

Nebraska Judges' Perceptions of Child Welfare Privatization

Nebraska Court Improvement Project
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August 14, 2011

Background

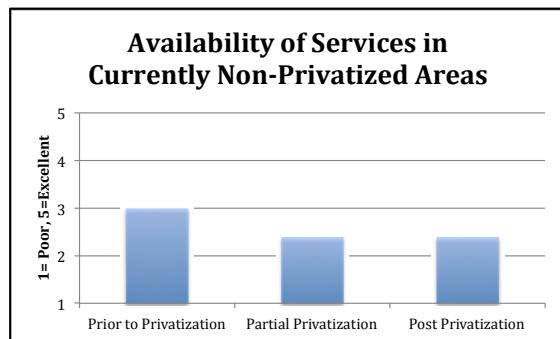
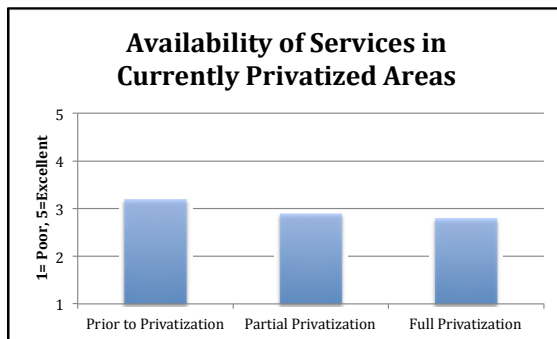
Senator Kathy Campbell requested information regarding judicial perceptions of the impact of Nebraska's recent privatization activities to assist her committee in its work required by LR 37. Senator Campbell and her staff worked with the Court Improvement Project to develop the questions. Judges were surveyed in late July and early August, 2011 through an internet based survey process. All 44 then active judges with juvenile jurisdiction were invited to participate. Thirty-eight judges completed the survey, producing an 85% response rate.

Judges were divided into two groups: those whose jurisdictions were in the Eastern and Southeastern service areas that had fully privatized case management (except for a third of the Douglas County cases) and those in the Central, Northern, and Western service areas that had gone back to HHS case management and service coordination following the failure of the single contractor in that part of the state.

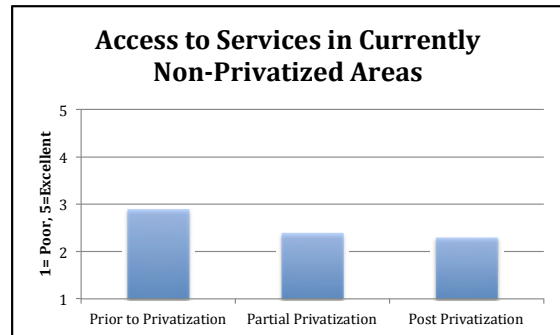
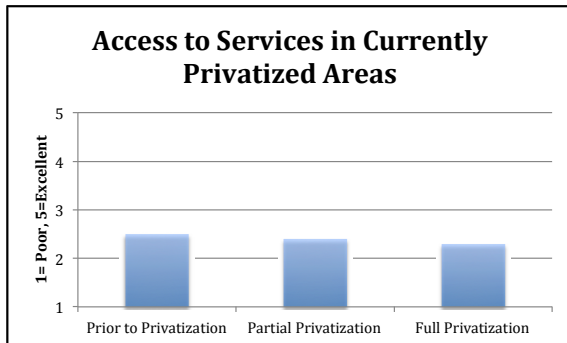
Services

Judges were asked to compare the availability, timeliness, and quality of services at three points in time: prior to the first major privatization effort involving lead agencies, during the first effort of partial privatization, and during the current time with full privatization in the Eastern and Southeastern areas and no privatization in the rest of the state. Judges were asked to rate three factors relating to services using a five-point scale (1=poor, 2= below average, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent.) The following tables show the averages (means) of judges' ratings.

