

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

DESCRIPTION

Mental health services for students should be coordinated with community-based mental health and substance abuse agencies, youth development organizations, family coalitions, and social services. This coordination will enhance resources, maximize efficiency, and broaden the scope of school mental health services.

RATIONALE

School mental health staff coordinates with community-based mental health providers in order to provide ample resources for students. Recognizing that the mental health needs facing many school-age children are complex and require multiple systems (e.g., schools, health care, mental health, social services) to collaborate and integrate efforts, schools are logical sites to initiate community collaborations. Forming a coalition of school-community partnerships, particularly those between schools and community mental health agencies, can provide a range of mental health services, maximize and leverage scarce resources, secure additional resources, and improve ratios of mental health/support staff to students.

The following recommendations offer guidelines for coordinating services for students and for developing a coalition of school-community partnerships to enhance mental health services for students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordinate with the Community to Offer Mental Health Services for Students

- 1) Develop a resource directory, either electronic or written, for the school mental health program.
 - Begin by contacting your local mental health agency, either for your city or state. A resource directory may already exist.
 - Contact agencies listed in your resource directory to add them to the directory.
 - Ask colleagues for resources they know about.
 - Update the directory at least yearly.
 - Make sure that the directory is accessible to staff, teachers, youth and families.
- 2) Maintain personal contacts with intake coordinators and key individuals in departments of human services, social services, mental health, juvenile court, community-based service providers, and substance abuse treatment centers.
- 3) Draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the school and each community agency for provision of mental health services.
- 4) Establish procedures for ensuring consistency and preventing duplication of services.
 - Once student and family consent is obtained, develop a mechanism for sharing information between all the professionals involved with a particular student.
 - Reduce multiple intakes and/or assessments by coordinating information across-systems (e.g., one case file for all systems).

- Develop coordinated multi-system case management. When youth are involved in multiple systems and assigned more than one provider, providers should:
 - a) Establish a mechanism for regular communication.
 - b) Develop a single and agreed-upon treatment plan
 - c) Define what each of their roles would be in working with the youth and family.
 - d) Work towards the same set of goals.
 - e) Have joint meetings with the youth and family.
 - f) Ensure services are provided collaboratively and consistently if other family members are receiving services.

Develop a coalition of community organizations that collaborate with the school.

1. Conduct an assessment of existing school-community collaborations.
2. If a coalition does not exist, recruit participation from community-based agencies, families, government agencies, local hospital, etc. to form or join an existing interagency steering committee, coalition, or collaborative stakeholder group. This group would be responsible for improving the coordination and collaboration between organizations, providers, and the school.
 - This group is most easily established by initially engaging groups where relationships already exist.
 - Begin small scale collaborations with organizations outside of the school by making contact with community agencies that are currently serving students.
 - This group should include people from the collaborating agencies who can quickly resolve issues of interagency cooperation and access to services.
 - The composition of the stakeholder group should be culturally diverse and include key players from partner institutions and groups.
3. Focus on the benefits for each potential partnership member and help ensure a commitment to the partnership from all stakeholders.
 - Survey existing efforts in the community that focus on the mental health needs of school-age children.
 - Clearly outline and promote the benefits of the partnership to all parties using common language.
4. Determine a leadership structure for the coalition.
 - Assign key roles and responsibilities in the beginning.
 - Develop the leadership structure according to available resources, existing leadership structures, and/or requirements of funding sources.
5. Engage the group in a small scale strategic planning process, including:
 - Developing its missions and goals
 - Identifying resources
 - Establishing mechanisms to ensure that the goals are achieved
 - Evaluating progress

REFERENCES

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

Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership (2005). *Guidelines for School-Community Partnerships*. Retrieved from <http://www.icmhp.org/icmhproducts/gdlnsclcmnty.html>

RESOURCES

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

Healthy People 2010 Toolkit: Identifying & Engaging Community Partners.

http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/pospaper_iac.aspx

Position Statement on Interagency Collaboration to Support the Mental Health Needs of Children and Families

<http://psychservices.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/52/10/1348>

Article entitled Collaboration Among the Education, Mental Health, and Public Health Systems to Promote Youth Mental Health

<http://www.211.org/about.html>

2-1-1 provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for every day needs and in times of crisis.

http://measbhc.org/uploads/sbhc_nmmanual_oct2005.pdf

Sample MOU on p.117 of *Opening a School-Based Health Center, A How-To Guide for New Mexico SBHC Coordinators*.

<http://www.icmhp.org/icmhproducts/gdlnsclcmnty.html>

Sample working agreement on p. 22 of *Guidelines for School-Community Partnerships*.