

**Home-Based Family Assessment  
And Other Factors Associated With  
Child Protection Outcome  
In High Risk Families.**

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed): .....

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## **ABSTRACT**

Families with serious and/or chronic child protection risks often have complex personal and social issues. Statutory child protection services must manage escalating child protection reports with limited resources. Addressing families at immediate risk often takes precedence over comprehensive family assessment and planned intervention, so the child protection issues in the lower priority families persist, and child protection reports continue.

The Montrose Home-Based Family Assessment Program assesses Department of Community Services registered families who are at risk of child removal because of chronic and/or severe child protection issues. Using an ecological perspective, the Montrose team conducts a five day comprehensive assessment in the family's home and community, and develops a caseplan to address child protection risks and family support needs. The assessment is voluntary, and the family is encouraged to participate in identifying the child protection issues and developing solutions.

The primary goal of this study is to compare child protection outcomes, three years after referral, for 100 families who participated in a Montrose Assessment, and 100 Comparison Group families. The research questions also explore the relationship between demographic, family, parent, child and child protection service factors and child protection outcome. Outcome is measured by Family Outcome, Children's Outcome, Legal Status, Children's Placement, subsequent Child Protection Reports and Substantiated Child Protection Reports, and Type of Abuse.

The results suggest that home-based family assessment is a cost-effective model that can measurably reduce the likelihood of further abuse, court intervention and out of home care even for complex, high risk families. The study also identifies specific child, parent and child protection service related variables that are significantly associated with child protection outcome. These findings have major relevance for current child protection policy and practice, and also for broader social policy that impacts on high risk families.