

Practice Change and Family Outcomes Associated with Using Comprehensive Family Assessment in Child Welfare Practice

Traci LaLiberte, Ph.D., Principal Investigator; Elizabeth Snyder, MSW, Co-Principal Investigator; Kristine N. Piescher, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator

Center for Advanced Studies
in Child Welfare

School of Social Work
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Project

Background

Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) are used by the Children's Bureau to assess the performance of state child welfare agencies' efforts at achieving positive child and family outcomes. A 2001 CFSR indicated that child welfare agencies needed to improve family assessment and service provision. This led to the development of the Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA) Guidelines and the funding of five state sites through a Children's Bureau Demonstration Grant to examine and improve their comprehensive assessment process.

A Partnership between the Ramsey County Community Human Services Department and the University of Minnesota

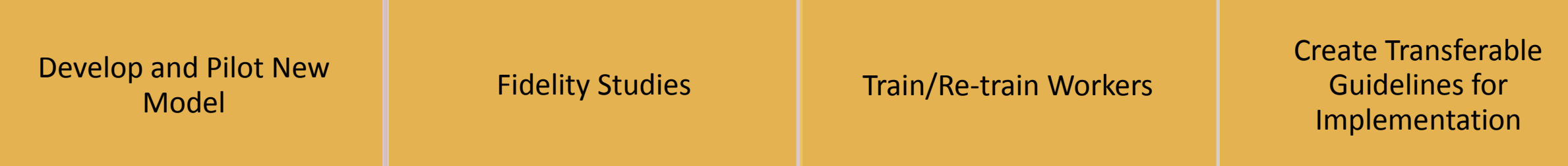
Ramsey County was chosen as one of five state sites and partnered with the University of Minnesota on a five year project to develop, evaluate, and disseminate a new model of comprehensive family assessment in child protection. The model was developed in collaboration with community members, cultural consultants, cooperating agencies, and a program consultant. External evaluators at the University of Minnesota conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the practice model and implementation process.

Project Details

Seven Part Baseline Study: Evaluate Current Assessment Approach



Development of a New Comprehensive Assessment Model by Ramsey County: Incorporation of Findings from Baseline Study



Implementation of New Practice Model



Four Part Posttest Study: Evaluate New Comprehensive Assessment Approach



Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs)

Federal Evaluation of Child Welfare Practice and Outcomes

Child and Family Service Reviews (CFSRs) assess several areas of child welfare practice. The full evaluation focused on specific areas including safety and risk assessments (Items 3-4), maintaining children's connections to the community, extended family, friends, etc (Item 14), placements with relatives (Item 15), comprehensive assessments (Item 17), family involvement in case planning (Item 18), patterns of worker visits (Item 19), connection of services related to a child's physical and mental health and educational needs (Items 21-23). Children's Bureau evaluators note that family assessments impact outcomes on these measures.

Evaluation Methods

Utilization-Focused Evaluation (Patton, 2002) including formative (implementation and process) and summative components.

Case Record Reviews (CRRs)

- CRR Questions were based on CFSR Items with a focus on items 3, 4, 14, 15, 17-23 at baseline and posttest

Family Interviews

- Qualitative, structured interviews including the Poertner Client Satisfaction Scale and the Youth CFSR Tool Kit (Ansell-Casey Questionnaire) at baseline

Focus Groups

- Worker and supervisor input on baseline practice and again on the new Comprehensive Family Assessment practice model

Supervisor Observations & Interviews

- Observations of and interviews with supervisors to assess "fit" of new practice model & understand supervisory roles and responsibilities at baseline and posttest

Time Study

- 100% workload, week-long study at baseline

Fidelity Studies

- On-going assessment of worker fidelity to new practice model via case record review and interviews

Educational Progress and School Study

- Use Minn-Link data (a database linking child welfare files with school data) to assess children's educational outcomes at baseline and posttest

Comprehensive Family Assessment (CFA)

An Assessment Model

The project provided evidence-based knowledge about the emerging role of comprehensive assessment in child welfare. CFA was studied to determine its association with family engagement and inclusion of fathers, worker-family visits, and case planning and service delivery – all of which are known to lead to better outcomes for families involved in child welfare.

Case Record Reading Findings

	All Cases		Intake				Case Management				
	Pretest n=120	Posttest n=90	Traditional Investigation		Alternative Response		All Cases Posttest n=45	Traditional Investigation		Alternative Response Posttest n=15	
			Pretest n=60	Posttest n=45	Pretest n=60	Posttest n=30		Pretest n=60	Posttest n=30		
Comprehensive Assessment											
All ¹	7	14	5	47	5	17	47	42	40	60	
Any ¹	59	91*	50	87	68	100*	87	63	83*	93	
Mom ²	52	86*	40	66	66	96*	66	31	47	86	
Dad ²	34	44	31	34	39	52	34	10	25	50	
Child ²	40	78*	37	67	42	90*	67	23	53*	93	
Sibling ²	23	78*	17	66	29	55*	66	23	52*	92	
Unrecognized Need ³											
Child	41	19*	65	24	9	0	24	35	35	0	
Mom	22	24	36	24	8	7	24	13	33*	7	
Dad	22	26	32	42	8	9	42	17	61*	8	
Unaddressed Need ⁴											
Child	59	27*	62	38	56	5*	38	25	48	18	
Mom	38	32	33	27	43	18*	27	18	34	8	
Dad	28	28	29	40	27	17	40	10	59*	8	

Note. Sample sizes for each cell vary as they are based on available parents. *p < .05

1 All available (all) or at least one available (any) family member received a full comprehensive assessment during Intake or case management as indicated by main column headings. Data do not reflect partial comprehensive assessment of family members.

2 Family member (if available) received a full comprehensive assessment during intake or the first 60 days of case management as indicated by main column headings. Data do not reflect partial comprehensive assessment of family members.

3 Needs were apparent in the case record but the worker did not identify these as needs.

4 Needs were apparent in the case record but not addressed by services.

Project Staff:

Laurel Bidwell, Ph.D., Meredith S. Daniels, Todd Stump, MSW, MPP; Susan J. Wells, Ph.D.

Project Research Assistants:

Mary Harrison, MSW, MPP; Jennifer Heldt, MSW; Jae Ran Kim, MSW; Lani Merritt, MSW; Angela Neal, MSW; Margaret Neuman, MSW; Hoa Nguyen, MSW; Melissa Schmidt, MSW; Robert Wilson, MSW

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