

4. Advancements in interventions across care contexts

Providing family time for children and adolescents in residential care: the Collaborating Families program

Nuria Molano & Esperanza León

Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology,
University of Seville, Spain



EuSARF Conference
12-15 September 2023
University of Sussex, UK



Actividad subvencionada con cargo a la
asignación tributaria del 0,7%
del Impuesto sobre la
Renta de las Personas Físicas



Research Project PID2020-115836RB-I00

Collaborating Families Program

Adults who commit to share specific periods of time, such as weekends, holidays and/or vacations, with a child or adolescent who is residing in a protection center

➔ **Implemented only when a more stable family-based protection measure is not an option**

- Priority to family measures over residential ones
- Despite this, there are still **16.177 children and adolescents in residential care** in Spain (Ministry of Social Rights and 2030 Agenda, 2022)

Objectives of the Collaborating Families program

- Participation in **alternative activities** to those of the protection center
- Environment where they can learn to relate and **live with a family**
- Establishment of healthy **emotional bonds**
- Expansion of their **social support network**

Collaborating Families Program at the international level

- Approximately **2.7 million people** under the age of 18 live in residential care (Petrowski et al., 2017)
- At the European level, there is evidence of the existence of this resource in some countries
- In some of them, it **lacks legal backing** (e.g., Portugal) or there are **no available families** (e.g., Croatia)



Portugal: *famílias amigas* or *famílias de afeto*

Italy: *vicinanza solidale* or *solidarity neighborhood*

France: *families bénévoles* or *family volunteer*

UK: *No Wrong Door (NWD)*

The Collaborating Families research project

➤ Pioneer research → **Need for empirical evidence**

- ❖ Research project between the **University of Seville** and the association **Crecer con Futuro**, with the collaboration and funding of the **Andalusian Government**
- ❖ **Five consecutive projects:** 3284/0926, 3527/0926, 3803/0926, 4138/0926 & 4518/0926
- ❖ **PI:** Esperanza León; **Research team:** León, E., Molano, N., Gallardo, A.I., Espinosa, E., Jiménez-Morago, J.M., Moreno, C., and Román, M.



Aim: to analyze the **characteristics and development of the Collaborating Families program** from the perspective of the different agents involved in it: the collaborating families, the children and adolescents in residential care, and their caregivers in the protection centers

The present study

Objectives:

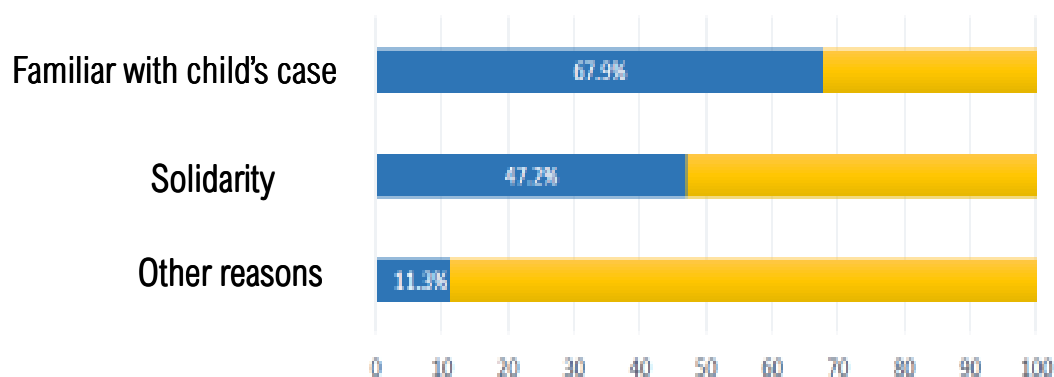
- I. Describe the **main characteristics of the process and the professional intervention in family collaboration** from the perspective of the collaborating families:
 - Motivation to collaborate
 - Access to the program
 - Training
 - Follow-up
 - Support
- II. Examine the families' **general satisfaction** with the program and with the **evolution of the child** during the program

