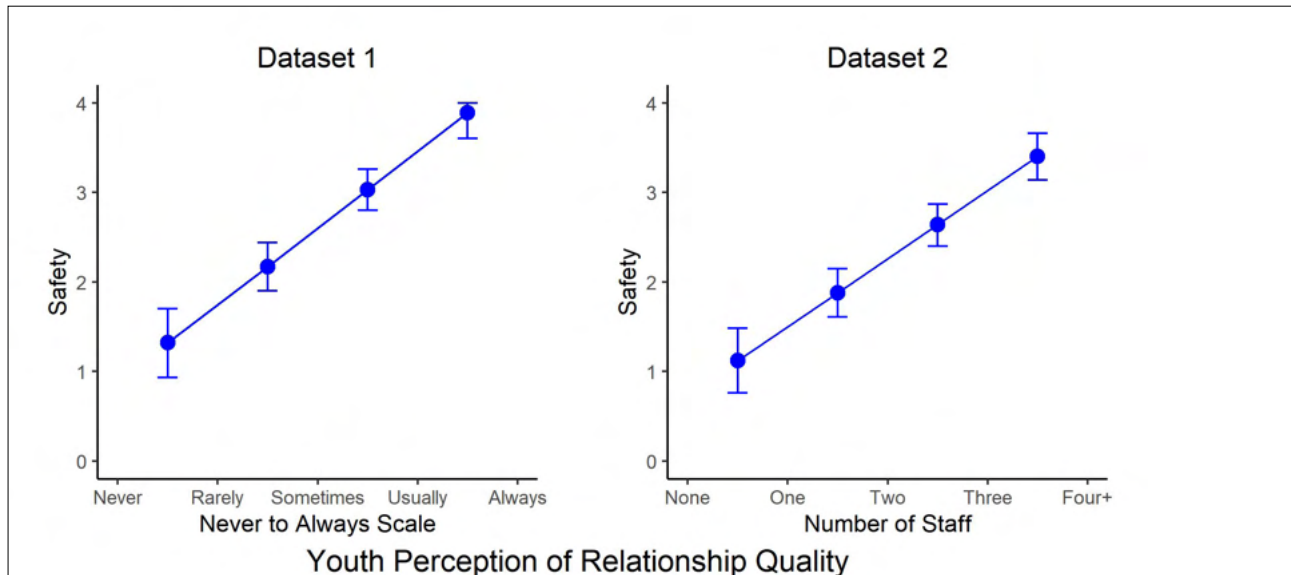




Child perceptions of safety increase as quality of relationships with staff increase



Note: Linear mixed models were used to estimate the association between safety and the quality of relationships with staff after controlling for agency and child characteristics.

This study examined perceptions of safety in 29 North American residential care agencies. In two different surveys, which we call Dataset 1 and Dataset 2, children and youth were asked how often “I feel safe here.” For Dataset 1, 352 young people from 13 agencies responded, and for Dataset 2, 363 from 16 agencies responded.

In both datasets, the higher the child’s perception of the quality of the relationship with staff, the more likely the child was to report feeling safe even when controlling for available child and agency characteristics. That is, perceived safety increased 0.86 (standard error = .09, p-value = .000) and 0.76 (standard error = .07, p = .000) for each one-unit increase in the Youth Perception of Relationship Quality measure (YPRQ) in Datasets 1 and 2, respectively. The YPRQ measure is designed to capture the child’s experience of the types of interactions that are key components of high-quality, trauma-informed, therapeutic relationships (e.g., Sensitivity to the child’s experience and needs, Availability/ Responsiveness, etc.). The important perspective for staff is their attunement to the child’s needs and experience of the relationship and their ability to adapt and address those needs, thus ensuring that the child’s experience of the relationship is positive and supportive and facilitates feeling safe.

Sellers, D. E., Smith, E. G., Izzo, C. V., McCabe, L. A., & Nunno, M. A. (2020). Child feelings of safety in residential care: The supporting role of adult-child relationships. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth*, 37(2), 136–155. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0886571X.2020.1712576>