

Research Highlights

Topic: Person-Centered Planning and Friendships

Blue-Banning, M., Turnbull, A.P., & Pereira, L. (2000). Group Action Planning as a support strategy for Hispanic families: Parent and professional perspectives. *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), 262-275.

BOTTOM LINE

Thirty-eight Hispanic parents of youth/young adults with developmental disabilities and 22 professionals who provided support services to Hispanic youth/young adults with developmental disabilities and their families participated in focus group interviews in four states. The interview data provided information about participants' perceptions of the responsiveness of Group Action Planning as a support strategy for Hispanic families of individuals with disabilities. Parent participants indicated that Group Action Planning may be an effective support for Hispanic families of youth/young adults with disabilities. Professional participants agreed, but they found little benefit for themselves. Participants identified advantages and disadvantages of this person-centered planning process.

TIPS

- Recognize that the collaborative focus of Group Action Planning is congruent with the Hispanic culture's collectivistic orientation which emphasizes a cooperative view of life.
- Work together with others as a team to achieve visions for children with a disability and to provide emotional support for parents by sharing the responsibility of meeting their child's needs with others whom they trust.
- Invite trusted and respected individuals to participate in action groups to reduce family members feelings of vulnerability and to facilitate the establishment of a reliable alliance.
- Create opportunities during action group meetings for enjoyable and reciprocal relationships that, in turn, can lead to collaborative partnerships.

KEY FINDINGS

- Responses from parent and professional groups were combined into two major categories: perceived advantages and perceived disadvantages.
- *Parental perceived advantages:* Parent participants indicated Group Action Planning could increase both the quality and quantity of accomplishments for their son or daughter. Their positive comments fell into two subcategories: teamwork and flexibility.
 - ◆ Teamwork: Teamwork was the benefit of Group Action Planning that parents most emphatically identified. The most appealing element of Group Action Planning appeared to be cooperation and partnership with a diverse group of people.
 - ◆ Flexibility: Parents identified versatility and flexibility as an advantage of Group Action Planning.
- *Professional perceived advantages:* While professionals perceived Group Action Planning as advantageous for family members, they felt it provided little benefit to themselves in accomplishing job-related functions associated with supporting individuals with disabilities and their families. Professionals identified positive factors in three areas: family benefit, environmental advantages, and improved communication.
 - ◆ Family benefit: Professionals perceived Group Action Planning as useful as a means of educating families.
 - ◆ Environmental advantages: The informal environment afforded by Group Action Planning reduces parental intimidation.
 - ◆ Improved communication: Action groups were perceived as improving communication, providing the opportunity for expression of multiple points of view.
- *Parental perceived disadvantages:* Disadvantageous factors identified fell into two subcategories: (a) vulnerability and (b) time commitment.
 - ◆ Vulnerability: Parents perceived that participating in a planning process such as Group Action Planning could put them in a vulnerable position (for example, sharing personal information with others).
 - ◆ Time commitment: Parents expressed concern that other individuals are busy and might not have the time to participate in an Action Group.
- *Professional perceived disadvantages:* Professionals' comments focused primarily on issues related to professional time commitments. They felt overworked by multiple tasks and legally required paperwork and thought the time commitment of action groups would be too much.

METHOD

- Focus groups were conducted with 38 Hispanic parents of youth and young adults with developmental disabilities and 22 professionals who provided support services to Hispanic youth/young adults with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Family member focus groups and professional focus groups were conducted in each research site in four states.
- Participants were identified using purposive sampling.
- A Hispanic community leader within each community served as a research site coordinator. The site coordinators had many responsibilities including assisting in the identification of participants and finding a location for and scheduling the interviews.
- A participatory action research committee provided advice and guidance to ensure that the research outcomes would be relevant for children with and without disabilities, family members, teachers, and researchers.
- The three phases of data analyses were: (a) recording and managing the raw data, (b) data reduction, and (c) interpretation.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Turnbull, A.P., Turbiville, V., & Schaffer, V. (1996). "Getting a shot at life" through Group Action Planning. *Zero to Three*, 16(6), 33-40.
- Turnbull, A.P., & Turnbull, H.R. (1996). Group Action Planning as a strategy for providing comprehensive family support. In L.K. Loegel, R.L. Koegel, & G. Dunlap (Eds.), *Community, school, family, and social inclusion through positive behavioral support: Including people with difficult behavior in the community* (pp. 99-114). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Turnbull, A.P., Blue-Banning, M.J., Anderson, E.L., Seaton, K.A., Turnbull, H.R., & Dinas, P.A. (1996). Enhancing self-determination through Group Action Planning: A holistic perspective. In D.J. Sands & M.L. Wehmeyer (Eds.), *Self-determining across the lifespan: Theory and practice* (pp. 237-257). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

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