Participants:

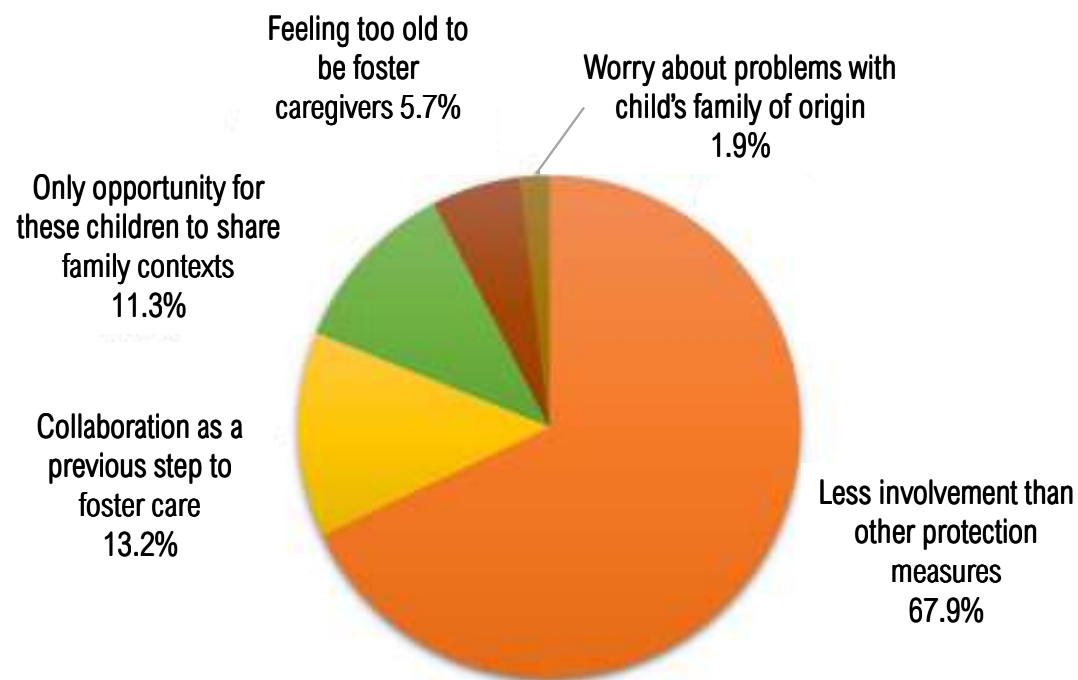
- **49 collaborating families with 53 minors** (76.6% total active collaborating families in Seville)
 - ✓ Minors' mean age around 14 years old
 - ✓ In residential care for an average of 8 years
 - ✓ In family collaboration for an average of 4 years
- Extensive semi-structured interview at the family's home

Results: Motivation to collaborate

Main motivations to formalize the collaboration process



Reasons for choosing Family Collaboration over more stable protection measures



- ✓ A high percentage of the collaborating families accessed the program because they were **previously familiar** the child's case and with the protection center
- ✓ Most of them stated that this program allowed them to help a child without as much **involvement** as other protection measures

