

Internal Functioning of Wraparound Youth



Melissa Patiño
California State University, Fullerton
Department of Social Work

Abstract

- ❖ The Wraparound Program is a collaborative and outcome-based model that is utilized to serve high-risk youth with complex needs.
- ❖ Vista Del Mar, a wraparound based agency, serves both children and families in Los Angeles County. This agency provides activities that are individualized for every client, that includes meetings, a child family team, connections to natural supports, safety planning, goal setting, needs identification, strengths chat, case management, referrals, therapy, and on-call support.
- ❖ The sample for the first evaluation question is 227 graduated youth from the program. The sample size for the second evaluation question is 164 families received flex funds.
- ❖ One objective for this study was to evaluate if the Wraparound Program has any effect on the internal functioning of the youth. A second objective was to evaluate if the amount of resources spent on a family had any effect on the internal functioning of the youth.
- ❖ The study found a significant difference for the effect of the Wraparound Program on the internal functioning of the youth. There was no significant correlation regarding flex funds and its effects on the internal functioning of the youth.

Introduction

This project is a program evaluation about determining whether the Wraparound Program and the financial resources available to the youth has an effect on their internal functioning.

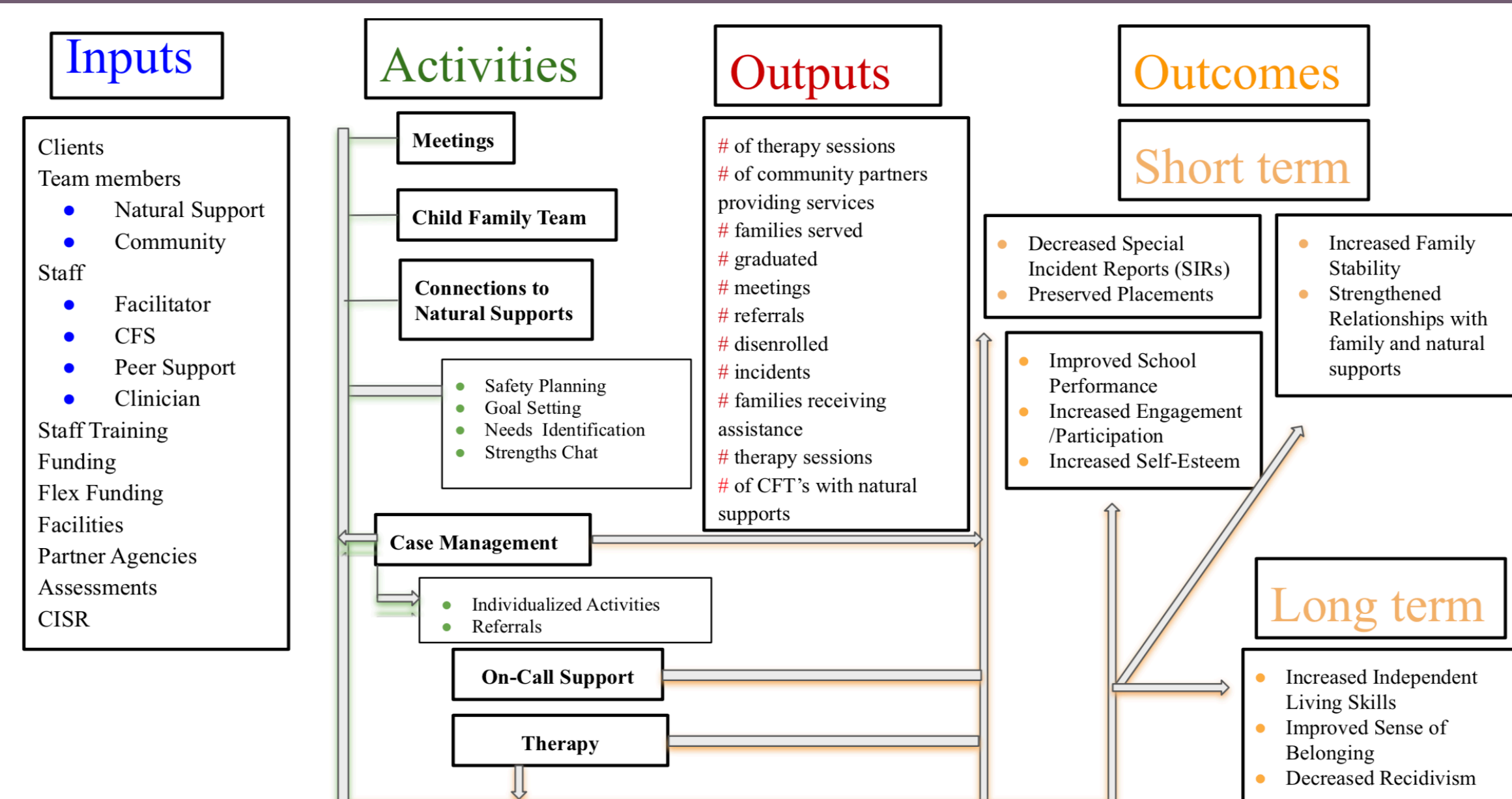
Research Questions:

