Reviewer’s report

Title: Parent Empowerment and Coaching in Early Intervention: Study Protocol for a Feasibility Study

Version: 0 Date: 24 Jun 2019

Reviewer: Mike Robling

Reviewer's report:

Methods / setting

* How do the selected agencies represent other agencies in terms of other metrics (eg is there any further socio-demographic information available on clients, professional background / training of clinicians?).

* Is the Project ImPACT Fidelity of Implementation for Coaching Form a validated measure - please clarify?

* The 7-point measurement scale proposed for clinician attitudes is not a likert scale (as described) and would be better referred to a likert-like scale.

* The very small numbers of clinicians being interviewed means that the authors should be cautious in interpreting the quantitative survey data.

* Line 58, Page 14 - provide definition for EBPs

* Line 26, Page 15 - provide definition for 'Part C system'

* Line 29, Page 16 - does the reference to organizational and system barriers mean that these factors are not being addressed at all on this feasibility study? This needs to be clarified and if so, justified, especially given the reference to ecological validity and implementation in community settings substantially referred to in Conclusions.

* Phase 4 - it is not stated that the clinicians will be trained (or otherwise subject to the implementation intervention toolkit developed by the CAB). Does this occur when 'Clinicians will have completed training in Project ImPACT at least one month prior to recruitment to ensure some experience with the program'? Can this be clarified?

* Line 29, page 18. 'For all video recorded and coded data, at least 20% will be coded by a second observer balanced across experimental conditions and participants'. Can the authors clarify what they mean by experimental conditions in this feasibility study?
* Line 58, page 19. A criterion for clinician competency is referred to (80%) but it has not been clarified how this is determined prior to this point. If this relates to the assessment of fidelity on line 39, page 17 this should be made clearer when introduced but it is also not clear how this will happen in practice if the rater is undertaking a blinded assessment of both pre and post intervention sessions.

* Line 19-43: the description of the planned analysis is too general to understand what specific analysis is planned. The plan also is simply before and after comparison with very small numbers involved and there is no clarification of what would be taken as evidence of change or feasibility (overall a clearer statement of feasibility objectives and / or progression criteria would be very useful). Some narrative description would be useful, and for example tying this to the intervention logic model. If this study is a precursor to a RCT as suggested is it anticipated that further work after the feasibility study will nevertheless still be required to then justify a trial?

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