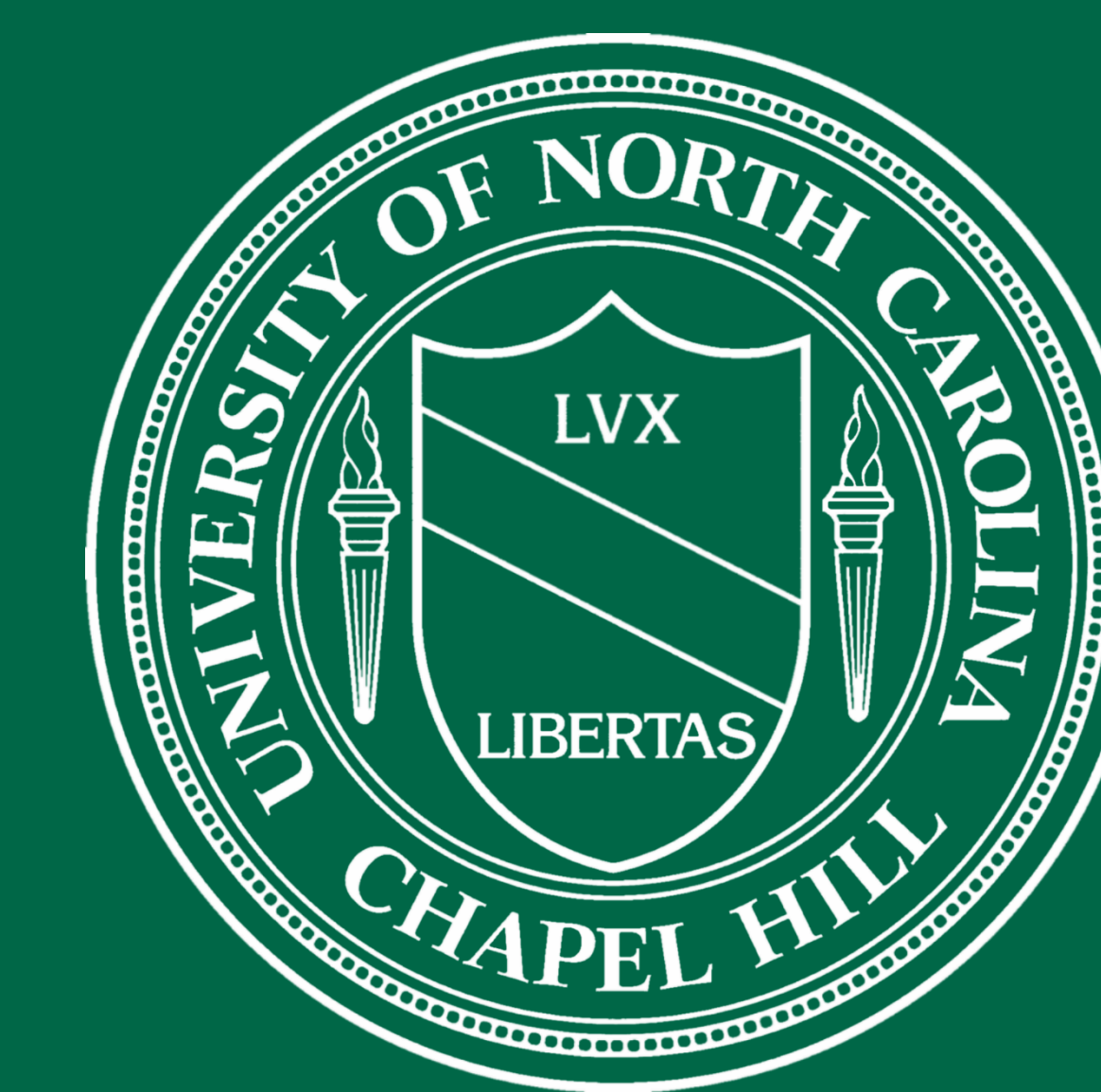


# Determinants of Case Outcomes in Family Dependency Treatment Court



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## Background

Family dependency treatment courts (FDTC) have emerged in response to the increasing amount of child welfare cases related to parental substance misuse. FDTCs initiate the pathway to substance misuse treatment for the parent and assist in obtaining permanency for the child. This study analyzes client outcome frequencies and predictor(s) of the FDTC in Hillsborough County's Thirteenth Judicial Court System . In the current study, the characteristics and case lifespan of 344 FDTC participants who had been involved with the court between 2014 and mid-2019 were collected and analyzed.