- 1) What is the effect of the Wraparound Program on the internal functioning of the youth?
- 2) To what extent does internal functioning effect differ by the amount of resources spent on the family?

Hypotheses:

- 1) It is expected that the youth who participate in the Wraparound Program will have an increase in their overall internal functioning.
- 2) It is expected that the total resources spent on the family will have a positive effect on the youth's internal functioning.

Program Logic Model



Methods

Research Design:

- ❖ This evaluation design is a one-group pretest/posttest design. The diagram conventionally used to depict this research design is $O_1 \times O_2$. O_1 represents the pretest, and O_2 represents the posttest.



Sample:

- ❖ The original sample contained male and female youth who participated in Wraparound between 2015-2019. These are the youth for whom demographic data were available and who had no missing data on the CAFAS. Among this sample, 227 graduated from the program, 90 were disenrolled, and 6 were neutral or transferred. The sample for the first evaluation question is the 227 graduated male and female. The sample for the second evaluation question is 164 families. The dataset was provided by Vista Del Mar.

Variables:

- ❖ Research Question 1: IV= Program Participation DV= Internal Functioning
- ❖ Research Question 2: IV= Flexible Funding DV= Internal Functioning

Measure/Data Collection:

- ❖ The data collection method is a self-administered questionnaire that the case worker fills out about the youth. The timing of the data collection happens within the first 30 days of enrollment, and in the 30 days leading up to graduation. Output data on graduation and disenrollment were tracked internally, and records on the amount of flexible funds allocated to families were kept by staff.
- ❖ Internal functioning is operationalized by two subscales "moods/emotions" and "thinking" on the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) at intake and exit.

Literature Review

- ❖ The Wraparound Model is a framework that works with both families and youth. A major factor that is central to wraparound is the idea that it is team-based, and it incorporates multiple individuals per each youth's team in helping develop the best treatment plan for both the family and the youth. The team includes formal members, informal members, and community relationships that are all agreed upon by the family. No individual will have the exact same plan, due every client having different goals to work towards and issues to overcome. The 10 principles of the model include: family voice and choice, team-based, natural supports, collaboration, community-based, culturally competent, individualized, strengths based, unconditional, and outcome based.
- ❖ A common theme for youth who completed wraparound services had a reduction in their behavioral and emotional problems and a decrease in their mental health symptoms.
- ❖ Given Wraparound is a newer model, there is minimal evidence of effectiveness. Although, the evidence of effectiveness that exists demonstrates that much success has been made amongst youth, such as improved outcomes particularly in comparison to youth who have used conventional services. An example of conventional services could be a family receiving services from one case worker instead of an entire team.
- ❖ There is a major gap in research regarding flexible funds. No articles were found that link amount of resources spent on youth and its effects on their internal functioning.