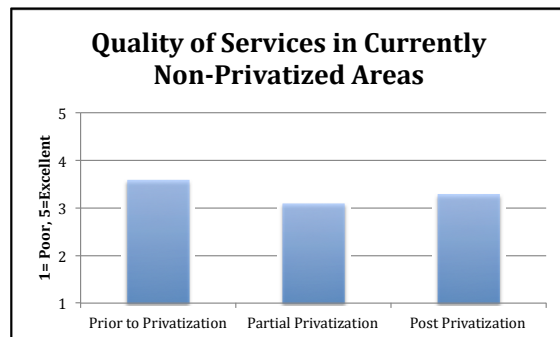
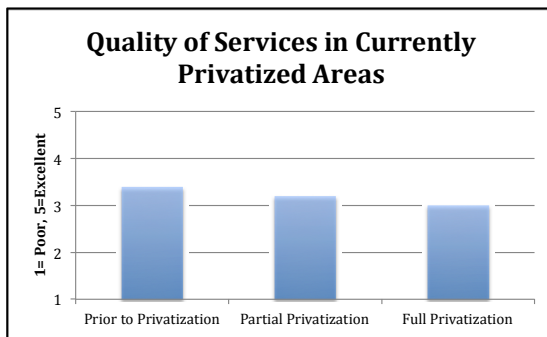
Availability of Services



Timely Access to Services



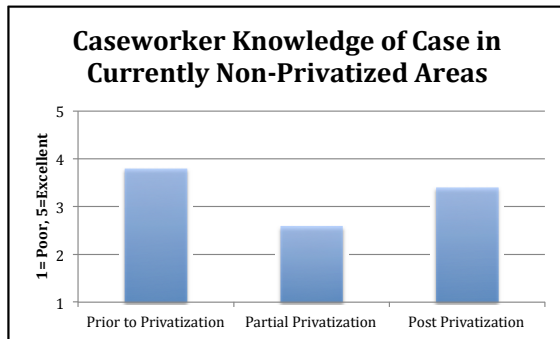
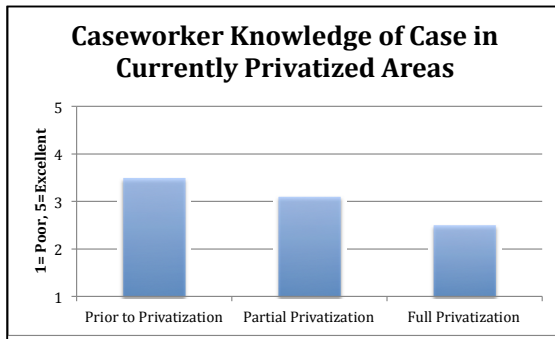
Quality of Services



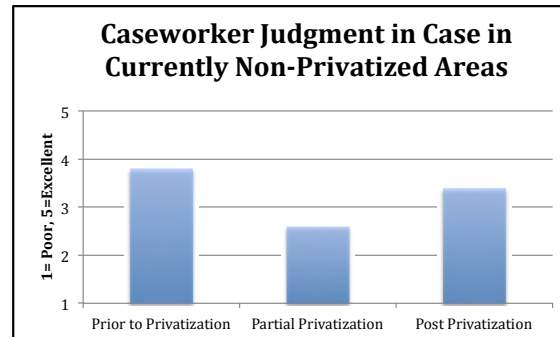
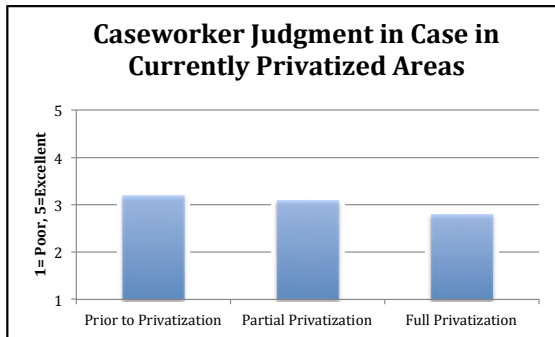
Casework

Judges were asked to compare factors about casework at the three same time periods as above. Again, judges were asked to rate these factors using a five-point scale (1=poor, 2= below average, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent.) The following tables show the averages of judges' ratings.