## Methods

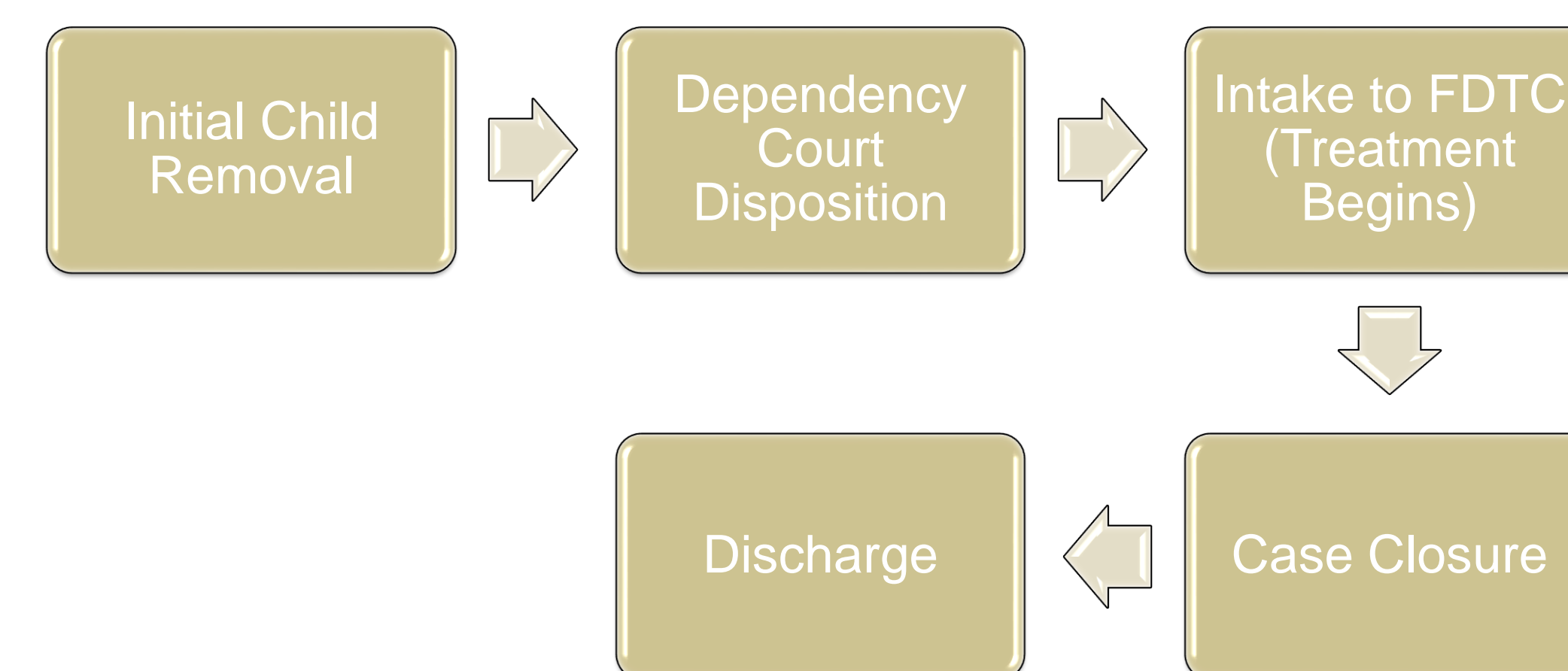
### Study Questions

- Which of the FDTC placement outcomes are the most prevalent?
  - Reunification (w/FDTC or other parent)
  - Permanent Guardianship (aka Adoption)
  - Termination of Parental Rights
  - Case Remanded (sent back to dependency division)
- Do any of these factor(s) predict these outcomes?
  - Age at intake
  - Prior Child Removal
  - Birth of a Child during FDTC involvement
  - Opioid use
  - Amount of time between child removal and FDTC intake
  - Amount of time in FDTC treatment phase (FDTC intake to discharge)

