The Parent And Caregiver Active Participation Toolkit (PACT) Pilot Study: Enhancing Participation in Child Mental Health Services

Parent participation in child treatment, in particular for children with disruptive behavior problems, is an important part of effective services. Barriers to participation exist, especially for diverse families with few resources served in community settings.

**QUESTION:** Can providers and parents work together to help parents participate more in their children’s mental health treatment?

To **ANSWER** this question, researchers developed and tested the Parent And Caregiver Active Participation Toolkit (PACT) in a randomized pilot study comparing PACT to standard care alone.

**PARTICIPANTS**
- 29 Therapists providing clinic-based psychotherapy in community settings serving low-income families
- 20 Families with children ages 4-13 with disruptive behavior problems

**DATA COLLECTED**
- Therapist surveys about job attitudes and parent engagement in treatment
- Video recordings of therapy sessions, coded for both therapist use of engagement strategies and parent participation in the session
- Therapist report on family attendance over the four-month study period

**OUTCOMES**

**THERAPIST ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS**
- Higher job adaptability and perceived influence in the workplace
- Increased collaboration with parents around homework early in treatment
- Increased commenting on parent strengths and effort early in treatment

**PARENT BEHAVIORS**
- 72% Therapists adherent to PACT delivery benchmarks
- Increased collaboration with therapists around homework later in treatment
- More enthusiasm for homework later in treatment
- Asked more questions later in treatment
- Higher attendance

**IMPLICATIONS** These preliminary results have important potential implications that can be explored in future studies. First, the evidence of improved job attitudes suggest that PACT may be useful for encouraging therapists in community settings to be receptive to innovations such as evidence-based practices. Second, results suggest a temporal synergy between changes in therapist practices and parent participation in sessions and indicate that an early, brief dose of attention to parent participation may set a positive course for participation over time.

**FULL REFERENCE**

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