Results: Access to the program

Waiting time from the presentation of the offer to the start of collaboration

Waiting time	%
0-3 months	37.7
4-6 months	32.1
7-12 months	22.7
13-24 months	7.5

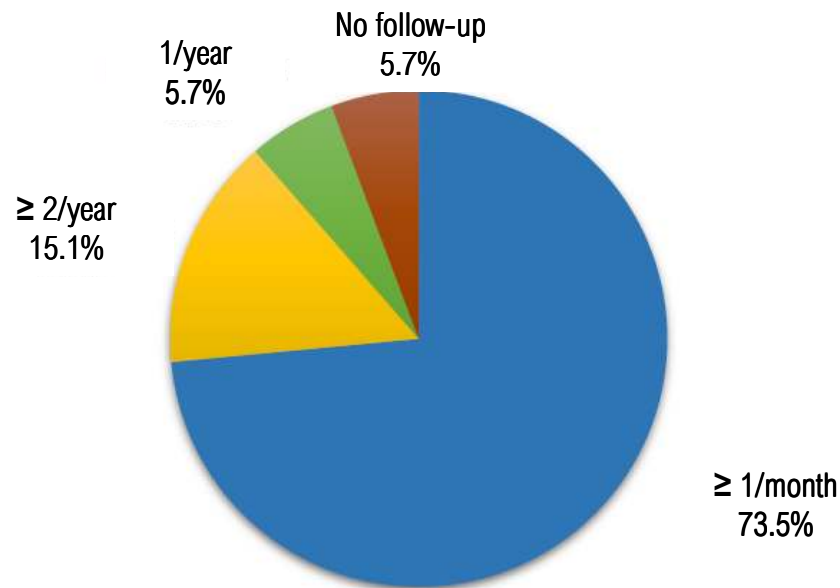
Satisfaction with waiting time

- 71.8% satisfied or very satisfied
- 7.5% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 20.7% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

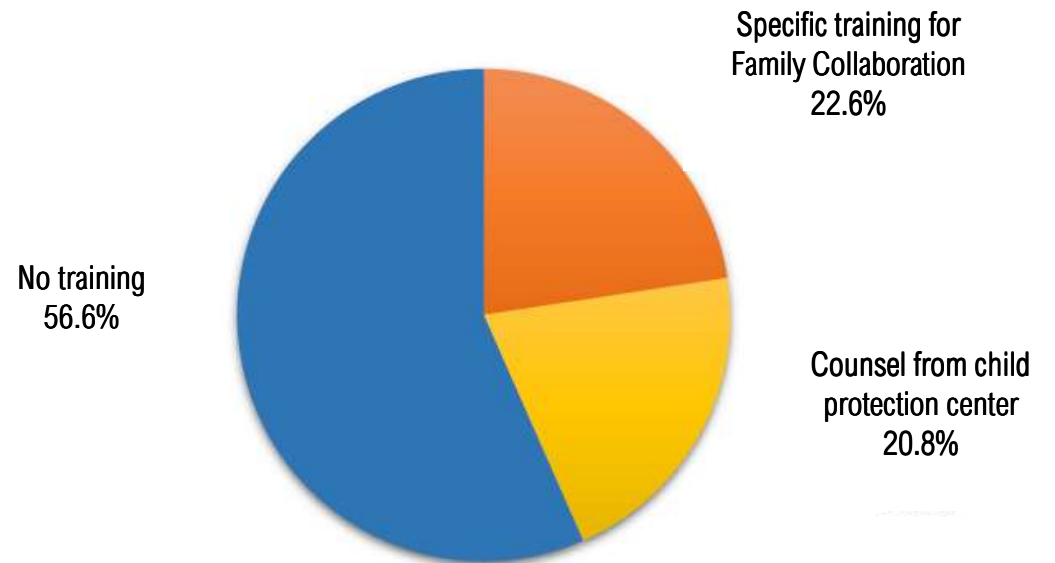
- ✓ To access the program, they waited **between 6 months and 2 years**
- ✓ Most families were satisfied or **highly satisfied** with the length of time elapsed from the offer to the formalization of the collaboration

