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ABSTRACT

This conference paper discusses the results of a study that investigated how the clients of the Chicago-based Satellite Family Outreach program are served by the social workers and family workers of Satellite. The Satellite Program is offered by Kaleidoscope, Inc., a child welfare agency that provides unconditional, individualized and, when necessary, wraparound services to more than 600 children and families. The Satellite Program is designed to help maintain referred children, parents, and siblings as an intact family unit. Specifically, this study investigated the type of activities performed by the four social workers and 13 family workers of the Satellite Program, the frequency of the occurrence of these activities, with whom the staff members are engaged in each activity, where each activity occurred, and the duration of each activity. Results indicated the most frequently occurring professional activities were writing reports, individual counseling, collateral contacts, and transportation. The least frequently occurring professional activities per day were employment/vocational activities, relationship counseling, housing, and training. (CR)

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The Daily Activities of Staff Employed at a Family Support Program Located in an Urban Setting

Authors

Introduction Method Results Discussion

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Introduction

Kaleidoscope, Inc., in Chicago, Illinois, is a child welfare agency that provides unconditional, individualized, and, when necessary, wraparound services to over 600 children and families. The purpose of Kaleidoscope is to support or recreate the family by helping to develop or redevelop the love, care, and discipline of its members. The Satellite Family Outreach Program is one of the programs offered by Kaleidoscope. The primary goal of the Satellite Program is to help maintain referred children, parents, and siblings as an intact family unit. The families served by Satellite experience numerous difficulties and needs. Most are single head-of-household families functioning on incomes below the poverty level. Many have open cases with Illinois' child protection agency.

Although there is much interest in the methods child welfare agencies such as Kaleidoscope use in aiding their clients, there is very little research concerning the specific activities performed by the staff members of such agencies. The present study examines (a) the types of activities performed by the Satellite staff, (b) the frequency of the occurrence of these activities, (c) with whom the staff member were engaged in each activity, (d) where each activity occurred, and (e) the duration of each activity. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the clients of the Satellite Family Outreach Program are served by the social workers and family workers of Satellite.

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Method

Setting

This study was conducted at Kaleidoscope, Inc., a non-profit child welfare agency in Chicago, Illinois. In January 1994, Kaleidoscope received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to evaluate its Satellite Family Outreach Program. This study is one component of the overall evaluation. The Satellite program serves approximately 48 families at any one time and employs a staff of four administrators, three supervisors, four social workers, and 16 family workers.

Participants

The Professional Activities Checklist (PAC) was completed at two time intervals: Time 1 (May/June 1995) and Time 2 (September/October 1995). At Time 1, 17 staff completed the checklist. Twenty-four percent (N = 4) of the respondents were social workers and 76% (N = 13) were family workers. Time 1 participants ranged from 23 to 54 years of age. The mean age was 32.4 years. A total of 71% (N = 12) of the Time 1 participants were female, and 29% (N = 5) were male. The racial composition was 53% African American (N = 9), 41% Caucasian (N = 7), and 6% Asian American (N = 1). At Time 2, 17 staff participated, four were social workers (24%) and 13 were family workers (76%). The average age was 32.9 years, ranging from 23 to 54 years. Seventy-one percent (N = 12) of the respondents were female; 29% (N = 5) were male. Forty-seven percent (N = 8) were African American, 41% (N = 7) were Caucasian, and 12% (N = 2) were Asian American. Thirteen staff members participated at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Instrument

The PAC was developed in three steps. First, evaluation team members met with a group of five Satellite staff members. The staff members were asked what activities they perform, with whom they perform them, and where they perform them. Based on the staff responses, the evaluators constructed a first draft of the PAC. Next, the evaluators met again with the group. Staff members provided feedback on the first draft and evaluators incorporated the appropriate changes into the PAC. Then, several staff members completed the PAC daily for three consecutive days in a pilot study. Based on this feedback, evaluators and staff noted any remaining inconsistencies, and the final version of the Professional Activities Checklist was then constructed.

