

## ABSTRACT

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE RECOVERY AND REUNIFICATION IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM: MOTHERS' STORIES OF SUCCESS

This qualitative study is based on in-depth interviews with eight mothers who have achieved sobriety and successfully reunified, or were regaining child custody, through Fresno County Child Welfare Services (CWS). Although there were many findings, the most salient themes that emerged regarding how the participants were able to “beat the odds” included: seeing the intervention as a necessary start to sobriety; children needing to be with mothers in treatment; therapy and classes being helpful; a sense of hope and inspiration, in addition to seeing children regularly, played critical roles in their journeys; receiving support from staff at the program made a positive impact; and believing that social workers need increased knowledge of addiction, as well as the essential values of compassion, nonjudgment, and support in client relationships. Tables are referred, implications for social work practice in child welfare are discussed, and recommendations for future research are suggested.

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