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# A meta-analysis of intensive family preservation programs: Placement prevention and improvement of family functioning

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## Abstract

The aims of the present study were, first, to establish the effect of brief, in-home intensive family preservation programs on prevention of out-of-home placement, family functioning, child behavior problems and social support and, second, to study moderators of these effects. The results of this meta-analytic study, consisting of 20 studies (31,369 participants), show that intensive family preservation programs had a medium and positive effect on family functioning ( $d = .486$ ), but were generally not effective in preventing out-of-home placement. Intensive family preservation programs were effective in preventing placement for multi-problem families, but not for families experiencing abuse and neglect. Moreover, the effect on out-of-home placement proved to be moderated by client characteristics (sex and age of the child, parent age, number of children in the family, single-parenthood, non-white ethnicity), program

characteristics (caseload), study characteristics (study design and study quality), and publication characteristics (publication type, publication year and journal impact factor). The discussion addresses implications for evaluation and practice.

## Highlights

• Generally no out-of-home placement prevention through intensive family preservation. • Intensive family preservation programs are effective in improving family functioning. • Effect of IFPP moderated by client-, program-, study-, & publication characteristics. • Less effect on placement prevention in the more rigorous studies.



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## Keywords

Child safety; Crisis; Family functioning; Intensive family preservation programs; Out-of-home placement

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