The instrument consists of 19 professional activities in which Satellite's family workers and social workers engage (e.g., individual counseling, advocacy). For each day, the worker indicates how many times each activity is performed (i.e., the frequency). For each occurrence the worker indicates with whom the activity is performed (e.g., referred

indicates with whom the activity is performed (e.g., referred client, other family members), where the activity is performed (e.g., client's home, community), and how long the activity lasts. The checklist takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Procedure

As stated, the study was conducted at two time intervals (Time 1 and Time 2). Each time interval spanned a five week period. Satellite staff are organized into teams comprised of one social worker and four family workers. One staff member from each team completed the PAC daily for one of the five weeks in the time interval. Staff members were given the PAC forms by an evaluation team member five days prior to their assigned week. The evaluation team member gave participants a reminder call on the first day that they were to complete the checklist. At the end of their assigned week, the participants returned the checklists to the evaluation team. If a participant was sick or not working on one of their assigned days, they completed the PAC for the same day the following week.

Results

To identify the professional activities of the Satellite staff, the frequencies per day per staff member and the time spent per day per staff member were examined. Findings are presented for both the frequencies and time spent for both time intervals (Time 1 and Time 2) and the differences between Time 1 and Time 2 in minutes spent per day on each activity.

At Time 1, the most frequently occurring professional activities were writing reports (1.51 per day), individual counseling (1.05 per day), and collateral contacts (1.00 per day). The least frequent activities were crisis intervention (0.02 per day), training (0.04 per day), relationship counseling (0.08 per day), and employment/vocational (0.08 per day). Staff spent the most time writing reports (111.97 minutes per day), counseling individuals (52.58 minutes per day), in meetings (49.12 minutes per day), making collateral contacts (44.42 minutes per day), and in transportation (39.01 minutes per day). Staff spent the least amount of time in crisis intervention (1.41 minutes per day), food depository (2.12 minutes per day), and housing (2.29 minutes per day).

At Time 2, the most frequently occurring professional activities per day were written reports (1.38 per day), collateral contacts (1.08 per day), counseling individuals (0.92 per day) and transportation (0.87 per day). The least frequently occurring professional activities per day were employment/vocational (0.00 per day), relationship counseling (0.04 per day), housing (0.04 per day), and training (0.05 per day). Staff spent the most time in writing reports (111.60 minutes per day), meetings (51.25 minutes

per day), transportation (37.39 minutes per day), counseling individuals (35.52 minutes per day), and collateral contacts (36.47 minutes per day). Staff spent the least amount of time in employment/vocational (0.00 minutes per day), relationship counseling (0.89 minutes per day), housing (0.89 minutes per day), food depository (1.61 minutes per day), and resource referral (2.86 minutes per day). A complete list of the frequencies and the time spent on each activity at both Time 1 and Time 2 is displayed in Table 1.

Across the two time periods, there were very few differences. Activities that showed a substantial increase in time spent per day (i.e., more than four minutes) were family counseling (11.67 minutes), training (10.99 minutes), family visits (10.43 minutes), and advocacy (6.08 minutes). Activities that showed a substantial decrease (i.e., more than four minutes) in time spent per day were counseling individuals (-17.06 minutes) and collateral contacts (-7.65 minutes). The other 13 activities were relatively stable across the two occasions. A complete list of the changes in time spent between Time 1 and Time 2 is shown in Table 2.

Discussion

The findings of this study are useful in a number of ways. First, Kaleidoscope can examine the findings and determine whether the activities the staff engage in accurately reflect the mission of the Satellite Family Outreach Program. For instance, one goal of the Satellite Program is to help families stay together through intensive case management. Therefore, program administrators can use the Professional Activities Checklist data to determine how much time the workers are spending with the clients and whether this amount of time adequately meets the goal of intensive case management.

Second, the information indicates what types of services are used most frequently by clients. This outcome may enable the agency to further develop services tailored to the specific needs of their clients. For instance, as individual counseling and recreational activities are among the services most used by clients, program administrators may consider providing counseling training to staff members and incorporating counseling into recreational activities.

Third, the data on the professional activities of staff members may reveal some important information when combined with other research on the same staff members. For example, combining the analysis of professional activities with research on job satisfaction (another area we are currently studying) may reveal significant relationships between the two variables. For example, those who are frequently advocating for their clients may have a higher level of job satisfaction than those who spend their time in meetings, or vice versa.

Finally, these data may assist other agencies interested in

providing wraparound-service programs. Specifically, these data outline the daily activities that are engaged in by staff who are following a wraparound model of service delivery; other agencies interested in following this model of care may be able to use these data when deciding what specific staff activities are necessary for the agency and its clients.

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