Results: Training and follow-up

Collaborating families' follow-ups



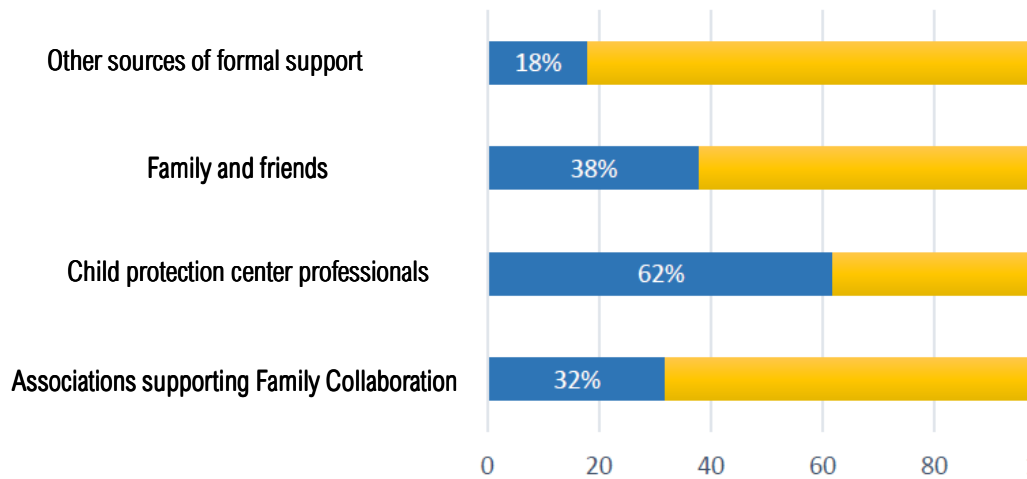
Collaborating families' training



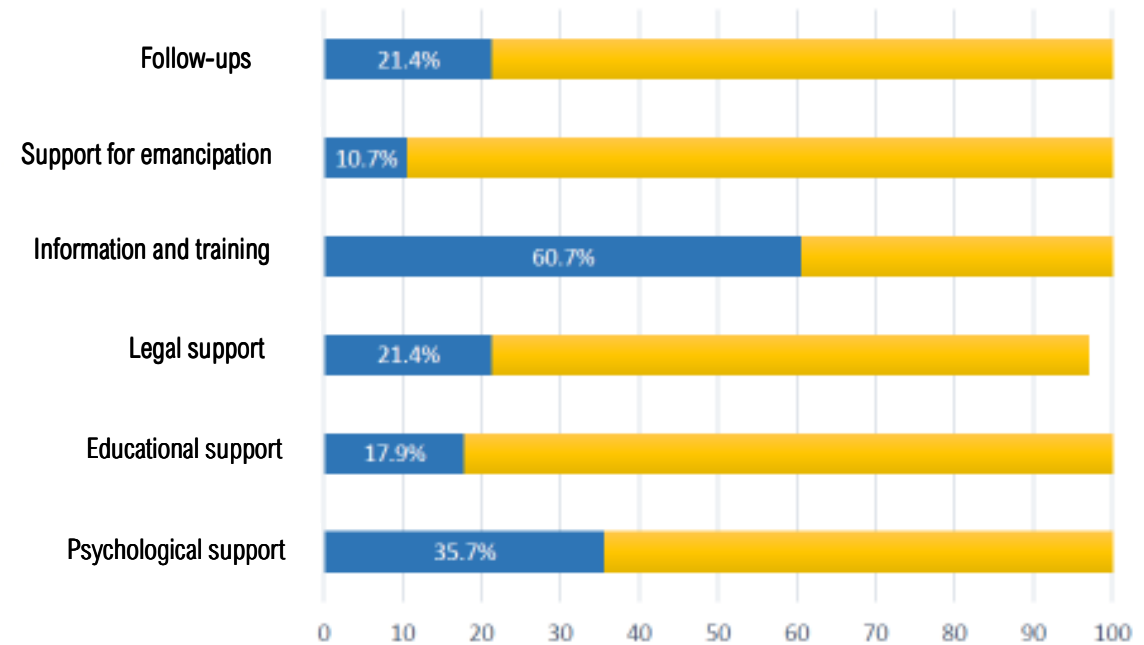
- ✓ **Almost half of them received training** prior to initiating the collaboration
- ✓ The highest percentage of families had **monthly follow-ups**

