



Department of Human Services
Community Mental Health Center

August 2, 2004

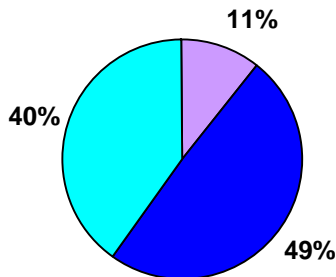
Issue 14

Youth Risk Factors

For the 14th issue of our evaluation reports we assessed the impact of risk factors on youth outcome scores. The four outcomes scores included the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale, Strengths Quotient (BERS), a measure of the youth’s strengths as rated by a caregiver; the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS), Total Score, a measure of youth’s functioning over eight domains; the Caregiver Strain Questionnaire (CGSQ), Global Strain Score, a measure of caregiver’s strain associated with youth’s emotional/behavioral problems; and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), Total Score, a measure of youth’s symptoms and behavioral challenges.

A “risk factor index” was developed to rate number of risk factors that were reported at intake for each participant. The five risk factors chosen were (1) history of domestic violence/spousal abuse, (2) history of mental illness in biological family, (3) history of biological parent(s) being convicted of a crime, (4) history of substance abuse among biological family members and (5) family at or below Poverty Threshold (according to U.S. Census 2000 poverty figures). Youth were ranked as experiencing 0-1 risk factors, 2-3 risk factors, or 4-5 risk factors. The risk factors reported may be a conservative estimate given that these factors tend to be underreported due to the sensitive nature of the questions.

Risk Factor Frequencies (N = 223)

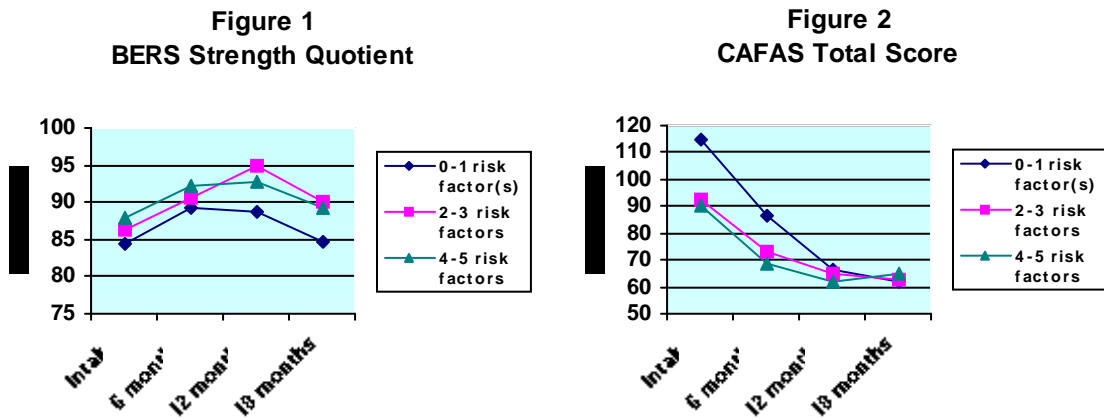


0-1 risk factor 2-3 risk factors 4-5 risk factors

Results showed that 11% of the families (24) reported 0-1 risk factors, 49% (109) reported 2-3 risk factors and 40% (90) families reported 4 or 5 risk factors. While the majority of the families reported a moderate number of risk factors, there were also a large number of families who reported a significant number of risk factors.

To examine the “risk factor index,” repeated measures analysis was done over four time periods to determine if there was any difference among the three groups and their outcome scores. Although none of the four measures revealed statistically significant differences among the three groups, a couple of interesting patterns emerged.

Figure 1 shows the differences among the risk factor groups and the BERS Strength Quotient mean scores. Youth with increased number of risk factors were rated as having greater strength throughout the 18-month time period while the youth who were reported to have 0-1 risk factor(s) were consistently rated lower in strengths.



In Figure 2, the differences among the three risk factor groups are shown regarding their CAFAS Total Score. Scores in the 50-90 range are considered “moderate” with regard to the “overall level of dysfunction” while scores in the 100-130 range are considered “marked.” Youth with 0-1 risk factors were rated initially with a mean CAFAS Total Score of 114.44—within the marked impairment range. The 2-3 risk factor group had a mean score of 92.57 and the 4-5 risk factor group had a mean score of 90.34—both falling at the high end of the moderately impaired range. Over time, each group decreased in mean score values, indicating improved functioning, and, by the 18 month period, all three groups have mean scores between 62-65, falling towards the lower end of the moderately impaired range.