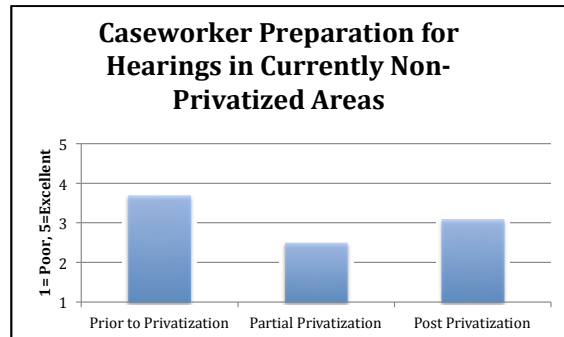
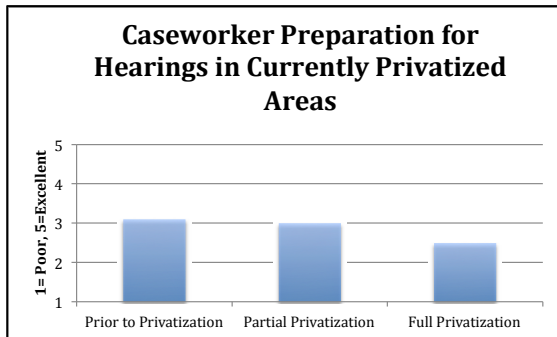
Caseworker Knowledge



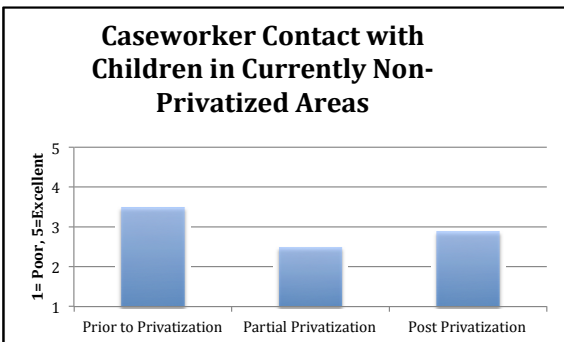
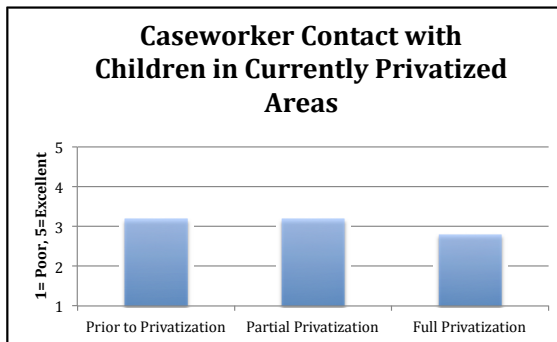
Caseworker Judgment



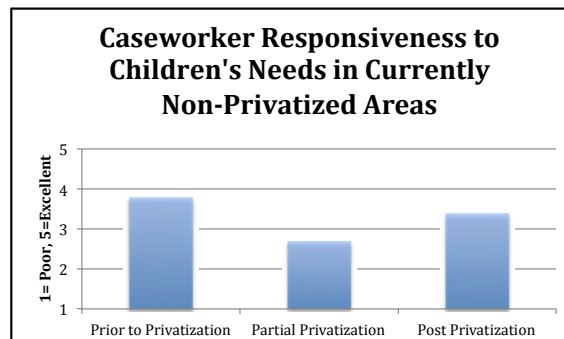
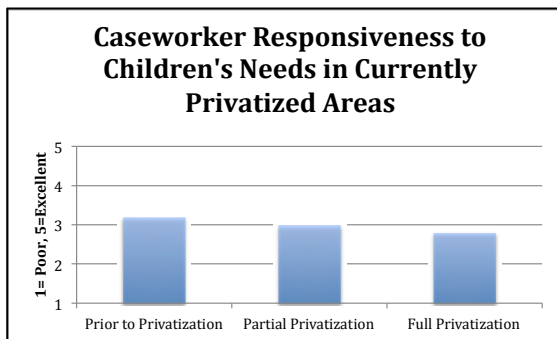
Caseworker Preparation



