

Title

GAS: A Client-Centered Tool to Generate Intervention Plans and Measure Case Resolution in APS

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Source

Burnes, Connolly, Hamilton, & Lachs (2018). Feasibility of goal attainment scaling to measure case resolution in elder abuse/neglect adult protective services. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 209-222. [Webinar recording located here.](#)

Summary of Research

Elder abuse response programs, such as adult protective services (APS), multidisciplinary teams, and other community-based agencies, work within a client-centered practice paradigm that respects the self-determination of older adults. The overall objective of elder abuse response programs is to reduce the risk of re-victimization and improve the older adult's safety and quality of life in accordance with their preferred resolution outcomes. Practitioners are tasked with understanding the unique circumstances of a case and working with the client to co-construct a tailored intervention plan. The varying goals and expectations across clients present a challenge in measuring the key outcome of case resolution, because it is defined differently across cases.

Goal attainment scaling (GAS) is a client-centered goal-setting strategy that can be used to help generate an intervention plan and measure case progress toward a client's preferred resolution outcome. Based on a collaborative dialogue between a practitioner and client, client-specific goals are established that work toward a client-centered definition of case resolution. Each goal is measured on a five-point GAS scale reflecting different levels of goal achievement. The scale provides a mechanism to measure progress on each goal over time. At the time of case closure, each goal score is entered into a GAS formula that generates an overall GAS summary score reflecting progress on the total set of case goals. GAS is framework to measure overall case resolution that accommodates varying needs and interventions across cases.

We recently collaborated with the state of Maine APS to study the implementation and feasibility of GAS in the APS context. To enhance feasibility, we implemented an adapted version of GAS utilizing a pre-worded menu of goal scales and developed a web-based GAS application (app) to facilitate GAS procedures. Development of the pre-worded menu of 18 goals/scales relevant to APS elder abuse intervention was based on an iterative process involving a series of focus groups with APS caseworkers, supervisors, and directors followed by a field-testing verification phase. The pilot feasibility study followed a prospective design across 6 Maine APS sites involving 10 caseworkers who recruited 27 clients. Eligible participants were community-dwelling older adults age 60+ experiencing elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and/or self-neglect with varying levels of cognitive capacity.

The most common goals across cases were accessing benefits/services, placement in an alternative setting, minimizing perpetrator's access to financial resources, and accessing health care. On average, APS practitioners spent 11.5 ms identifying/discussing each goal with clients, 3.2 ms creating each goal in the app, and 0.9 ms scoring each goal at case closure. The average amount of time spent on GAS per case was 34 minutes and involved 2 goals. The distribution of GAS case summary scores was normally distributed and centered around a mean of 54, indicating that practitioners and clients were able to set realistic goals, as opposed to goals that were too easy or challenging.

Practice & Policy Implications

GAS represents a feasible goal-setting strategy that compliments existing APS practice. Treatment planning and goal discussion are common components of existing everyday APS practice; GAS provides a framework to formally organize and measure progress on this work. In practice, GAS facilitates a collaborative, client-centered practitioner-client process to help guide APS work. APS casework often involves complex circumstances and several moving parts; GAS has the capacity to capture nuanced aspects of APS work with clients across several domains of need. For research and program evaluation, GAS can be used to measure the key outcome of case resolution.

Funding:

Elder Justice Foundation

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Adult Protective Services caseworkers, supervisors and directors who were instrumental in this goal attainment scaling work. We would also like to thank David Zimmerman and Kathryn Hester from the Elder Justice Foundation for their support and vision.

Further Reading

Burnes, D., Connolly, M.T., Hamilton, R., & Lachs, M.S. (2018). The feasibility of goal attainment scaling to measure case resolution in elder abuse and neglect adult protective services intervention. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 209-222. doi:10.1080/08946566.2018.1454864

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