

Evaluation

In the newsletter of June 1997 we wrote an article about 'Setting objectives'.

Before starting the rehabilitation process of a child it is important to set one or more concrete objectives and to include these in an Individual Rehabilitation Plan (I.R.P.). Otherwise you can often not judge well if the assistance given has been appropriate. The voices of the parents and of the child are important in this respect.

In the last newsletter it was advised to set objectives at three different levels, namely at

- a) physical,
- b) ADL (= Activities of Daily Life), and
- c) social level.

The article you now have before you links up with that, dealing with evaluation.



Evaluation is a subject of much discussion. It is by no means always clear "HOW" this can be concretized. The objective is to know whether a child has been given proper help. Evaluation is useful, because we can learn from experience gained. It is also stimulating and motivating for yourself and leads to better help for other children you guide in their rehabilitation process.

Through this article we would like to stimulate you, to begin with, to think about this and to talk with others. No doubt some of you have already (much) experience with evaluation. We would like to invite you to write us about this, so that we can learn from your experiences. Your contribution is very important for us, for in the next newsletter, to be issued by mid-1998, we would like to present some concrete guidelines.

Evaluation per child

Being a mediator you are often evaluating without being actually aware of it.

You regularly visit the (families of the) children whose rehabilitation process you are guiding. You listen to the stories, the progress and the problems of the children. On this basis further action is taken.

Evaluation is something you don't wait with until the end of a programme: it is part of the rehabilitation plan that you make for each child. As you are aware, the Liliane Foundation wishes to stimulate you to draw up an I.R.P. for each child.

Every time again it turns out how essential it is for the parents and the child itself to be actively involved with setting priorities. Even if parents and children cannot assess at each level which objectives are realistic. Especially when it concerns the ADL & social objectives it is important to actively involve the parents and the child. Discuss various options so that you can make a reasonable choice. This also applies to the level of the physical objective to be set. If mobility is the target, then discuss the choice between surgery and orthopaedic aids at the one hand and the purchase of a tricycle or wheelchair on the other. To provide the parents and the child with a realistic picture you may use drawings and pictures or examples of other local children, so as to visualize and explain the different options.

Evaluation is necessary to find out whether the objective set has been completely or partly accomplished and if necessary to make changes in either the objective or the rehabilitation.

Overall evaluation

Next to an evaluation per child it is important for you as a mediator to regularly make an overall evaluation of your activities for several children. Evaluation has partly to do with collecting figures: how many children have been helped, how many are going to school, how many were given a particular



kind of help (surgery, appliances etc.), what were the costs, what was the parent contribution, what part of the funds has been raised locally etc. On the other hand it has to do with collecting qualitative information. It is highly informative when you write us and give us an example of the course of the rehabilitation process of a child (or youngster) helped by you. Such an example should preferably illustrate the way in which and the conditions under which you are working. You may then at the same time indicate whether and how you have adjusted the objectives during the rehabilitation process.

You are absolutely not supposed to share only success stories with us. We too are very well aware that reality is sometimes different from how we would like it to be.

Importance of evaluation

Eventually the key question is: "In what way does the help affect the daily life of a child with a disability and his/her family". As you know, the Liliane Foundation differentiates two categories based on the consequences of the various handicaps that exist, namely:

- a) The group of children and young adults who can become independent when offered rehabilitation. Here the emphasis is put on setting objectives on the child's own future.
- b) The group of children and young adults who can only become partially independent or up to a minor degree. Here the emphasis of setting

objectives is put on the child as well as on the family. The family should be able to properly cope with the child and his/her disability.

On the other hand there are other relevant questions, such as: "Is there a (positive) change in the attitude and acceptance with regard to family members & persons in the near environs with a disability"; "Are there any disabilities that people tend to hide"; "Are there any work opportunities"; "Have you managed to involve several people with your mediator work (co-workers; people who have a disability themselves")?

If you ask yourself these and other questions then this will help you to make improvements in the way you work.

This will enable children with a disability to get better opportunities for personal development. This is also motivating and stimulating for you and your co-workers. This very fact shows that it takes several people to make an evaluation: the child and the family, but also your co-workers and the community in which you work.

Evaluation is not always simple. Some mediators will think that they are too busy for that or that it is too difficult. Sometimes people are reluctant to evaluate because of their fear of the consequences. We hope to have sufficiently explained to you that setting priorities and evaluating are however of major importance.

We once more invite you to think along with us. In the next newsletter, to be issued in about six month's time, we hope to provide you with more information about the 'guidelines' that we intend to use for our evaluation and assessment as to whether 'a child has been given proper help'. For that is just what it is all about.