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AN EXAMINATION OF COMMUNITY INTEGRATION AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON PARTICIPANTS

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BACKGROUND

For more than four decades, the provision of long-term services and supports by Medicaid has relied heavily on institutional settings. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration program seeks to reverse the imbalance of care between institutional and community-based settings by providing supportive services that assist people in moving out of inpatient facilities and returning to their homes and communities. The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) began enrolling participants in the program in September of 2008. Since that time, the program has transitioned over 2,000 individuals out of institutional facilities in Georgia. Since 2009 the Georgia Health Policy Center, in partnership with the DCH, has been responsible for the evaluation of the state's program. Part of the evaluation has included conducting and analyzing surveys with program participants one and two years after transitioning to the community.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study examines the relationship between community integration and quality of life measured through global life satisfaction (an individual's general feeling of happiness at a particular time) for individuals that transitioned out of institutional settings into the community. Data were analyzed from the MFP Quality of Life (QoL) survey developed by Mathematica Policy Research (Sloan & Irvin, 2007.)

Community Integration Index

A composite score was assigned to each participant using the following five yes or no questions from the community integration and inclusion section of the Money Follows the Person QoL Survey

- "Can you see your family and friends when you want to?"
- "Can you get to places you need to go, like work, shopping, or the doctor's office?"
- "Do you go out to do fun things in your community?"
- "Do you miss things or have to change plans because you don't have a way to get around easily?"
- "Is there anything you want to do outside your home that you can't do now?"

Each response was assigned a value of 1 or 0 for each positive or negative answer to the questions in the index, respectively. The community integration index calculates a score of 0 to 5, with 5 indicating greatest integration and 0 indicating least integration. The community integration index was previously used to assess the relationship between community integration and QoL by Connecticut's Money Follows the Person Program (Robison et al., 2015).

POPULATION STUDIED

The study includes 204 MFP program participants that completed a pre-transition survey, a year-one survey, and a year-two survey between January 2009 and July 2016. The sample size included a slightly higher percentage of male participants (54%) than female participants (46%). Participants ranged in age from 21 to 88 with the average age being 54 years old. Participants represented three target populations: individuals with a physical disability (43%), individuals with a developmental disability (45%), and older adults aged 65 and older (12%). Information on race and ethnicity was not collected for the purposes of this study.

STUDY DESIGN

A multivariate regression was conducted to estimate the relationship between community integration using the community integration index and global life satisfaction. Matched QoL surveys from a longitudinal panel of MFP program participants' were analyzed. MFP program participants are interviewed three times: prior to leaving an institution (baseline), 12 months after leaving an institution (year-one follow-up) and 24 months after leaving an institution (year-two follow-up).

PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

The community integration index is the only variable included in this analysis that is a significant predictor of global life satisfaction across all three time points. Age and target population were significant predictors of global life satisfaction at baseline.

Relationship between Quality of Life Indicators and Global Life Satisfaction in Georgia Money Follows the Person Participants			
	Before Transition	12 months post transition	24 months post transition
	(n=188)	(n=179)	(n=196)
Variable	P value		
Respondent Type	0.91	0.70	0.08
Community Integration Index	0.02*	0.04*	0.000***
Sex	0.75	0.88	0.97
Age	0.02*	0.01	0.64
Target Population:			
Developmental Disabilities	0.000***	0.16	0.32
Physical Disabilities	0.000***	0.06	0.14
Older Adults	0.003**	0.13	0.24

*p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Community Integration is a significant predictor in global life satisfaction for individuals transitioning out of nursing homes. It is important to ensure that opportunities exist for individuals to connect or reconnect with individuals and activities in their communities upon transition. Common barriers to community integration that can be addressed through policy and practice are transportation, lack of assistive technology, health issues, and a lack of awareness of opportunities for engagement such as volunteer activities and community events.

RESEARCH FUNDER

The Georgia Department of Community Health through grant funding received from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

For more information, please contact the Georgia Health Policy Center at 404.413.0314 or visit us online at www.gsu.edu/ghpc.



FOOTNOTES

Sloan, M., & Irvin, C. (2007). Money Follows the Person Quality of Life Survey. Prepared for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

Robinson, J. e. a. (2015). Connecticut's 'money follows the person' yields positive results for transitioning people out of institutions. Health Affairs, 34(10), 8.