

INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

DESCRIPTION

Interdisciplinary collaboration within school mental health includes a range of collaborative activities undertaken by two or more individuals from varying disciplines who apply the methods and approaches of their respective disciplines in order to enhance students' mental health outcomes. Within the school setting, there are several different approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration between health and mental health providers. "Collaborative care" requires a broad network of interactions among a variety of health service providers, students, their families, and the community. "Integrated care" exists when mental health services are incorporated into a primary care setting, such as in school-based health centers.

RATIONALE

Coordinating health and mental health care in schools can result in an enhanced referral base, interdisciplinary collaboration, increased screening capacity, reduced stigma, and decreased need for more intensive care. Research shows that coordinated systems of care for children and adolescents contribute to improved functioning for youth with emotional disturbances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This document will focus on collaborative care, and offer recommendations for schools and school mental health providers on how best to facilitate collaborative care in the school setting.

General

1. Promote collegiality and collaboration among the interdisciplinary staff.
 - Collegiality, mutual respect, maintaining focus on the common goal (providing comprehensive health care in schools), and keeping a sense of humor will contribute to achieving positive outcomes from interdisciplinary meetings and trainings.
2. Communicate respectfully among all health disciplines. This includes communication on both service delivery and potential conflict.
3. Co-lead a group with school mental health staff & school health staff on health issues that are related to both disciplines (e.g., obesity, substance abuse).
4. Work together to create a mental health and health flyer/handout, brochure, or newsletter. In creating materials or developing presentations, be sure to include a clear breakdown of what services are available, who offers them, and how and when to access them.
5. Work together to present a classroom or school-wide prevention activity, co-create a booth, or develop a health and mental health presentation for parents/guardians at a major school activity.
6. Provide opportunities for informal networking.
7. [Engage families](#) and the community in collaborative care when possible.
8. Be aware of potential barriers to collaborative practice including:

- Service overlap and/or duplication
 - Competition for space, supplies, and staffing resources within the school
 - Licensure, certification, and payment
 - Clinical challenges present in the school environment
 - Confidentiality and student health data
9. Establish procedures for mental health and school health staff to provide mutual support and cross referrals (i.e., health staff assess students for mental health issues and refer them to mental health staff and vice versa).

Training

1. Remind collaborative partners that building collaboration is a developmental process that takes time and considerable effort.
2. Offer training for collaborative partners on role clarity, interdependence and shared responsibility, communication with families, and how collaborative care supports the concept of the whole child within the student's family and community.
3. Set up monthly or quarterly interdisciplinary "cross training" with other mental health and health staff to improve service provision and the coordination of care.

Meetings

1. Hold regular interdisciplinary meetings with all health (if present) and mental health staff of the school.
2. Form an interagency steering committee to improve coordination efforts across multiple levels.
 - Work on streamlining paperwork by designing universal forms wherever possible.
 - Implement a management information system that ties collaborative partners together.
3. Create a team of all mental health and health staff to discuss service provision, the coordination of care, and the avoidance of duplication.
4. Request a seat for both the school mental health worker and the school nurse at student support team meetings or student problem-solving team meetings.

REFERENCES

Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative (n.d.) *What is Collaborative Mental Health Care? An Introduction to the Collaborative Mental Health Care Framework* . Retrieved from <http://www.ccmhi.ca/en/products/documents/02-Framework-EN.pdf>.

Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children and Their Families Program (1998). *Promising practices: Building collaborations in systems of care*. Retrieved from <http://cecp.air.org/promisingpractices/1998monographs/vol6.pdf>

National Assembly on School-Based Health Care (NASBHC) (2002). *Position statement: interdisciplinary practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.nasbhc.org/atf/cf/{CD9949F2-2761-42FB-BC7A-CEE165C701D9}/Advocacy%20interdisciplinary%20pos.%20statement.pdf>.

The University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health (2008). School Mental Health Quality Assessment Questionnaire (SMHQAQ) Quality Indicator Power points, Indicators 38, 40. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/QAQP>.

RESOURCES

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Coordinated School Health Program.

<http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/coalitions/expand/index.jsp>

Community Toolbox from Kansas University : Maintaining coalitions and partnerships

<http://cecp.air.org/>

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP) has resources on collaborating to facilitate the exchange of information about effective practices.

http://www.ccmhi.ca/en/products/toolkits/documents/EN_CompanionToolkitforChildrenandAdolescents.pdf

The Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Initiative offers an implementation toolkit to assist in increasing collaboration between primary care and mental health for adolescents.

<http://www.cfha.net/pages/Practice-Models/>

The Collaborative Family Healthcare Association offers information on nationally and internationally recognized models for healthcare delivery that integrates mind and body, individual and family, patients, providers and communities.

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