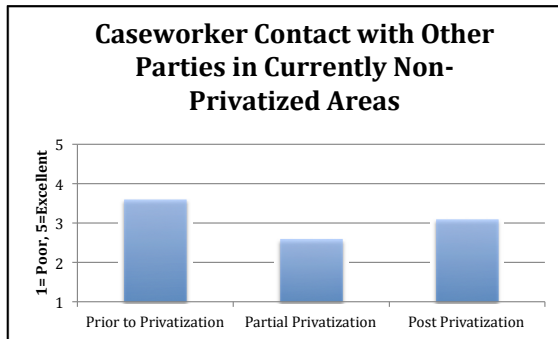
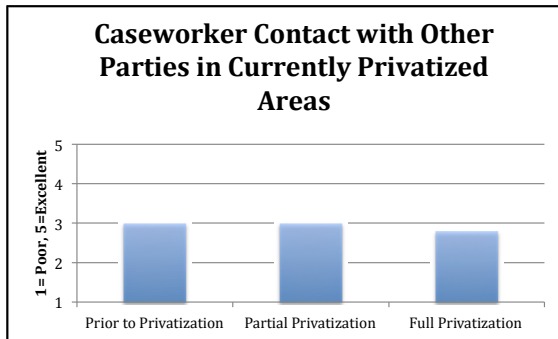
Contact with Children



Responsiveness to Children's Needs



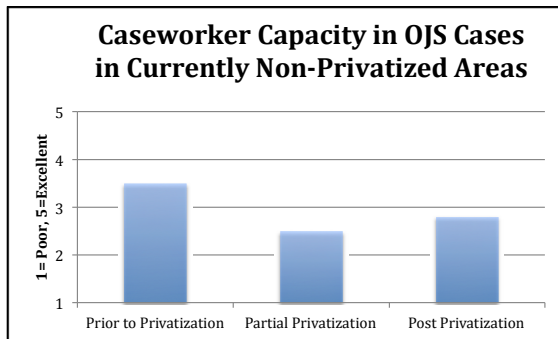
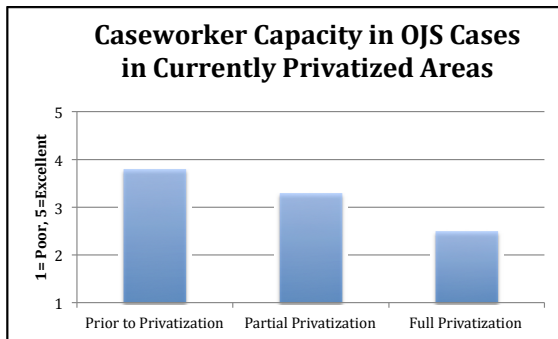
Contact with Other Parties



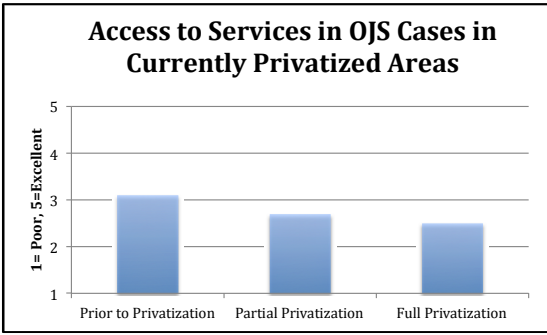
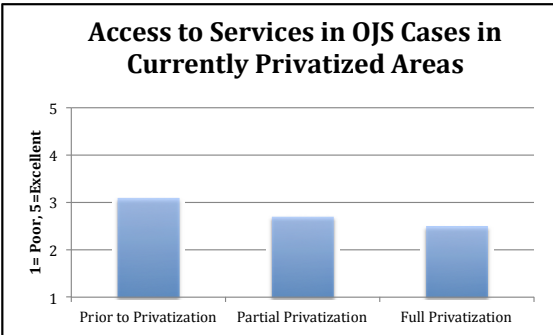
Office of Juvenile Services Cases

Judges were also asked to rate their perceptions of factors regarding their OJS cases during the same time periods as above and using the same 5-point rating scale.

