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ABSTRACT

Checklists have been developed with which mildly or moderately mentally retarded people can assess the quality of services provided them in residences and workshops. Based on the normalization principle, the checklists include examination of residential factors (such as the building's external appearance, rules, degree of privacy, and use of community facilities by residents) as well as of workshops features (such as working conditions, relationships with staff, and preparation for community employment). Checklist items should be thoroughly explained before assessment is begun, and results should be considered in terms of implications for change. Nine references are listed and both checklists are appended. (CL)

NORMALIZATION AND THE ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENCES AND WORKSHOPS BY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CONSUMERS

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For the past decade, the normalization principle (Wolfensberger, 1972) has served as the standard for evaluating the quality of services provided to handicapped people. Normalization is the belief that handicapped people have a legitimate right to participate in the mainstream of society, and that as closely as possible the conditions of their everyday life should reflect the normal rhythm of daily existence. Services to the handicapped that fit with normalization are furnished in a manner that is as culturally normative as is practical.

Several models have been developed to evaluate services in terms of the normalization principle. Presently, these models--which vary in format from elaborate checklists (e.g., Wolfensberger & Glen, 1975) to lists of questions for consideration (e.g., Bogdan & Taylor, n.d.; Taylor & Bogdan, n.d.)--are currently utilized primarily by staff of service agencies, by members of associations serving the handicapped, and by members of physically disabled consumer and advocacy groups. Generally, applying these models to assess services to handicapped people is a complex operation.

The emergence of People First and similar self-advocacy groups suggests the need for a comparable evaluation model that can be understood and used by mentally handicapped people (Williams & Shoultz, 1982, p. 104). The need for this type of model was also demonstrated at People First meetings in the Greater Vancouver area, where many complaints about situations in residential facilities and sheltered workshops were voiced.[1]

The purpose of this report is to describe checklists that can be used

by consumers with mild to moderate mental impairment to assess the quality of services provided them in residences and in workshops. The rationale behind these checklists is that without the means for evaluating these services, mentally handicapped people must rely upon the good intentions of nondisabled people for their welfare.

Developing the Checklists

From a teaching perspective, an appropriate method for developing checklists for examining service systems would be to instruct mentally handicapped consumers in the principles of normalization and then to assist them to deduce from these principles criteria for assessing services such as residences and workshops. However, our experience indicates that beyond generating a few obvious statements of conditions that fit with normalization, this approach is not especially productive. Instead of having groups develop checklists, our involvement with mentally handicapped adults suggests that a more satisfactory method consists of discussing the concept of normalization and describing criteria for assessing services,[2] and, then, of providing checklists that can be used by residents in group homes and employees in workshops to evaluate conditions in each service facility.

Two checklists, "Looking At Your Residence" and "Looking At Your Workshop" were developed for use by People First chapters in British Columbia (Curtis, 1982, pp. 45-53). Both checklists are suitable for examining similar services provided to mentally handicapped consumers in communities throughout Canada and the United States. Some items in the checklists were suggested by staff of agencies in Vancouver serving mentally handicapped people. Other items were simplified from PASS 3: Field Manual (Wolfensberger & Glen, 1975) and from "Observing Community Residences" (Taylor & Bogdan, n.d.).

The 46-item residential checklist includes examination of the location

and external appearance of the residence, rules, choice of roommates, degree of privacy, relationships with staff, training for self-sufficiency, and the use of community facilities by residents. Included in the 31-item workshop checklist are the interior and exterior of the building, working conditions, relationships with staff, and preparation for community employment. Reading levels as determined by the Fry (1977) formula are grade 2 for the residential checklist and grade 3 for the workshop checklist. Reading levels as determined by the Spache (1974, pp. 195-207) formula are grade 2.5 for the residential checklist and grade 2.7 for the workshop checklist.

The checklists require either a Yes or No response. During the development of the checklists the use of three-point (Yes, Uncertain, No) and five-point (Strongly Agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) scales was considered and rejected. The decision to use a dichotomous scale resulted from observations of mentally handicapped persons during testing situations that revealed that including Uncertain or increasing the range of possible responses appeared to significantly increase the difficulty of test items, and their use frequently resulted in a disproportionate number of items with the Uncertain category checked.