### Participants & Measures

Participants in our study were either currently or previously involved with Hillsborough County's Family Dependency Treatment Court between January 1, 2014 and June 1, 2019. Information on a total of 344 closed individual cases were examined from Hillsborough County's Family Dependency Treatment Court records. This information included: age, # of children born during FDTC, drug of choice, prior FDTC involvement, and the dates of child removal, FDTC intake, FDTC discharge, and case closure. Finally, information on the various FDTC outcomes (reunification, termination of parental rights, permanent guardianship, and send back to dependency division) also were collected.

## FDTC Process

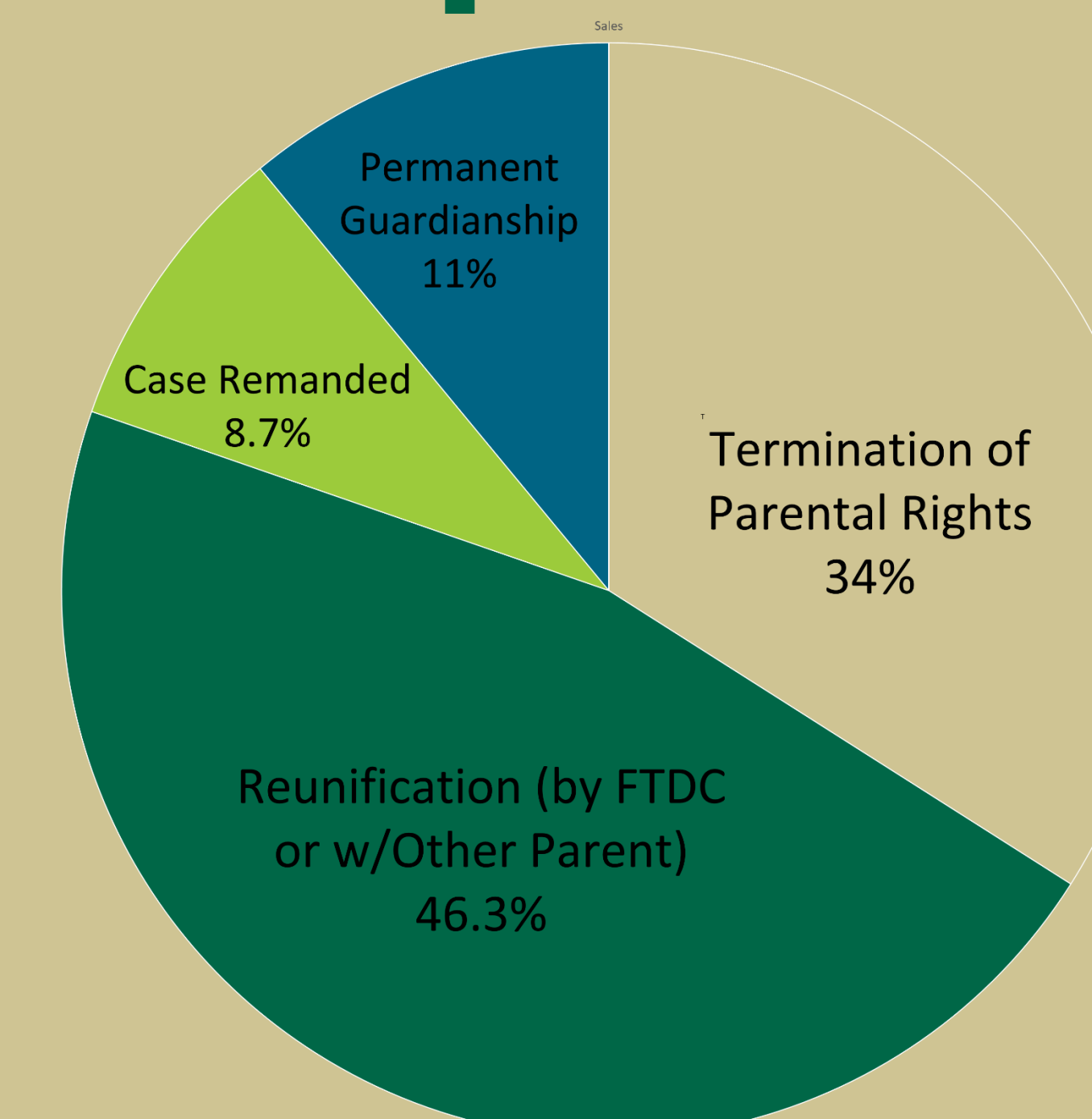


In the FDTC system, the child welfare system, the court, and substance abuse treatment providers all work in tandem.

## Demographics (n=344)

| Characteristic      |                 | Percentage |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Gender              | %Female         | 66%        |
| Age (M=30)          | 19-24           | 12.2%      |
