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Study Title: *Implicit Bias, Attributions, and Emotions In Decisions about Parents with Intellectual Disabilities by Child Protection Workers*

Term of IRB Approval: June 3, 2010 – June 2, 2011

Study Completed: February 22, 2011

Summary or Abstract:

Several epidemiological studies suggest that individuals with intellectual disabilities (IDs) constitute a higher proportion of child protective services (CPS) cases than would be expected based on the prevalence of IDs in the general population. Researchers have suggested that the stereotypic assumptions and expectations that CPS workers' have about parents with IDs might influence decisions and responses to parents with IDs. The goal of this study was to examine the social-cognitive and emotion factors associated with CPS worker's investigative decisions and treatment of parents with IDs during child neglect situations. Of particular interest were CPS workers stereotypes and attitudes about parents with IDs, attributions about their disability, and their emotional reactions (anger, disgust, pity) to parents' behavior. Each factor, along with the potential buffering effect of workers' perspective taking ability, were examined to determine their association with workers' decisions about future risk to the child, removal recommendations, and their general willingness to help the parents with IDs. Second, this study examined whether parents' ID status (having an ID versus not) had an effect on CPS workers' emotional reactions, attributions, and decisions about risk, removal, and help. The present research had several important findings. First, findings supported only the association between workers' emotional responses to (rather than their stereotypes about, attitudes toward, or attributions for) the behavior of parents with IDs with their decisions. Second, findings supported the effect of parental ID status on child protection workers' emotional reactions, risk assessments, and willingness to help. Limitations and clinical implications of findings are discussed.

Full text of dissertation available at: <https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/paper/12302/>