

POSTER ABSTRACT

Family centres in Finland – a new integrated service model for families with children and adolescents

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Introduction

In Finland, the basic services have a central role in supporting families with children. However, the provision of these services has been fragmented. Family centre refers to an integrated and coordinated whole of services for children, young people and families. Family centre operates and is managed as a whole.

Practice change

Family centers have been developed based on jointly agreed national policies, and criteria on Family centres were established in 2017, so called national model. Family centres provide a structure for integrating local services for families, such as the basic level health, social, and early education services for families with children, as well as the services provided by non-governmental organizations and parishes.

Aim

The aim of family centre is to provide the support and help to each child, young people and family in a timely and coordinated manner, and to reduce inequality, to strengthen prevention and early help and to help offset increasing costs.

Targeted population and stakeholders

The targeted population is all the parents and families with children. Stakeholders include e.g. professionals at maternity and child health clinics, physician and psychologist services, physical, speech and occupational therapy, home help service, family work, parenting and family counselling, social work for families with children, services of family law and the activities and services of non-governmental organizations and parishes.

Timeline

Family centres have been developed all over the country as part of the service system in Finland since 2016 and development is ongoing.

Highlights

The regional, cross-administrative family center model has become more specific, and it is more widely applied in the whole country. The idea of integrated services has been strengthened. Child-

and family-centered and participatory working methods have become more common. Help and support indicated by families' needs have been strengthened and are provided earlier. Fragmentation and improved accessibility of services have been reduced through networking, coordination, cooperation, integration, establishment of Meeting Places and e-services.

Sustainability

Providing child and family care services according to the guidelines of a multidisciplinary family center enables the achievement of better performance-based effectiveness and welfare outcomes.

Transferability

The national guidelines including the idea of integration are transferable.

Conclusions

Family centres implemented in Finland seem to be feasible, and the preliminary results have been mainly positive for the clients, service providers and managers.

Discussions

Preliminary results of family centre model are gradually becoming evident in the financial and operational figures of municipalities and communities of municipalities. More efficient and systematic early support and care helps to reduce the need for expensive curative care such as child protection and psychiatric services.

Lessons learned

The development was facilitated by a co-design structure which brought together regional and national level actors: commitment, dialogue, learning together. Policies and commitment helped to navigate towards new destinations. Cooperation was stepped up at all levels. Shared underlying values and principles help to identify essential issues that connect the actors, also when encountering problems: together for children and adolescents. Structures are needed to safeguard continuity, otherwise progress will be haphazard and inconsistent."