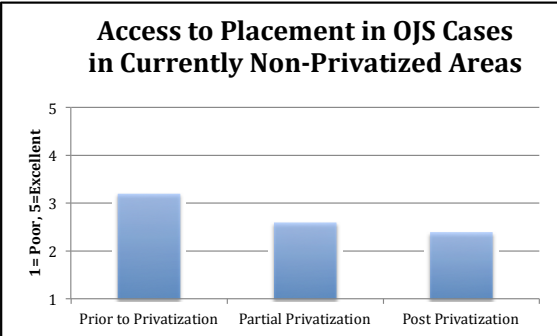
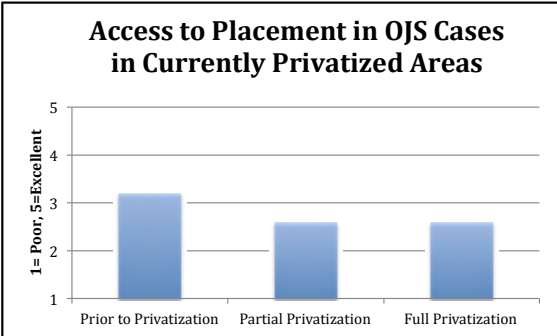
Caseworker Capacity



Access to Services

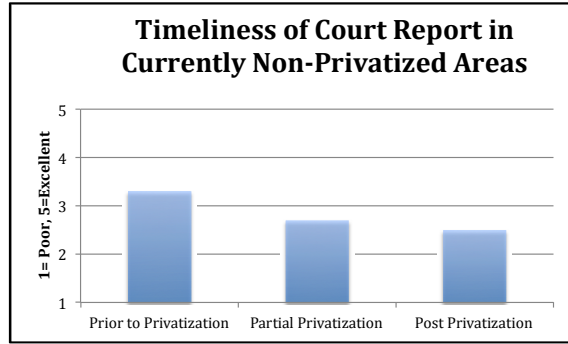
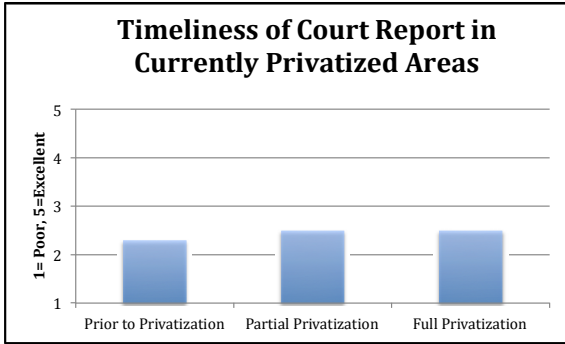


Access to Placements

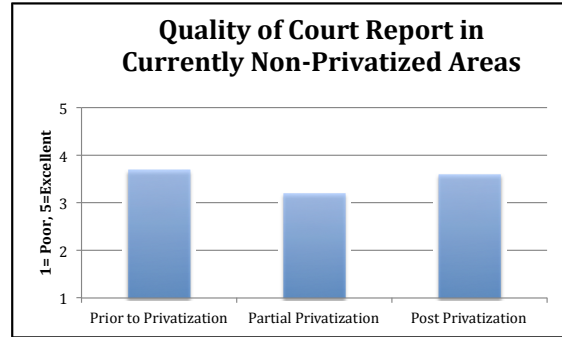
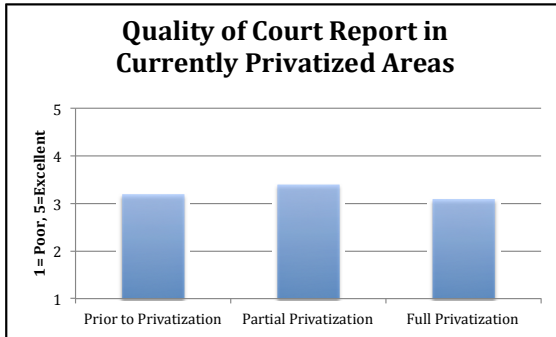


