

The roles of individual and organizational factors in burnout among community-based mental health service providers

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Abstract

Public-sector mental health care providers are at high risk for burnout, which negatively affects not only provider well-being but also the quality of services for clients and the functioning of organizations. This study examines the influence of demographics, work characteristic, and organizational variables on levels of burnout among child and adolescent mental health service providers operating within a public-sector mental health service system. Additionally, given the dearth of research examining differences in burnout levels among mental health subdisciplines (e.g., social work, psychology, marital and family therapy) and mental health programs (e.g., outpatient, day treatment, wraparound, case management), analyses were conducted to compare levels of burnout among multiple mental health disciplines and program types. Surveys were completed by 285 providers across 49 mental health programs in a large urban public mental health system. Variables representing dimensions of organizational climate and transformational leadership accounted for the greatest amount of variance in provider reported burnout. Analyses demonstrated significantly lower levels of depersonalization among wraparound providers compared to traditional case managers. Age was the only demographic variable related to burnout. Additionally, no significant effects were found for provider discipline or for agency tenure and caseload size. Results suggest the need to consider organizational development strategies aimed at creating more functional and less stressful climates and increasing levels of transformational leadership behaviors in order to reduce levels of burnout among clinicians working in public mental health settings for youth and families.