Title

Using Standardized Measures for Adult Protective Services (APS) Outcomes Assessment

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Source

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Summary of Research

The Identification, Services, and Outcomes (ISO) Matrix is derived from the Elder Abuse Decision Support Systems (EADSS) Short-Forms. Workers assess the occurrence of each type of abuse using multiple indicators that most likely would substantiate that type of abuse. Having standardized, empirically validated assessment tools that are convenient to use in Adult Protective Services (APS) would be ideal given that such measures can enable setting benchmarks and observing improvement or decline after service delivery. The balance between the psychometric quality of the measures and measurement burden added to workers' practice prompted us to test the Short-Forms and then develop the Mini-Forms, just three indicators per type of abuse, using data from San Francisco and Napa APS. The quality of Short-Forms was evaluated through predictive validity and internal consistency reliability. Good predictive validity was found for all measures except for those that were very rare, such as sexual abuse, abandonment, and abduction. Mini-Forms were developed with the goal to reduce measurement burden on workers. Results were mixed, and some will require further research on their reliability and validity. In addition, we also used the data in practice to improve the quality of implementation and to improve the ISO Matrix to meet client and caseworker needs. Using San Francisco and Napa APS' s data on self-neglect cases, we examined the ISO Matrix self-neglect scores within each of the three categories of findings: unfounded, inconclusive, and confirmed. Our case reviews and worker interviews about ISO Matrix outliers revealed (1) problems using the assessment tool, (2) misunderstanding of APS procedures, and (3) struggles navigating the case management system. Workers' clinical judgment and experience continue to have a place in complementing the use of standardized assessment tools. One positive observation was that most cases reviewed and interviewed were earlier cases when the ISO Matrix initially launched. This indicated that additional training sessions were likely effective in resolving the confusion. Therefore, as experience with the standardized tool and its findings accumulated, improvements were made.

Practice & Policy Implications

Short-Forms had good psychometric properties and some Mini-Forms did as well. As demonstrated, potential advantages of the ISO Matrix include that the quantitative results provided the basis for improving ongoing evidence-based practice. On the other hand, empirically developed measures enable future research that will support valid studies to understand APS and its clients. The few anomalies from study findings led to additional training in using the ISO Matrix, understanding APS practice and case management system. A realistic scenario would be to refine zones of questionable scores to be considered that could help to reduce the number of inconclusive substantiations while supporting more accurate substantiation decisions that are ultimately made by the workers. Ongoing adoption of the ISO Matrix demonstrated the viability and sustainability of using the ISO Matrix for research and practice. Although we need large samples to conduct psychometric analyses for an assessment tool, having standardized data will not neglect smaller programs. It will enable aggregation of data, potentially over smaller programs with similar characteristics (e.g., rural areas), so they can be properly represented. The ongoing collection of data by San Francisco and Napa County APS, as well as the APS program in the State of Montana, makes them a national resource for APS programs and research that can contribute to improving APS services and client outcomes.
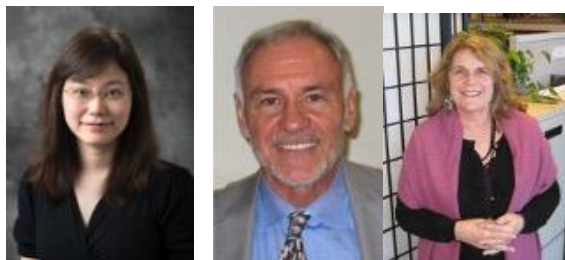
Further Reading

• Liu, P., Stratton, S. K., Hass, Z. J., & Conrad, K. J. (2020). Can standardized measures provide helpful feedback about Adult Protective Services substantiation? Pilot data from a short self-neglect assessment. Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect, 32(3), 259-274. doi: 10.1080/08946566.2020.1742837 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08946566.2020.1742837) • Conrad, K. J., Liu, P. J., Hass, Z., & Conrad, K. M. (2021). Balancing practicality and validity of elder abuse identification measures: Using data from adult protective services investigations. Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect, 47-64. doi: 10.1080/08946566.2021.1876579 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08946566.2021.1876579)

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