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## Evaluation of the effectiveness of mental health care at the Expanded Center for Family Health and Primary Health Care in Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil

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### Abstract

The Expanded Family Health and Primary Care Center (NASF-AB) is a Brazilian public health program that complements and supports the Family Health Strategy (FHS) service, enabling community-based mental health care. Given the importance of this strategy, the present study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of mental healthcare offered by NASF-AB in the city Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, from different social actors involved – health professionals, managers, and users. This is a qualitative, exploratory, cross-sectional, and ethnographic-biased research study. For this purpose, two NASF-AB teams were accompanied in the city of Fortaleza. 42 participants were included in the study (31 professionals/managers and 11 users) who responded to a semi-structured interview guide. The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using IRaMuTeQ software and field observations. The results showed that NASF-AB had a positive impact on the users' quality of life and mental health through the group activities developed. Furthermore, the mental health care provided by the service was shown to be of great importance for the comprehensive and psychosocial care of users. However, there was evidence of a lack of interest among FHS professionals in shared work with NASF-AB, based on the matrix support methodology, and a difficulty in understanding the service's operating format. Despite the barriers that distance professional practice from the premise of psychosocial care, the research concludes that NASF-AB has made significant progress in community mental health care, showing partial effectiveness.

**Keywords:** NASF-AB, mental health, primary health care, FHS