Characteristics and Consequences of Family-Centered Helpgiving Practices

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Abstract

Selected references to family-centered practices are included in this bibliography. The particular sources of information are ones that provide a foundation for understanding the characteristics and consequences of helpgiving that builds parent and family capacity and strengthens parent and family functioning.

This CASEmaker bibliography includes selected references to different conceptual and operational features of family-centered practices. The particular approach to family-centered practices constituting the focus of attention is one component of an integrated model for practicing early childhood intervention and family support (Dunst, 2000, 2004). Family-centered practices place families in central and pivotal roles in decision-making regarding needed supports and resources (information, advice, material assistance, parenting guidance, etc.) and their active involvement in procuring and obtaining resources and supports having positive benefits and consequences. The Prescription for Practice lists four articles that readers should find helpful in order to fully appreciate the characteristics and consequences of family-centered practices.

Family-Centered Practices

The references included in this CASEmaker bibliography are organized into six sections: Conceptualization, operationalization, procedures for measuring family centeredness, the degree to which family-centeredness has been achieved (adherence), factors accounting for variations in the degree of adherence, and the benefits and outcomes of family-centered practices.

Conceptualization

Family-centeredness has been conceptualized in a number of different but theoretically similar ways. Several useful sources of information about the meaning and definition of family-centered practices include:


Operationalization

Operationalization of family-centered practices has been accomplished by specifying the key elements of this approach to working with families. Descriptions of the key characteristics of family-centered practices can be found in:

**Measurement**

The extent to which programs and practitioners operate and behave, respectively, in a family-centered manner can be determined using different measurement scales and tools. Procedures for assessing and measuring family-centered helping practices are described in:


**Adherence**

Adherence refers to the extent to which actual behavior matches professed or desired behavior. The extent to which professionals practice, and families experience, family-centered practices are described in:


**Sources of Variation**

Many different factors influence whether or not a program or practitioner operates or behaves, respectively, in a family-centered manner. Some of the factors associated with different degrees of adherence to family-centered practices are described in:


**Outcomes and Benefits**

Evidence now indicates that being treated in a family-centered manner is associated with different parent and family benefits. These include, but are not limited to, parent/family empowerment; parent/family well-being; parents’ judgments regarding their parenting competence and confidence; and parents’ judgments about their children’s behavior. The following constitutes sources of information about the consequences of being treated in a family centered manner.


Conclusion

Despite arguments to the contrary (e.g., Feldman, Ploof, & Cohen, 1999; Mahoney et al., 1999), the adoption and use of a family-centered approach to working with families is now known to have value-added benefits not realized using other approaches to family intervention (see e.g., Dunst & Trivette, 1996). Moreover, evidence has increasingly been amassed regarding the particular kinds of family-centered practices that matter most in terms of their influence on parent and family functioning (Dunst & Trivette, 2001). A forthcoming practice-based research synthesis of the family-centered literature (Dunst, Snyder, & Trivette, 2004) “pulls together” nearly all available evidence with a particular focus on the direct and indirect effects of being treated in a family-centered manner. Armed with knowledge about the key characteristics of family-centered practices and how these practices are related to improved parent and family functioning, program builders and practitioners are in a much better position to understand why and how being a family-centered professional matters a great deal in the lives of children and their families.

References


Authors

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