|                     | 25-29           | 34%        |
|                     | 30-34           | 27.9%      |
|                     | 35-39           | 16.9%      |
|                     | 40 and Above    | 9%         |
| Drug of Choice:     | Opiates         | 54.7%      |
|                     | Methamphetamine | 20.3%      |
|                     | Cocaine         | 12.8%      |
|                     | THC             | 2.9%       |
|                     | Alcohol         | 2.3%       |
|                     | Spice           | 2%         |
| Childbirth in FDTC: | %Yes            | .3%        |
|                     | %Yes            | 2.3%       |
| Prior Removals:     | %Yes            | 12.5%      |

## Placement Outcome Frequencies



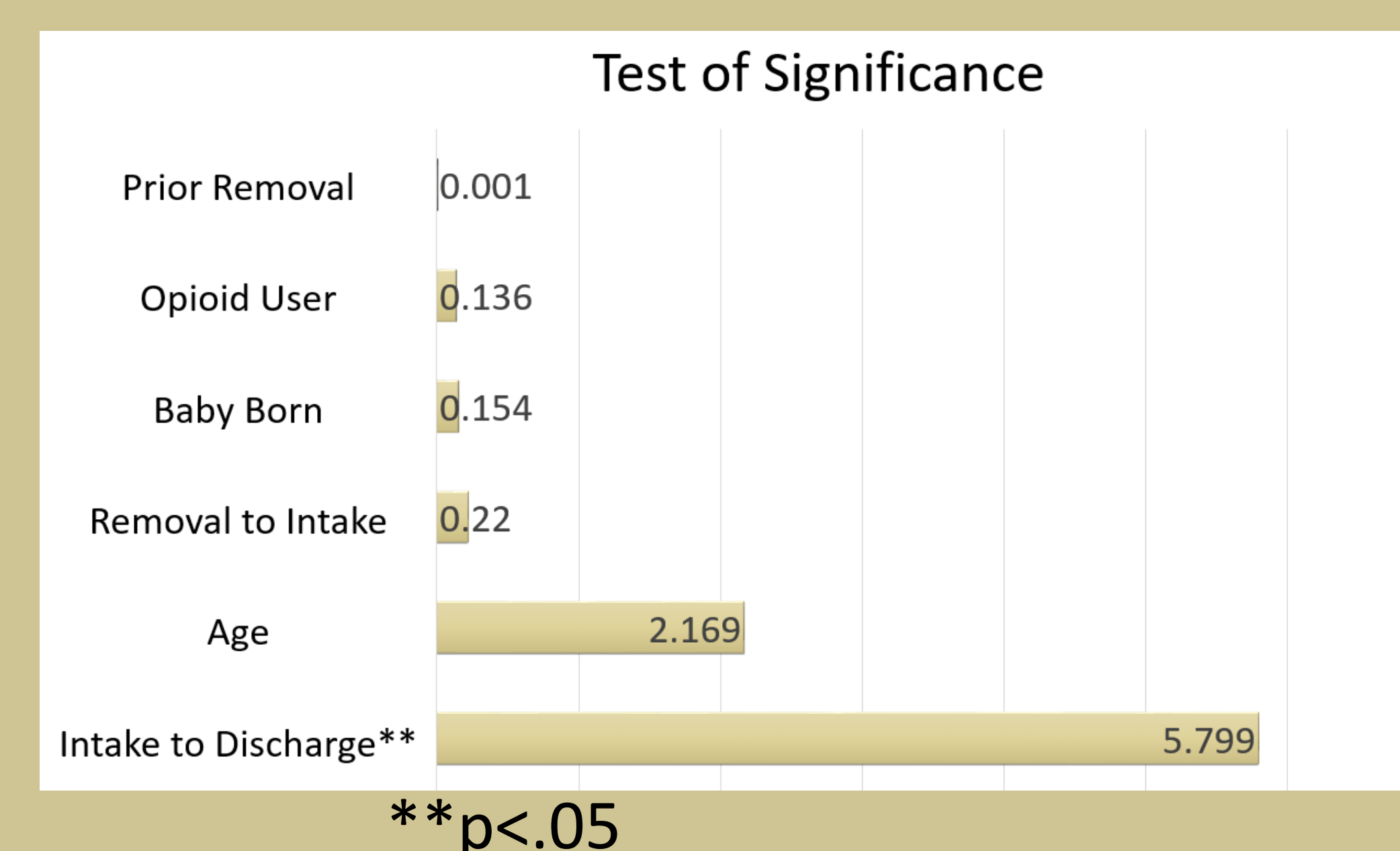
Reviiewing outcome frequencies for FDTC cases, 47.3% of cases resulted in reunifications, 34% resulting in termination of parental rights (TPR), approximately 11% resulting in permanent guardianship (adoption), and 10.5% of cases were remanded to the dependency court division.

