A STRAIGHTFORWARD QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILY ASSESSMENTS AT SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

In order to examine the perception regarding parenting skills, children’s social skills, and community involvement of a sample of families receiving services at a non-profit organization in Puerto Rico during 2012, a family assessment questionnaire was developed and administered to a non-probability sample of voluntary subjects. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of 27 closed-ended questions with multiple choice and Likert scales. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data entry and analysis. The self-administered questionnaires were completed by 97 subjects. Almost 50% of the parents considered their parenting skills as good or excellent. Forty percent of the parents considered their children’s social skills as good or excellent. More than 40% of the parents considered as good or excellent their community involvement.

Keywords: parenting skills, social skills, community involvement

Resumen

Para examinar la percepción sobre destrezas de los padres, destrezas sociales de los niños y participación en la comunidad de una muestra de familias recibiendo servicios en una organización sin fines de lucro en Puerto Rico durante el año 2012, un cuestionario de evaluación familiar fue desarrollado y administrado a una muestra no probabilística de sujetos voluntarios. El cuestionario auto-administrado consistió de 27 preguntas cerradas con selección múltiple y escalas Likert. El Paquete Estadístico para las Ciencias Sociales (SPSS, por sus siglas en inglés) fue usado para la entrada y análisis de los datos. El cuestionario auto-administrado fue completado por 97 sujetos. Casi 50% de los padres consideraban que sus destrezas como padres eran buenas o excelentes. Cuarenta por ciento de los padres consideraban que las destrezas sociales de sus hijos eran buenas o excelentes. Más del 40% de los padres consideraban como buena o excelente su participación en la comunidad.

Palabras claves: destrezas de los padres, destrezas sociales, participación en la comunidad
INTRODUCTION

Parenting skills, children’s social skills, and community involvement are some of the factors influencing families seeking services at social services organizations. For these organizations, it is crucial to perform an assessment of the families to examine and evaluate, systematically, these factors. An assessment is a process for gathering and organizing information. Through a family assessment, social service workers and case managers will be able to identify family’s strengths and critical problems, as well as, to plan effective service interventions. An appropriate family assessment considers support systems and incorporates relationship building as a basis for strengthening families and family functioning. This is why a balanced and effective family assessment goes beyond problems or limitations; it seeks to identify and use strengths, beliefs, values, interests and goals.

Family service representatives must seek to help families build strong relationships and develop empowering skills to identify and access appropriate formal and informal support systems and assist them in building, strengthening and developing a sound state of wellness, security, resilience and self-sufficiency.

Based on the literature, parenting skills are skills that parents need in order to fulfill their duties as parents. Also, parenting skills are defined as child rearing skills used by parents or other primary caregivers. The literature showed that parenting takes a lot of skill and patience and is a constant work. Good parenting skills help children become healthy, productive and successful adults.

Social skills are defined as the set of skills people use to interact and communicate with one another. Based on the literature, children’s social skills are important for early school success and later adjustment. Also, research showed that children without adequate social skills are at risk for difficulties, including peer rejection, behavior problems, and poor academic achievement.

Community involvement is the process of engaging in dialogue and collaboration with community members. It refers to activities that increase people’s knowledge of the community and allow them to give back to the community while experiencing a sense of connection to it.
The purpose of this study was to examine the perception regarding parenting skills, children’s social skills, and community involvement of a sample of families receiving services at a non-profit organization in Puerto Rico during 2012. The objective of this study was to determine specific strengths and needs among participating families in order to design services better tailored to their needs using a simple and straightforward questionnaire.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study was based on a non-experimental, descriptive and cross-sectional design. To collect the data, a self-administered questionnaire was developed in English and Spanish. Well-constructed and validated self-administered questionnaires provide a highly valuable internal view of family life. As a data collection method, they have proven to be reliable and supportive of simple and receptive administration, providing easy scoring and a quantifiable association between the respondent’s perceptions (attitudes, beliefs, etc.) and her/his actions. Self-administered questionnaires are the most frequently used data collection method in social research and intervention practice.

The questionnaire consisted of 27 closed-ended questions, including multiple choice and Likert scales. To determine the perception of participating families regarding parenting skills, children’s social skills, and community involvement, a scale was developed for each factor. To score parents’ perception, the following scale was used: 1=need a lot of improvement, 2=need some improvement, 3=fair, 4=good, and 5=excellent.

The questionnaire included simple instructions to facilitate its administration. Participation was voluntary and the information was anonymous and confidential. The sample selected to complete the self-administered questionnaire was a non-probability sample of voluntary subjects. The data collection instrument was pre-codified to facilitate data entry and data analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.
RESULTS

The questionnaire was administered to a non-probability sample of 97 parents. Based on the results, 48% of the parents considered that their parenting skills were good or excellent, while 28% considered that their parenting skills need a lot or some improvement (Figure 1). Regarding the children’s social skills, 40% of the parents considered that their children’s social skills were good or excellent, while 36% considered that their children’s social skills need a lot or some improvement (Figure 2). Concerning the community involvement, 44% of the parents considered that their community involvement was good or excellent, while 34% considered that their community involvement need a lot or some improvement (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Perception of Parents about their Parenting Skills
Figure 2. Perception of Parents about their Children’s Social Skills

Figure 3. Perception of Parents about their Community Involvement
CONCLUSION

At the time of selecting an assessment instrument, it is critical to make sure that the instrument is reliable and valid, as well as, practical and user friendly for both the respondent and the professional who scores, interprets and uses the results. Through the self-administered questionnaire, a family assessment was performed from an inside perspective, which gave the social service workers and case managers an additional reliable tool to identify family’s strengths and critical problems, as well as, to plan effective service interventions in a timely manner.

Based on the results of the family assessment, social service workers and case managers will be able to, not only plan effective service interventions, but also to refer clients to appropriate services quickly, if necessary. Forty percent or more of the parents considered as good or excellent their parenting skills, their children’s social skills, and their community involvement. The self-administered questionnaire designed to serve as a self-assessment facilitated the family assessment performed by the social service workers and case managers, contributing to provide a more accurate, complete and timely assessment of family’s strengths, critical issues and needs. The administration of the family assessment will also contribute to monitor family’s progress over time, to assess overall program performance and effectiveness and to identify service areas in need of improvement.

REFERENCES


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