Parenting Goals, Strengths and Needs of Parents with Disabilities
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Background, Sample and Method

Background
People with disabilities historically have experienced extreme forms of discrimination or oppression related to parenting:
- High rates and of CPS involvement and termination of parental rights.

There currently are few formal supports to assist parents with disabilities as their parenting, as the support and service system for adults with disabilities focuses on supporting people with disabilities as individuals, rather than as parents or caregivers (Lightfoot & Liberti, 2011).

Sample
Criteria: Adults with intellectual, developmental and/or physical disabilities, and at least one child 18 or younger

Disabilities: Count
1-4 diagnoses per parent, mean = 2.33

Disabilities: Diagnoses
Autism Spectrum Disorder, Mild Cognitive Impairment, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Scoliosis, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Pain, Traumatic Brain Injury, Spinal Chord Injury, Mobility/Partial Paralysis, Multiple Sclerosis. (55.6% acquired)

Additional Mental Health Diagnoses:
Major Depressive Disorder: 66.7%
Generalized Anxiety Disorder: 11.1%

Family Composition
Single parent: 55.6%
Coupled with other parent: 44.4%

Age of Parents
Range 27-55 years, mean = 40.67

Race/Ethnicity of Parents
Caucasian (55.6%), African American (44.4%), Native American (11.1%)

Number and Ages of Children
1-5 children per household
0 – 5: 23.5%
6 – 12: 47.1%
13 – 18: 29.4%

Collection and Analysis Methods
- Data collection/sources: Intake paperwork, interviews with participants and key support people, case notes from goal-setting meetings.
- Quantitative Data: Demographic and Descriptive, prevalence and means
- Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis of participant interviews, goal-setting charts, and notes from meetings.

Study Purpose and Intervention Process

Purpose
The purpose of this study is to explore the strengths, needs, goals and levels of support for parents who have disabilities.

This qualitative study is part of an intervention study, aimed at testing the effectiveness and feasibility of parent-centered planning, a supportive goal-planning intervention, modeled after person-centered practices (O’Brien, Pearpoint, & Kahn, 2010).

Goal setting intervention:
1. Dreams for the future
2. Positive and Possible goals for one year
3. Identification of gaps and needs
4. Short – term goals (3-6 months)
5. Bold/Next steps

Findings: Goals and Strengths

Goals for Parenting
- Increase social networks
- Increase child involvement in activities
- Employment activities
- Stable/improved housing
- Connection to social services
- Parenting-specific (i.e. deal with challenging behavior of one child, talk to child about why his dad was not in his life)

Parent and Family Strengths
- Use of and knowledge of the social service system
- Dedication to children
- Desire to learn and try new things

References: