may impede your ability to say something really illuminating about either racial disparities or the permanency type unless you focus exclusively on one of those areas. The more dimensions you add – the more comparison groups you have – and since the plan is to sample 20 – I'd recommend a more narrow focus for this particular set of inquiries.

If you include consideration of the FFA/Kinship home distinction – do you have a hypothesis about why that might impact the risk of reentry?

My questions are:

- Are we reunifying our under 1s too quickly and not giving enough time to assess parental readiness?
- Are parents with substance abuse issues receiving adequate services?
- Are we removing children for circumstances that could have been addressed in home and a lack of appropriate referrals? OK - but how is this related to your observation? Do you mean are children reentering care who could have been well served in their home?
- Are parents of African American children receiving cultural appropriate services that are tailored to their needs?
- Could the number of children in the household be a factor associated with reentry?
- Are families with multiple problems at greater risk for re-entry?

2. **What method do you need to answer the questions?**

I plan to use the following:
- Administrative data analysis
- Case review
- Adding a variable to my spell file – what variable is that? And what question will this variable help you answer? (is it the last placement type – if so – then I know what you are doing with it!)

Case review will be used to answer most of my questions. In the case file, I should be able to acquire more knowledge about what the process and quality of casework/service delivery. For instance I should see the primary reason for removal and if parental substance abuse was involved. If the child was in out of home placement for a short period of time, if there was sufficient time to address all of the families' needs, particularly families with multiple needs. OK – these areas map to items you will look for in case review. They don't attend to all of your questions though. What about the number of children in the home – is that at removal, return, or reentry? And will that be something you can find from case review?

3. **Pick the type of population you will use to answer the question:**

My observation about re-entries will be made from an entry cohort. I will draw my sample from an entry cohort population of children who entered care in 2013 and exited to reunification or guardianship within 12 months.   OK – so we know that is a group of 1211 entrants – and you are going to randomly select 20 as described below. Great.

4. **Identify the specific population(s) you will use to answer the question.**
    I will select a stratified random sample of children who exited care to reunification or guardianship in 2013. Specifically, I will take 5 random cases from each of the following four populations. I would need a random sample of infants and random sample older children. In each group, I will select some children who re-entered and some who did not. My sample will include a mix of all races. A total of 20 cases will be reviewed 5 infants who re-entered, 5 infants who did not reenter, 5 older children who re-entered and 5 older children who did not reenter.
    Right – this is exactly correct. Given your observations above, do you want to restrict your sample to children and infants last placed in either and FFA or a Kinship home?

Age Category	Re-entered within one year	Did not re-enter within one year
Infant	5	5

Older Children	5	5

5. **Write the analytic question(s):**

So this is what you want to learn – primarily from the case review. I think it would be useful to rework these questions to articulate what you plan to collect in the case review tool. And so I think they may have to more specific so that you can be sure you collect the same set of information for all 20 cases.

- Are families involved in the placement decisions so as to maximize their strengths and resources? So – would this be any family member? All family members? Removal parent? Would it happened at a removal FTM? Is so – would you look for evidence that parent was there and involved in decision?
- Do assessment results accurately reflect parental readiness for reunification? Or how is parental readiness determined? Not sure how you can uniformly collect this from case review tool
- Are quality visits conducted between parent and child? How consistent? Same – issue – but your tool could record how total time in care, total number of visits, and something quantifiable that could be proxy for quality.
- Are parents receiving age-appropriate parenting services while the child was in care? Is there a known services that you would expect to for infants vs older kids? Are they referrals or provided by the case managers? I would specify that in the instrument as well.
- What types of services are available for substances abuse issues? Do parents who receive substance abuse treatment require more than 12 months in order to provide a safe and stabling home for their child? Same issues as above --- you will want to make clear what specifically you are looking for in your case review so that you can summarize the results.

- Regional Office Variations: this is a great bit of context and I think very worthwhile to add to the research plan. This will be useful descriptors to provide prior to your discussion of the case review results.
  - Are there differences in service array
  - Practice/Policy differences
  - Caseloads, turnover(staff and leadership), and training
  - Demographic factors and case mix
- Do children placed in FFAs have higher needs? How are families that are reunified with these children supported in providing for their needs? Needs based on what? Some assessment tool – if so you will want to report what the assessment says about each of the 20 cases you reviews, so that then you can establish if this is the case. It sounds like this is part of your hypothesis about the distinction between infants in FFAs vs infants in kin. And then the services part of the question is similar to the one above – what services are referred or provided to parents post reunification?

So – just to be clear – we are imagining a pretty limited case review that allows for the collection of data that can be easily summarized. So your instrument might look something like this…

Sample Desc	Sample Desc	Sample Desc	Sample Desc	Sample Desc	QU 1: Fam Involvement	QU1 Family involvement	Qu2 Visitation	Q2 Visitation	Q2 Visitation
Child	Sample type	Last placement type	Primary Pl Reason	Parental Substance Abuse Y/N	Removal Parent Mom, Dad, etc	Was removal parent at removal FTM?	Was removal parent part of placement decision?	Total duration in care	Total number of parent-child visits in care
1	Infant, reentered								
2	Infant not reentered								
3	Older reentered								
4 etc to 20	Older not reentered								

Of course – this is just a sample – but related to a couple of the questions you outlined above. You would expand it to reflect the other questions that relate to your developing hypothesis.

SO – in sum looks very good, and I'm looking forward to the results. I really like the contextual notes about the removal offices – I think that will be very interesting.

Please be in touch with questions –and if you need help pulling the random sample.