The Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International – Live Meeting

Tracking Progress in Equine Assisted Services: Observational, Qualitative, and Quantitative Approaches

Prof Selçuk AKPINAR

EC Member at HETI

Faculty of Sports Sciences

Equine – Horseback Riding Application and Research Center

Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University

Why Measure Progress in EAS?

- Show improvement in clients

- Enhance service quality (Improve program planning and individual intervention)

- Accountability and transparency (not necesarry but good to have evidence-based practice)

Three Main Approaches

- Observational Methods

- Qualitative Methods

- Quantitative Methods

Observational Methods

- **What It Involves:**
- Watching sessions to record specific behaviors
- Using structured tools or rating scales
- Example: Measuring rider posture, balance, or responsiveness to cues
- **Tools Used:**
- Video analysis
- Behavior coding systems
  (e.g., GAS – Goal Attainment Scaling)

Goal Attainment Scale

Name:			Date:	
Goal:				

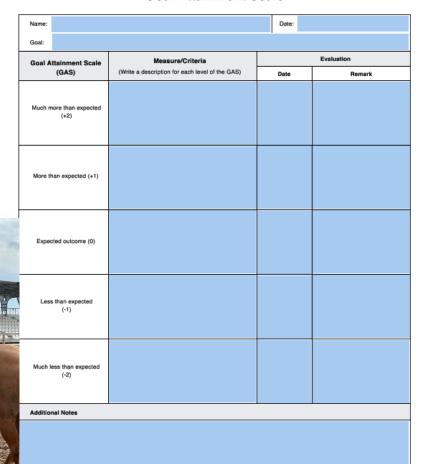| Goal Attainment Scale (GAS)	Measure/Criteria (Write a description for each level of the GAS)	Evaluation	
		Date	Remark
Much more than expected (+2)			
More than expected (+1)			
Expected outcome (0)			
Less than expected (-1)			
Much less than expected (-2)			

Additional Notes

Observational Example – Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS)

- Goal: "Sit independently for 1 minute during walking."

- 5-point scale:
  - -2: No sitting without support
  - -1: Sits 10 seconds
  - 0: Sits 1 minute
  - +1: Sits 2 minutes
  - +2: Sits 2 minutes with balance correction

Goal Attainment Scale

Name:			Date:	
Goal:				

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Qualitative Methods

- **What It Involves:**
- Interviews with clients, caregivers, therapists
- Focus groups
- Open-ended questionnaires
- **Themes Explored:**
- Emotional well-being
- Perceived behavioral change
- Social interaction

Qualitative Example – Client Story

- **Before:** "My son barely made eye contact and avoided group settings."
- **After:** "Now he looks at the horse, greets the therapist, and even participates in school."

Quantitative Methods

- **What It Involves:**
- Standardized assessments
- Pre/post-test comparisons
- Data from wearable sensors
- **Tools Used:**
- Gross Motor Function Measure (GMFM)
- Physiological measures (e.g., heart rate variability)
- Surveys with Likert scales

Quantitative Example – Heart Rate Variability

HRV may offer a noninvasive way to signal imbalances in the autonomic nervous system. Based on data gathered from many people, if the system is in more of a fight-or-flight mode, the variation between subsequent heartbeats tends to be lower. If the system is in more relaxed state, the variation between beats may be higher (Harvard Health Publishing, 2024).

- Baseline HRV: 40ms

- Post-session HRV: 55ms

- Interpretation: Increased relaxation and autonomic regulation

Integrating Approaches

- **Why Integrate?**
- Get a 360-degree view of progress
- Validate qualitative reports with quantitative evidence
- Use observational data to contextualize numbers

Challenges and Considerations

- Resource and time intensive

- Requires training to implement properly

- Ethical considerations (e.g., consent, confidentiality)

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THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

For questions and further information.

OFFICE@HETIFEDERATION.ORG

WWW.HETIFEDERATION.ORG

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HETIFEDERATION/

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/HETIFEDERATION/