The item responses are not assigned a numerical value and then summated for a measure of normalization. To do so would require a weighting of the items (since some items are more important indices of normalization than others) and it was not our intention to produce an instrument for this purpose. The most suitable way to interpret responses is to infer that a large number of positive responses indicates an agreement with normalization and client satisfaction. However, regardless of the number of positive responses on a checklist, it may be that even a small number of negative responses indicates problems to which attention should be given.

The validity of the checklists is dependent upon how closely they fit with the concept of normalization. Content validity was provided by professionals in the field who were familiar with the normalization principle and its implications for services to mentally handicapped consumers. They stated that items in the checklists are suitable for the purpose for which they are intended. To date, the checklists have been used by small groups (usually consisting of four or five members) only, and so responses to the items have not been analyzed for interrater reliability or internal consistency. So far, experience with the checklists show that the responses of individuals within a group will likely vary for items pertaining to relationships with staff of residential and workshop facilities.

Using the Checklists

Checklists are included in the Appendix so that they may be copied easily for use by consumer self-advocacy groups.

Before using the checklists, advisors and leaders of self-advocacy groups should help members to understand both the rationale for normalization and how commitment to normalization affects services. Each item in the checklists should then be discussed in terms of the normalization goal. For example, the items pertaining to self-sufficiency ("F. 'Becoming Self-sufficient") in the residential checklist and the items pertaining to circumstances in the workplace ("D. Working Conditions") in the workshop checklist may be explained in the following manner:

> A. Looking At Your Residence
>
> To live a normal lifestyle you should be as self-sufficient as possible. Being self-sufficient means that you can look after most of your needs. It means that you can cook some meals, do your laundry, keep yourself and your room clean, and make small

repairs to your clothing. It also means that you know how to shop and to spend money wisely. Someday you may want to leave the residence and move into your own apartment in the community. The staff in your residence should help you to learn the skills you need to look after yourself in the community.

B. Looking At Your Workshop

Short working days, long coffee breaks and lunch periods tell you that your job is not like other jobs. If you are being trained to work in the community, your job should be as much like regular jobs in the community as possible. You should work regular hours, have regular length breaks for coffee and lunch, and your fellow workers should all be adults. Also, you should be able to spend your break periods as you please.

Taking Action to Improve Conditions

If checklist responses indicate problems in a residence or a workshop, and if the group decides that action should be taken, group advisors should instruct members in the proper means for registering complaints. For example, in British Columbia workshops are operated by local associations for mentally handicapped people. If a problem is perceived by the employees of a workshop they should first discuss it with the staff who work directly with them. If staff are unable or unwilling to assist, the problem should be taken to the workshop manager or supervisor. If the problem remains unresolved at this stage, it should be placed before the association's Workshop Advisory Committee, and if necessary, before the Board of Directors.

Summary

Contemporary commitment to normalization and the recent rise of consumer

advocacy groups suggest that mentally handicapped people should have a voice in assessing the quality of services offered them. Simplified checklists based on models presently employed by staff of service agencies and other professionals were proposed as being suitable for use by mentally handicapped people for examining residences and workshops.

Footnotes

[1] As an advisor to a local People First chapter, I visit People First meetings in a number of communities in the Greater Vancouver area. Complaints about conditions in residences and workshops are frequently expressed.

[2] The literature concerning People First and similar consumer advocacy groups is growing and a number of manuals for organizing these groups and for teaching them rights are now available. However, a search of the literature in this area revealed only a single program (Curtis & Curtis, 1985) that was designed specifically for teaching mentally handicapped people about normalization about how commitment to its principles affects residential and workshop facilties.

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APPENDIX

A. LOOKING AT YOUR RESIDENCE

B. LOOKING AT YOUR WORKSHOP

A. LOOKING AT YOUR RESIDENCE

	Yes	No
A. The House		
1. Is it located in a town or a city?	___	___
2. Is it located in a neighborhood?	___	___
3. Does it look like other houses on the block?	___	___
4. Is it about the same size as the houses around it?	___	___
5. There is no sign or name on the house that tells people that it is different from other houses.	___	___
6. Are the rooms in the house painted in a manner suitable for adults?	___	___
7. Are pictures and decorations in the house suitable for adults?	___	___
B. Your Room		
1. Do you have your own bedroom?	___	___
2. Do you have furniture in the room (for example, a dresser, a desk), that only you use?	___	___
3. Do people ask to borrow things before they take them from your room?	___	___
4. If you have a roommate, is the person about the same age as you?	___	___
5. Did you have a choice of roommates?	___	___
6. Did you get the roommate you wanted?	___	___
7. Can you decorate your room if you want to?	___	___
C. Rules		
1. Did you have a part in making up the rules for the residence?	___	___