These findings indicate that the most common outcomes are **reunification** and the **termination of parental rights (TPR)**.

## Predictors

A binomial logistic regression was conducted to determine if opioid use, gender, age, the amount of time between child removal to FDTC intake, and the amount of time from FDTC intake to discharge were significant predictors of whether a case resulted in reunification or the termination of parental rights.

Results of the analysis indicated that the **intake to discharge period** was the only significant predictor,  $b = -0.002$ ,  $SE = .001$ ,  $p = .016$ . Therefore, as the amount of time between intake to discharge increases the higher the likelihood of reunification. And the entire model accurately predicts about 58.8% of cases.



## Conclusion

Circling back to our original research questions, we first wanted to know which outcomes were most prevalent among FDTC cases, which our analysis revealed to be Reunification and the termination of parental rights.

We then conducted a binomial regression on several predictors to learn which variables were determinants of whether a case resulted in reunification or the termination of parental rights, which was revealed to only be the amount of time between intake into FDTC and the client's discharge. Moreover, the longer this time the more likely client's are to be reunified. This time period, being the treatment phase of FDTC, sheds light on the importance of comprehensive and quality treatment for successful rehabilitation

### Limitations

- Limited generalizability w/out comparison group
- Lack of variability of descriptive characteristics (majority female, opioid users)
- Local sample may not generalize to other FDTCs (may explain insignificance of other predictors)

### Implications & Future Directions

- With treatment being such a key feature, encourage FDTCs to more closely evaluate the treatment providers they outsource
- Future studies should utilize a qualitative or in-depth method to understand client experiences within the treatment phase of FDTC that influence case outcomes.
- Further research into the variety of factors that impact treatment may prove indicative of how courts can structure and tailor rehabilitation programs, hopefully, yielding more positive outcomes.

## Acknowledgements

Hillsborough County Family Dependency Treatment Court Judge Espinosa, FDTC Judge  
Alexa Argerious, Office of Attorney General  
Shannon Gillett, Drug Court Specialist  
Julia Schilling, Director of Problem-Solving Court  
Summer Research Institute @FMHI Faculty



*For more information on FDTC*