

Developing and Standardizing Individual Care Plan for Children in Conflict with Law in the State of Kerala

Authors : Kavitha Puthanveedu, Kasi Sekar, Preeti Jacob, Kavita Jangam

Abstract : In India, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the law related to children alleged and found to be in conflict with law, proposes to address to the rehabilitation of children in conflict with law by catering to the basic rights by providing care and protection, development, treatment, and social re-integration. A major concern in addressing the issues of children in conflict with law in Kerala the southernmost state in India identified were: 1. Lack of psychological assessment for children in conflict with law, 2. Poor psychosocial intervention for children in conflict with law on bail, 3. Lack of psychosocial intervention or proper care and protection of CCL residing at observation and special home, 4. Lack convergence with systems related with mental health care. Aim: To develop individual care plan for children in conflict with law. Methodology: NIMHANS a premier Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, collaborated with Social Justice Department, Govt. of Kerala to address this issue by developing a participatory methodology to implement psychosocial care in the existing services by integrating the activities through multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach as per the Sec. 18 of JJAct 2015. Developing individual care plan: Key informant interviews, focus group discussion with multiple stakeholders consisting of legal officers, police, child protection officials, counselors, and home staff were conducted. Case studies were conducted among children in conflict with law. A checklist on 80 psychosocial problems among children in conflict with law was prepared with eight major issues identified through the quantitative process such as family and parental characteristic, family interactions and relationships, stressful life event, social and environmental factors, child's individual characteristics, education, child labour and high-risk behavior. Standardised scales were used to identify the anxiety, caseness, suicidality and substance use among the children. This provided a background data understand the psychosocial problems experienced by children in conflict with law. In the second stage, a detailed plan of action was developed involving multiple stakeholders that include Special juvenile police unit, DCPO, JJB, and NGOs. The individual care plan was reviewed by a panel of 4 experts working in the area of children, followed by the review by multiple stakeholders in juvenile justice system such as Magistrates, JJB members, legal cum probation officers, district child protection officers, social workers and counselors. Necessary changes were made in the individual care plan in each stage which was pilot tested with 45 children for a period of one month and standardized for administering among children in conflict with law. Result: The individual care plan developed through scientific process was standardized and currently administered among children in conflict with law in the state of Kerala in the 3 districts that will be further implemented in other 14 districts. The program was successful in developing a systematic approach for the psychosocial intervention of children in conflict with law that can be a forerunner for other states in India.

Keywords : psychosocial care, individual care plan, multidisciplinary, multisectoral

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