	Yes	No
C. Rules (cont'd)		
2. Do you know what each rule means?	___	___
3. Do you know why each rule is important?	___	___
4. Are you allowed to come and go as you wish?	___	___
5. Can you use the telephone when you want to or need to?	___	___
6. Can you have visits from friends and family?	___	___
7. There are no special times when visitors must come.	___	___
D. Staff		
1. Do staff treat you as an adult?	___	___
2. Staff never speak to others in front of you as though you were not there.	___	___
3. Staff never raise their voices when they talk to you.	___	___
4. Staff do not interfere when you are speaking with someone.	___	___
5. Do staff call you by the name you like (for example, if you want to be called John, they do not call you Johnny)?	___	___
6. Do you eat the same meals as the staff?	___	___
7. Do staff members eat with residents?	___	___
E. Friends		
1. Do you have fniends your own age?	___	___
2. Are you allowed to date?	___	___
3. Can friends and dates visit you in the living room?	___	___
4. Can you get advice from staff on male-female relationships?	___	___

	Yes	No
F. Becoming Self-suffioient		
1. Are you learning to cook?	___	___
2. Are you learning to do laundry?	___	___
3. Are you required to keep your room clean?	___	___
4. Are you learning to make small repairs to clothes?	___	___
5. Can you get advice on hairgrooming, selecting proper clothing, behaving in the community?	___	___
6. Can you get advice on how to spend money wisely?	___	___
G. The Community		
1. Is the house close to public transportation?	___	___
2. Can you use public transportation?	___	___
3. Can you go shopping when you want to?	___	___
4. Can you go to church in the community?	___	___
5. Can you attend night school if you want to?	___	___
6. Do you ever visit neighbors?	___	___
7. Do neighbors ever stop by at the house to visit?	___	___
8. Do you have friends who live in the community?	___	___

B. LOOKING AT YOUR WORKSHOP

	Yes	No
A. The Building		
The Outside of the Building		
1. Is the building located on a street with other buildings?	___	___
2. Does the building look like the other buildings on the street?	___	___
3. Does the building look like a workshop, and not like a school, a gym, or a church?	___	___
4. The name of the workshop does not tell people that handicapped workers are employed there.	___	___
5. There is nothing about the building that tells people that handicapped people work there.	___	___
6. Is the building kept painted and in a good state of repair?	___	___
7. Are the grounds around the building tidy, if there is grass is it kept cut?	___	___
The Inside of the Building		
1. Is the inside of the building painted like other shops or factories where adults work (and not in bright colors that are for children)?	___	___
2. Have you got a lunch area or rest area away from the work area?	___	___
3. Do the washrooms have closed-in toilets?	___	___
4. Are there separate washrooms for men and women?	___	___
5. Is the workshop cool in summer and warm in winter?	___	___

	Yes	No
B. Staff		
1. Are staff members friendly?	___	___
2. Do staff members treat you as an adult (for example, you don't get scolded when you do something wrong)?	___	___
3. Do staff members call you by the name you like (for example, you like to be called Jennifer and not Jenny)?	___	___
4. Do staff members and workers eat together?	___	___
5. Can workers use any part of the building that staff members use?	___	___
6. Is there a workers' committee to give staff members advice?	___	___
7. Are there any workers on the association's Workshop Advisory Committee?	___	___
C. Training		
1. Are you given jobs in the workshop that help you to learn new skills?	___	___
2. Can you get job counseling if you want it?	___	___
3. Are you told what jobs you can do well?	___	___
4. Are you told what skills you still have to learn?	___	___
5. Do you think that your work in the workshop is preparing you for a job in the community?	___	___
6. Are some people in the workshop finding jobs in the community?	___	___
D. Working Conditions		
1. Do you work a full day (7 to 7½ hours)?	___	___

	Yes	No
D. Working Conditions (cont'd)		
2. Are coffee breaks no longer than 15 minutes?	___	___
3. Is the lunch period no greater than 1 hour?	___	___
4. Are there only adults working in the workshop?	___	___
5. Can you spend your lunch period as you want to (for example, go to a store, go for a walk)?	___	___
6. Can you spend your lunch time with a boyfriend or a girlfriend if you want to?	___	___