

Mental Health Augmentation to Nurse Home Visiting

Louisiana's Experience

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The NFP Nurse-Family Partnership:

Helping First-Time Parents Succeed



National Center for Children, Families and Communities

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

Nurse Family Partnership: Program

- First time, low income pregnant women
- Begins prior to 28th week of pregnancy, continues until infant turns 24 mos.
- Goals:
 - To improve the outcomes of pregnancy
 - To improve infant/child health and development
 - To improve mother's own personal life-course development

How Does NFP Work?

- Voluntary
- Registered nurses--*Relationships are Key*
- Intensive visitation schedule:
 - Visits in home, generally about one hour
 - Once a week during first month, then
 - Every other week until delivery of child
 - Once a week for first six weeks after delivery
 - Every other week until the 21st month
 - Once a month until baby's second birthday

Preparation of NFP Nurses

- All are experienced RN's, many with backgrounds in MCH or public health
- Extensive training in program theories and implementation
- In LA, additional 30-hr training in IMH, including maternal mental health
- Regular individual reflective supervision and team case conferences

Mental Health Consultation to NFP

- Anticipated significant mental health needs would emerge
- Inadequate or no community mental health resources
- Most mental health providers not informed about perinatal, infant, or early childhood mental health

Mental Health Augmentation

- Collaboration of LA OPH, Tulane, and OMH resulted in training of licensed mental health clinicians
- Focus on infant mental health assessment and interventions
- Relationship-oriented, not disease-specific
- Consultants provide direct clinical services in the home, as well as consultation to the nurses

Louisiana Experience

- 26% of women screened prenatally scored above depression screen cutoff
- 62% of women with depression symptoms reported history of partner violence (Boris et al, 2006)
- NFP clients showed significantly less depression prenatally and in immediate postpartum period, than community sample
- (Nagle & Boris, unpublished)

LA Experience, cont'd:

- Nurses perceive 40-75% of their time spent on “mental health problems” (Zeanah et al, 2006; Lewis, 2007)
- Value mental health consultants
- Recognize importance of relationship, but retain self-perceptions as nurses, not therapists
- Use of “non-specific” components of therapy (Zeanah et al, 2006)

Advantages of In-home Mental Health Services

- Access/flexibility
- Ability to observe family's actual life situation
- Ability to provide client-relevant information, skills, interventions
- Ability to involve other family members meaningfully, directly and indirectly

Advantages, cont'd:

- Ability to assess directly impact of depression on parenting
- Ability to integrate approaches that address parenting function and psychiatric symptoms
- Ability to use in-vivo, teachable moments to intervene in timely, relevant manner

Challenges: Client-Related

- “Relationship-fragile”
- Lack of personal resources
- Lack of social support--grandmothers
- Crisis-orientation and/or lack of stable living situation
- Stigma regarding mental health

Challenges: Problem Focus

- Parenting function vs symptomatic treatment
- Mental health problems do not exist as solitary issues
 - Co-occur with overwhelming stressors, family conflict/DV, substance abuse, personality issues, cognitive problems, other mental health problems
- Diagnosed vs undiagnosed psychiatric disorders (treated vs untreated)

Challenges: Implementation

- Translating office-based practices into the home
- IMH consultant working “through” the nurse vs direct intervention
- Boundaries/role clarity
- Relationship with nurse can help/hinder involvement of mental health consultant

Challenges: Resources

- Training
 - Time-intensive
 - Paradigm shift
- Availability of mental health consultants
- Lack of medical support/other community mental health resources
- Data collection, monitoring, follow-up
- Funding!

More Information

- www.nursefamilypartnership.org
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