Results: Support

Types of support received during Family Collaboration



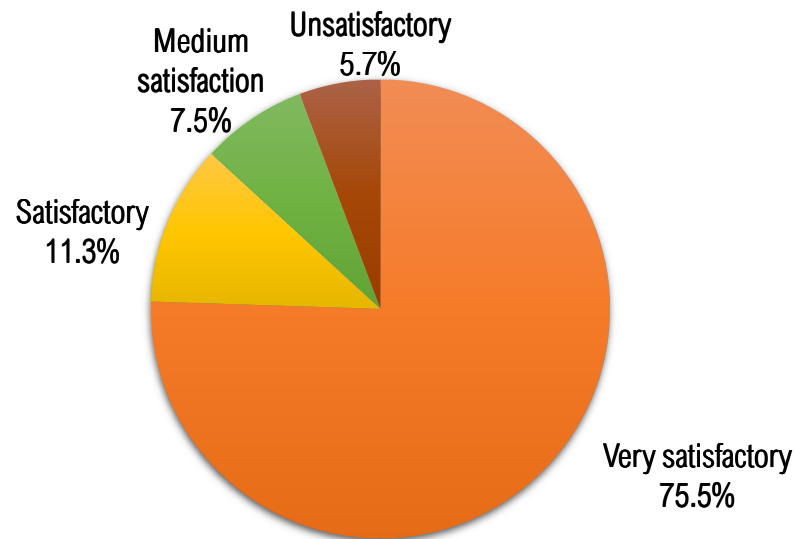
Additional support requested by collaborating families



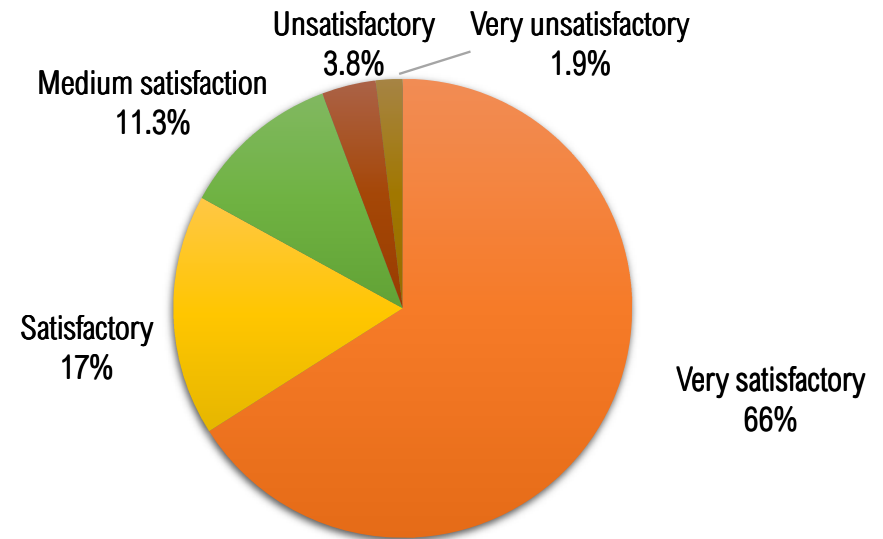
✓ Although most of them were offered support from professionals, they requested **more formal support**

Results: Satisfaction with the collaboration and children's evolution

Overall satisfaction with the collaboration



Overall satisfaction with the child's evolution



✓ Families were **very satisfied** with the program and with the evolution of the child throughout the collaboration

Conclusions

- Family Collaboration → **positive and well-functioning practice**, although not free of tensions and difficulties
- Some of the needs detected and reported have already contributed to important **social transfers**:
 - ✓ Inclusion of the resource in the new Andalusian law (**Law 4/2021, of Childhood and Adolescence of Andalusia**), in its article 110 on **Social Collaboration**
 - ✓ Development and publication of an **intervention protocol** for the program
- Future directions: study the **role of the collaborating families in the protection trajectory** of other children and adolescents from another residential care sample (**LAIS.US Study**)





Thank you for your attention

More information about Collaborating Families research project:

<https://crecerconfuturo.org/investigacion-sobre-familias-colaboradoras/>

LAIS.US Study:

<http://grupo.us.es/estudiolais/>