

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

DESCRIPTION

Mental Health activities and services have been developed with input from students, school leaders, school staff, families, and other community members.

RATIONALE

Involving stakeholders in the planning process of a program -- through program development, implementation, and evaluation -- increases the likelihood that a program will address relevant concerns and will be well received and utilized.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations offer suggestions on how schools, school mental health providers, and stakeholders can most effectively recruit and engage stakeholders in school mental health. (Information pages with strategies that focus specifically [on partnering with families](#) or [engaging youth](#) are also available).

1. Recruitment

- Define who the stakeholders in your community are.
- Identify key individuals and organizations that look at challenges and solutions differently.
- Design recruitment and retention strategies to encourage stakeholders to become partners.
- Establish a statement of commitment to stakeholder involvement that is included on all distributed outreach materials in order to recruit and promote engagement consistently.
- Strive for broad representation of stakeholder involvement, and regularly assess gaps.
- Accept that some stakeholders will have different levels of commitment.

2. Establishing roles

- Create opportunities for involving stakeholders at all stages of a school mental health program-- planning, program development, program implementation, and program evaluation.
- Identify specific roles for partners and assign responsibilities.
- Establish formal partnership agreements with [collaborating community organizations](#) when appropriate.
- Evaluate stakeholder involvement and satisfaction.

3. Managing meetings

- Where possible, offer incentives (e.g., food, vouchers for social activities, stipends, gift cards) when inviting youth and families to participate in school mental health activities.
- Respect stakeholders' time during meetings. Be clear about the purpose and desired results of meetings.
- Allow time within meetings, forums, or focus groups for meaningful discussion.
- Consider rotating meeting places and times to accommodate different schedules.
- Offer meeting options that accommodate different preferences and levels of comfort with groups, such as informal discussions, conference calls, anonymous surveys, provider forums, focus groups, and independent work groups.

- Develop a follow-up communication vehicle to maintain connectedness between all stakeholders and highlight activities.

4. Suggested activities in which stakeholders can participate:

- Trainings: Offer training to stakeholders on team decision-making and collaboration.
- Meetings: Attend School Committee meetings, School Board meetings, or PTA meetings to introduce the school mental health program and welcome feedback.
- Research: Review the census data for the neighborhood around your school at <http://www.census.gov/http://www.census.gov/>.
- Networking: Network with other community service providers and agencies to access their data and gather additional information about the school and the surrounding community.
- Focus groups and community forums: Host open community forums and facilitated discussions around school mental health.
 - a) Identify a parent or community member to assist in recruiting members for one-hour focus groups of 8-10 participants of various stakeholder groups (e.g., students, parents, teachers, community members).

Sample open-ended questions:

1. What do you see as the strengths of this school? This community?
2. What do you see as the challenges?
3. What specific information would be important for a mental health provider to know to work well in this school? In this community?
4. What health/mental health issues do you see as most pressing to young people at this school?
5. What types of services would you like to see offered here?

REFERENCES

Adelsheim, S., Ambrose, M.G., Christodulu, K.V., Lever, N.A., Prodent, C., Schlitt, J., & Weist, M.D. (2003). System, agency and stakeholder collaboration to advance mental health programs in Evans, S., Lever, N., & Weist, M (Eds.), *Handbook of school mental health* (149-164). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

The University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health (2008). *School Mental Health Quality Assessment Questionnaire (SMHQAQ) Quality Indicator Power points, Indicators 3, 4 and 13*. Retrieved from <http://www.schoolmentalhealth.org/Resources/Clin/QAIRsrc/QAQP>.

RESOURCES

<http://www.healthypeople.gov/state/toolkit/partners.htm>

The Healthy People 2010 tool kit provides resources on identifying and engaging community members in public health initiatives.

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/taxonomy/term/18>

The Stakeholder Involvement Resource page of the Forum for Youth Investment offers examples of successful stakeholder involvement.

<http://www.uap.vt.edu/cdrom/tools/tools2.htm>

The Partnerships and Participation in Planning site offers resources and links on involving stakeholders in planning, problem-solving and decision-making.