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Practicum 2012 - 2013: LIFT Boston Client Well Being Study

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A Multi-Method Evaluation of Client Well-Being From a Community-Based Outreach Organization

Tanya Stepasiuk, Lisa Kalimon, Ryan Kling, Ryan McLane, Ana Maria Sanchez Rodriguez, Bukola Usidame and Ryan Whalen, University of Massachusetts Boston

Project Summary

A Boston based non-profit and a team of public policy PhD students engaged in several months of collaborative problem identification and goal setting focused on the effectiveness of the organization's unique service delivery model. The non-profit uses volunteer advocates and a goal-oriented process with no eligibility criteria to assist clients in distress. We collected administrative data, administered a survey, and conducted interviews to explore client well-being.

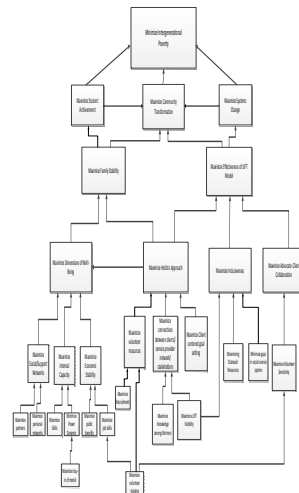
Well-Being from Survey

Clients were asked to score themselves on their well-being, using the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (Robitschek 1998). Scores are determined by summing the scores of nine survey questions, with values ranging from 9 to 54. Higher scores indicate greater levels of intentional self-change.

	Total	Roxbury	Somerville
	n=125 Mean	n=68 Mean	n=58 Mean
Personal Growth Initiative Scores	37.8	38.4	37.1

Value Focused Thinking (VFT)

We engaged in internal and external Value Focused Thinking to narrow our research questions, creating the following guide for our study and partnership.



Primary Research Question

Our primary research question was:

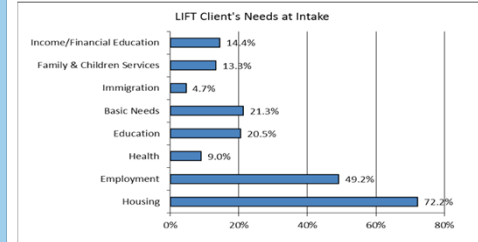
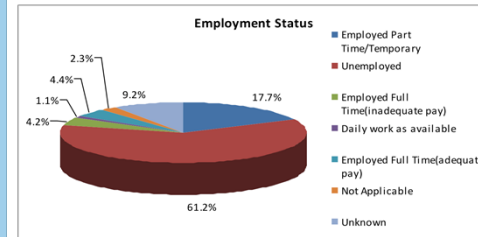
What impacts do the organization's services have on the well-being of the clients it serves?



Our research question led us to a variety of research methods including collecting administrative data, conducting a survey of current clients, interviews and focus groups. We also engaged in value focus thinking with our client, a new technique to us.

Administrative Data

Our project uses administrative data from the organization to describe clients and establish a baseline useful in assessing the service model increases and/or decreases overall client well-being over time.



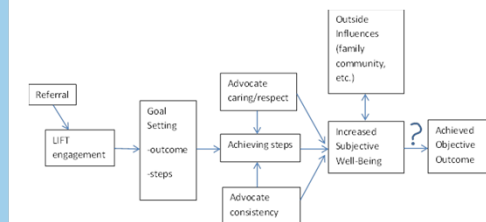
Survey Data

Survey data was used to confirm and supplement the available administrative data.

We found clients had problems meeting their mortgage expenses (35.8%), and utility bills (30.8%), while 17.5% had problems meeting their medical expenses. More than half of the clients claimed they rely on their family as sources of help, 40.8% rely on their friends, and 53.4% rely on their community and religious groups, while 17.5% claimed to have no sources of help. In terms of social networks, about one-third (30%) of the clients are active participants in religious groups, 22.5% are in neighborhood and school organizations, and 33.3% are in other non-profit organizations. Nearly 30% claimed they are not active in any type of social group.

Qualitative Data

We collected data through ten semi-structures interviews with current clients. All interviews were transcribed and coded. We worked with grounded theory. From these interviews, we developed a conceptual framework for the intervention's connection to well-being.



"It seemed so monumental, but they put it in bite-size steps for me, and it got completed so I saw a result. I needed results in my life. It was so many starts and nothing completed, and that was completed. Even though it's just a little resume, for me that was monumental at the time. It really, really was. That was a big, big high."

Important Literature

Robitschek, C. (1998). Personal growth initiative: The construct and its measure. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 30, 183-198.

Overall this research was informed by three strains of literature: (1) strength-based case management, (2) objective and subjective measures of well-being, and (3) the impact of family stability on student achievement.

Additional resources available upon request.