

COLLABORATION WITH SCHOOL

DESCRIPTION

Collaboration between the school mental health providers and school personnel is critical to the success of a school mental health program. This collaboration can take on many forms including: developing and maintaining relationships with school personnel; participating in training and meetings with faculty and school-employed mental health staff; providing consultation services and training to teachers, administrators, and other school staff; and coordinating service delivery with school-employed mental health/health staff.

RATIONALE

Effective school mental health practice requires the ability to work across disciplines to augment, rather than replace or duplicate, existing services within a school and community. School mental health providers need to coordinate with educators and other school staff to ensure that youth who need services receive them and to avoid service duplication. This collaboration can improve the health and well-being of students and families, improve students' capacity to learn, as well as improve the overall school climate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations offer guidelines to schools and school mental health providers on how to best collaborate on issues of school mental health.

1. Set a tone within the school that promotes wellness and model a collaborative spirit.
 - Be flexible and available when meeting with staff and accommodate their schedules.
 - Offer workshops, assemblies and classroom presentations to the school community on strategies to increase school connectedness.
 - Make services available to school leaders to improve school climate (i.e. the quality and character of school life) through workshops, assemblies, classroom presentations.
 - Recognize current efforts of school staff to support students and communicate that appreciation.
2. Increase visibility of school mental health services so that the school understands the purpose and value to the students and school community.
 - Develop a brochure for the school mental health program that clearly describes what school mental health is and emphasizes the importance of collaboration with school staff.
 - Introduce school mental health staff to school administration at the beginning of the year to set a tone that is welcoming of input and ongoing dialogue.
 - Send out an introductory letter to staff detailing the function of the school mental health program and how it can directly and indirectly benefit the staff.
 - Make current research and literature available to school staff on the impact of school-based mental health services and improved academic outcomes.
 - Document the variety of contributions school mental health makes to the educational environment and the students' readiness to learn.
3. Create opportunities/mechanisms for educators and students to make suggestions about needed services and how to improve the quality of service provision.
 - Take the time to listen and learn about the services that are offered by school personnel, particularly specific mandates for their work (populations served, required services).
 - Conduct focus groups to elicit feedback from school staff and students.

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- Share feedback gathered with school administration. Frame findings as opportunities for program enhancement, rather than deficits in resources, students or staff.
4. Coordinate service delivery with school-employed mental health/health staff.
 - Brainstorm with school-employed mental health/health staff about how to coordinate and avoid duplication of services.
 - Meet with other school mental health providers in the school to define the roles of distinct service providers within the school setting to promote more efficient and collaborative service delivery.
 5. Partner with existing staff teams (e.g. student support teams, mental health teams) to:
 - Help review initial school mental health [referrals](#) for services and determine who can best provide services.
 - Initiate school-wide interventions, such as developing [crisis intervention](#) plans.
 - Bring relevant curricula into the school to promote the development of psychosocial competencies
 - Conduct mental health education programs in classrooms
 6. Provide Training and Consultation to School Staff
 - Develop scope of training and consultation in collaboration with school staff by defining and agreeing upon specific roles and expectation of services.
 - Make sure trainings fit with the current belief system of the school, are [culturally competent](#), relevant, and avoid excessive time demand on teachers and school staff.
 - Provide school staff with rationale for school mental health (e.g., school mental health is connected to academic achievement and can address barriers to learning)
 - Evaluate training sessions.
 - a) Evaluations will help demonstrate to school staff that their opinion is valued.
 - b) School mental health providers can use the feedback from the evaluations to design future trainings.
 - c) School mental health providers can also use evaluations to ask for suggested future topics.

REFERENCES

The University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health (2008). School Mental Health Quality Assessment Questionnaire (SMHQAQ) Quality Indicator Power points, Indicators 16, 17, 36, 38. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/QAQP>

Freudenberg N, (2004) School-Based Health Centers and Academic Performance: Research, Challenges, and Recommendations, Journal of School Health, v74 n9 p347.

RESOURCES

<http://www.promoteprevent.org/Publications/ESAguide/ESAguide.pdf>

Engaging School Administrators Guide from the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/topicslist.html#IB>

UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools resources on collaborative teams