Case Plan/Court Reports and Placement Stability

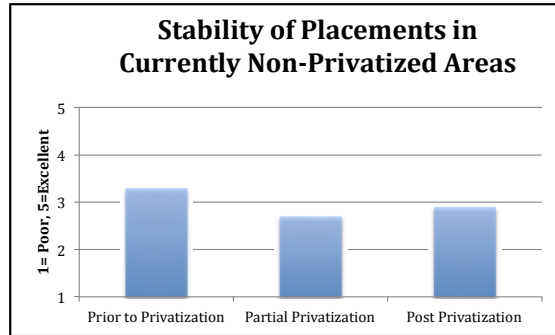
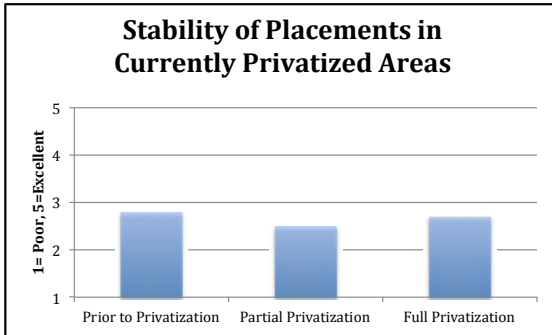
Timeliness of Court Reports (all cases)



Quality of Case Plan Court Report

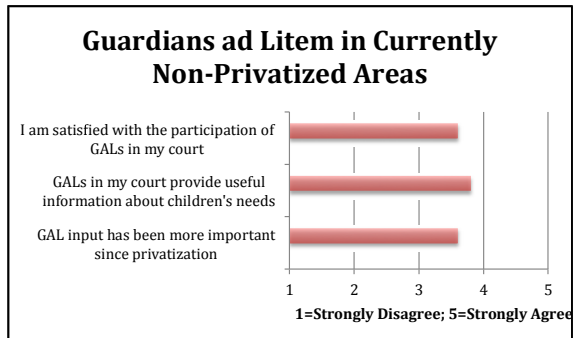
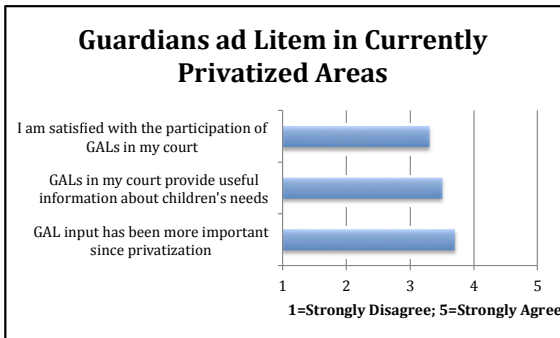


Stability of Placements



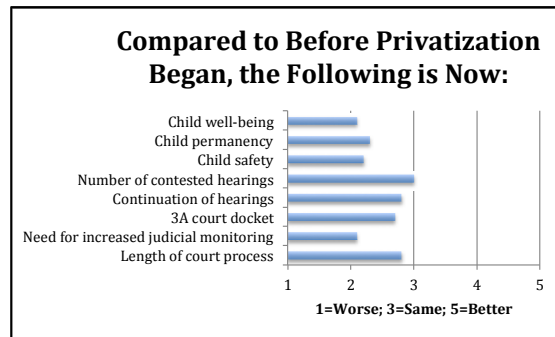
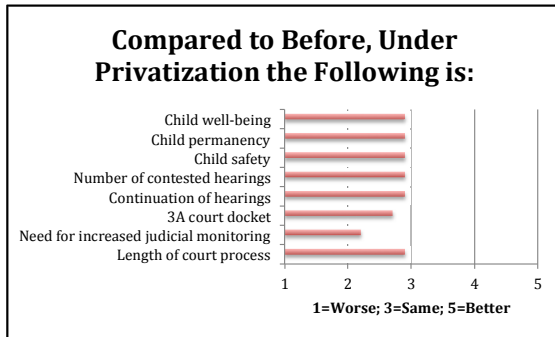
Guardians ad Litem

The following chart shows judges' perceptions of guardians ad litem who appear in their court rooms. Judges were asked to rate their agreement with the statements in the chart (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree).



Impact of Privatization

Judges were also asked for their perceptions as to whether things have gotten better or worse since the beginning of the privatization effort. They were asked to use this sentence as a stem: "Compared to the way it was before, under privatization the following is....." A 5-point rating scale was used (1=worse; 2=somewhat worse; 3=same; 4=somewhat better; 5=better). The left chart below shows the averages (means) of judges' ratings for the currently privatized areas. The right chart shows the ratings for the currently non-privatized areas.



Judges' Optimism about Nebraska's Privatization

Finally, judges were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, "Privatization, as it is currently structured, will eventually be successful." A 5-point scale was used: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree.

