

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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How can we best capture client feedback within therapeutic services for children, youth and families?

What you need to know:

There is currently no consistent or regulated method for collecting client feedback in counselling sessions within [Child and Youth Mental Health \(CYMH\)](#) services. This leads to a lack of deeper understanding of experience and outcomes - possibly hindering client progress - that can be remedied through the implementation of a coherent feedback system.

What is this research about?

In order to create an effective system to collect in-session client feedback with children, youth and their families, the study examines the strengths and weaknesses of existing models through a literature scan. Additionally, it offers systemic recommendations to ensure effective implementation. There is a summary of what is needed for success when obtaining feedback from those accessing services within CYMH.

What did the researcher do?

The researcher conducted a systematic literature review to study existing models of client feedback methods, following the Arksey and O'Malley's scoping study methodological framework. In order to identify appropriate search terms, the research question was further broken down to three research areas: 'counselling', 'feedback', and 'child'.

Both Google Scholar and Google search engines were used in February 2020 to find relevant academic sources. Following that, the researcher then removed articles that were duplicates; and reviewed abstracts for the inclusion criteria of measures for use with those served by CYMH. The process identified six available measurement metrics for further analysis and recommendations.



UVic researchers reviewed literature to study client feedback methods (Photo credit: picjumbo_com from [Pixabay](#)).



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What did the researcher find?

The six metrics could be categorized based on the type of feedback collected: outcome (indicated by a reduction in symptoms), therapeutic alliance (measured by the connection between the client and clinician), or a combination of the two. The type of feedback collected in conjunction with the time to complete, along with who could provide feedback were all considered. Based off this, the researcher recommended the Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS), which is a brief measure that collects data from the children and youth accessing services.

In addition to identifying and recommending a feedback metric for use within CYMH, the researcher found in the literature that lack of a consistent, regulated method for collecting data led to several issues – mainly, by basing client progress solely on clinical judgement during which clinicians tend to overestimate their effectiveness, clients are not given the opportunity to provide input. As such, clients are more likely to disengage or drop out prematurely from vital therapeutic interventions.

Utilizing an ongoing in-session measure to collect client feedback on the services they are receiving mitigates these issues and has well documented benefits for both the clients and clinician as they:

- Monitor clients' perceived change compared to expected outcomes
- Identify lack of progress and/or symptom reoccurrence
- Enhance clinical decision making
- Provide clients with choice and control, leading to enhanced motivation

How can you use this research?

This research contributes to our knowledge in the area of CYMH as well as larger policy implications. In particular, the PCOMS offers an effective and easy to implement measure to better understand therapeutic services. As the researcher acknowledges, implementing these metrics are only one aspect of improving mental health services. PCOMS is only effective when combined

with larger organizational changes, such as providing training, working closely with clinicians, and developing an atmosphere where clients are comfortable giving feedback.

About the researchers

Chantelle Smith is a Clinical Counsellor for CYMH within the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Dr. Sibylle Artz and Ms. Thais Amorim. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD.

Keywords

Counselling; psychotherapy; therapy; feedback; systematic feedback; client feedback; approaches to collecting in session feedback; child; children; children and adolescents

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