Discussion



Implications for the Program:

- ❖ The agency could consider offering continued education, trainings, and timely evaluations to ensure their employees are up to par with the model. Although their employees may believe they know how to work with their client's due to working with the agency for a while, continued education is so important to relearn some aspects of the model and to also learn new implications of the model. It would be important for the program to evaluate their employees from time to time to assess their knowledge, and to also gain feedback from their team to enhance their work environment.
- ❖ For future program evaluations it is recommended that using the CAFAS assessment be reconsidered. The CAFAS is administered by the case worker and has a narrow view due to the worker filling it out about the youth. A recommendation would be having the youth fill out the assessment themselves if they are old enough to comprehend the material. Also, having the CAFAS available in other common languages to meet the cultural needs of the youth.
- ❖ Reexamining the variable of flexible funding. The program collected data on the amount of money the families received. A suggestion would be exploring deeper into what services and items were actually utilized and spent on for each family's treatment plan.

Study Limitations:



- ❖ A limitation of this evaluation question was the variable of flex funds. The study looked at how much money was spent on the family, but perhaps should have examined what the money was used for.



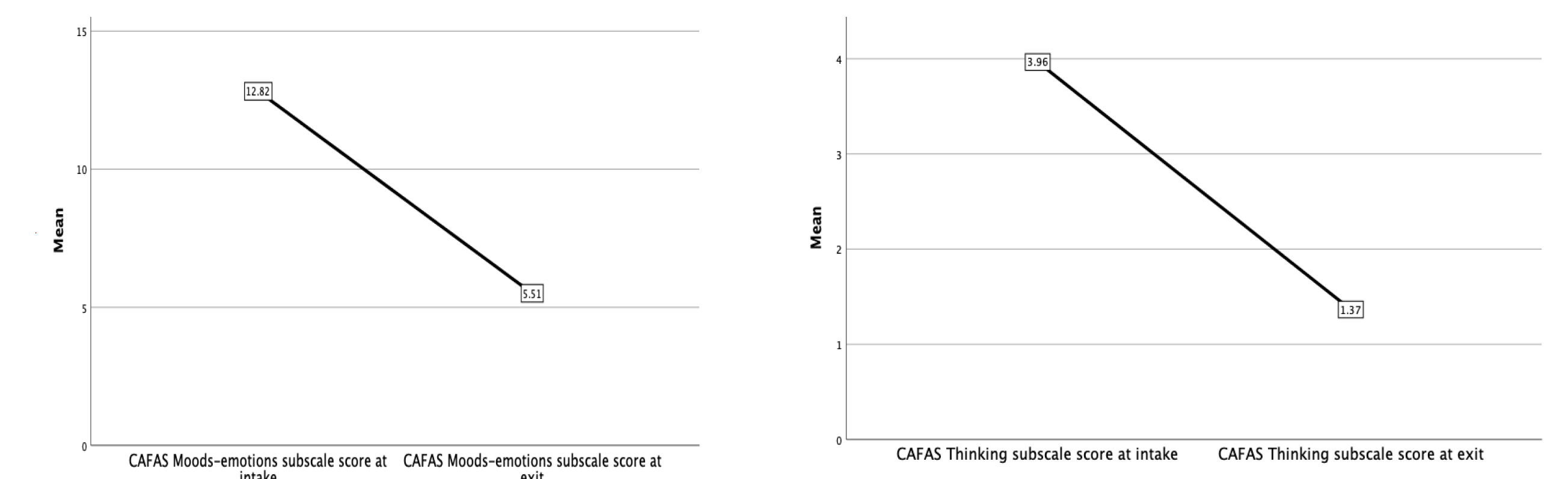
Conclusion:

- ❖ An important implication for social work practice is that social workers should incorporate the same principles of the Wraparound Program when working with youth and families to help evolve their practice. The Wraparound Program has a special way of individualizing services to best meet the needs of youth and families. Further research needs to be conducted to see if flexible funds has any effect on the emotional well-being of youth.

Results

Question 1:

- ❖ A Wilcoxon signed-ranks test examined the results of internal functioning at baseline and internal functioning at program exit. A significant difference was found, meaning that the youth's internal functioning improved from the Wraparound Program from intake to program exit.



Question 2:

- ❖ Spearman's rho correlation was performed to examine the relationship between total amount of flexible funds spent on a family and internal functioning at exit of the program. No statistically significant correlation was found for the amount of resources spent on a family and internal functioning.