School Practitioner Listserv

29 years & counting

A Weekly Community of Practice Network for Sharing and Interchange

Mental Health in Schools
UCLA
Center
Program and Policy Analysis

June 8, 2015

Request from a colleague just starting to work with schools & *Responses* from the Center & the Field

>About Involving parents in school MH programs

Related Set of Center Resources

>Promoting connections between families and schools

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Please forward this to a few colleagues you think might be interested. The more who join, the more we are likely to receive to share.

For those who have been forwarded this and want to be part of the weekly exchange, send an email to **Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

For previous recent postings of this community of practice, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

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Note: In keeping with the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student & Learning Supports*, this community of practice network has expanded in number of participants and topics discussed.* The thematic emphasis is on (1) daily concerns confronting those working in and with schools, (2) the transformation of student and learning supports, and (3) promoting whole child development and positive school climate.

Request from a colleague just starting to work with schools:

How are schools involving parents in programs for school MH?

Center Response: With respect to mental health concerns, parents and families can play key roles across a continuum of student and learning supports that spans:
- classroom and school-wide programs to promote healthy development and prevention of problems
- support for students as soon as problems are noted
- interventions when problems are serious and long lasting, including special education.

For a brief discussion of this continuum conceived as a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system, see:

>*Agencies addressing problems of children and youth: Pursuing a continuum of interventions* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/agenciesschools.pdf

How do school try to involve parents and families throughout this continuum?
- For promoting healthy development and preventing problems, schools may stress family involvement in a variety of classroom and school-wide programs (e.g., efforts at school and at home to enhance student social-emotional development; ensuring supports to prevent psychosocial and education problems).

- For early after onset interventions, parents may be involved in discussion of problems, asked for consent, and encouraged to participate in programs that have a component for family involvement in supporting the student.

- For severe/chronic emotional, behavioral, and/or learning problems, students need special assistance and sometimes special education. Parent participation includes problem solving. And, of course, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires parents participation in special education service decisions, setting IEP goals, and ongoing discussions of progress.

In general, a variety of psychological, socioeconomic, language, racial, and ethnic factors affect a parent's motivation to actively participate in programs at a school. If a student receives mental health services at school and is not a special education student, family involvement often depends on district or provider organization's guidelines.

See the following Center resources for discussion of (1) using initial contacts to assess and address parent motivation for involvement and (2) maintaining motivated parent involvement over time:

>*Involving Parents in Counseling* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/practicenotes/involvingparents.pdf

>*Enlisting appropriate parental cooperation and involvement in children's mental health treatment* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/29 enlisting appropriate parental cooperation and involvement.pdf

Responses from the Field:

We shared the question with a few colleagues in the field; here some responses:

(1) "We basically operate with the understanding that anything we do around youth with mental or behavioral health challenges will work better if we involve parents or caregivers. So, we look for opportunities and especially so with our most challenging youth to involve parents/caregivers as partners in helping their child succeed. We also work with the understanding that, for many, they have no reason to trust us or even return our call given that their past interactions have often been only about what their child is doing wrong. And, we don't give up on them if they at first don't want to work with us.

Specifically, we work with teachers to give 'good calls' home, we partner with parents on behavior plans, check-in/check-out interventions. We are often re-framing behavior for teachers, parents, helping them to better understand it (trauma lens), see it in a more positive context, focus on improvement rather than overall performance. For 1:1 services often provided by interns, we involve them as part of our assessment but also to check in regularly about positive things we're seeing, invite them in to get their perspective periodically. Time and time again, that involvement leads to the parent sharing their own stressors, getting support and agreeing to seek more intensive services for their own selves. That's my short answer. I have many examples including involving parent/ caregivers in RJ harm circles which, for some, has been the most positive experience they have ever had with the school. I hope that's a little helpful."

(2) "You definitely make me think. . . . In our project aware grants, we are beginning to review our multi-tiered systems of supports and a few model schools that stand out. We have some system practices in place we would like to scale. The short term answer: involve parents one by one, at each treatment team meeting while building the system infrastructure to address this issue. If anyone is familiar with our World Wide Voyage, of the Hokulea http://www.hokulea.com/voyages/our-story, they will know that answering this question 'Takes a Voyage'. There often must be years of planning and systematizing the effort, before you can launch a successful parent school partnership, which often is supported through a Community School effort. Here are some of the things we know work in small doses ... we would like to scale these basics to more schools:

> Referral Process known to all staff, families, students
> School team that addresses referrals and prioritizes needs, assigns and monitors appropriate interventions.
> School Advisory that allows for teachers, families, stakeholders to come and address MH or behavior problems systemically, and problem solve school climate concerns
> Complex Area/District Teams that work on community resources that schools may have access to (goal is to increase parent and student leader voice in addressing resources and solving system problems)

>State, District, School coordination and integration of resources and systems to increase student, family and community input on MH issues.

The old adage... it takes a village still rings true and with that, the voyage can begin with those who have the stamina to work toward improved systems that support our families as partners in the process."

(3) "It seems like a simple question but can be somewhat challenging to achieve. . . . In our state, we are very fortunate to have a company, Parent Action For Healthy Kids that the Dept of Education works with closely to help us help schools actively and thoroughly engage parents. Through our recent work with the S3 grant and the 22 'persistently low achieving high schools' we are able to help several of our schools authentically and effectively engage parents. The focus isn't just re: school mental health per se but the overall school climate and conditions for learning, which we know definitely includes SMH. ... for more on this, see http://www.parentactionforhealthykids.org

Additionally, with our school based health centers, the mental health (and medical) providers work to include parent involvement with any programming they provide in the school as warranted. In many cases, parents are consenting for their child to receive these school based services and so are aware and available to communicate with the providers as they offer services to their student/child. These two answers are more general and not necessarily specific but practicals can be provided if needed. . . . "

Listserv Participants: The question seems so straightforward, but clearly the solution is rather complicated (e.g., what must be done, what there is time and resources to do, what works, etc. etc.). ***How would you answer the question?*** Send responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu .

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Featured Set of Center Resources:

Promoting connections between families and schools

For schools to significantly enhance connections with the home requires (1) broadening the focus beyond thinking only in terms of parents and (2) enhancing the range of ways in which schools connect with primary caretakers. Particular attention must be given to outreaching to those who are reluctant to engage with the school, especially if they have a child who is not doing well. Also, to avoid marginalization and minimize fragmentation, it is essential to embed home involvement interventions into an overall approach for addressing factors interfering with school learning and performance and fully integrate the work into school improvement policy and practice.

Here are some additional resources from the Center related to all this:

>"Home Involvement, engagement, and re-engagement in schooling." Chapter 6 in *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system** – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/book/book.pdf

>*Enhancing home involvement to address barriers to learning: A collaborative process* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeinv.pdf

>*Engaging and re-engaging families when a student is not doing well* – http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/familyengage.pdf

For more links to relevant resources related to this topic, see the center's online clearinghouse Quick Finds on:

>*Parents and home involvement* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm

>*Parenting skills & parenting education* –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/p2103_02.htm

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*For information about the *2015 National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports*, see http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity and promoting whole child development.

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Please share relevant resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences! **Send to** ltaylor@ucla.edu

Note: Responses come only to our Center at UCLA for possible inclusion in the next week's message.

We also post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange* on our website at
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and to *Facebook* -- access from the Center's home page
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/