Safety & Support Begin at Home: Evidence-Based Strategies for Family Engagement
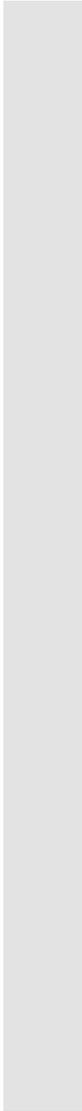
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Families are _____.

Family Systems Theory

Why engage families?

Parental Involvement Under ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 ensures that #AllKidsMatter. It includes serious protections for vulnerable students. And it creates important leverage for parents, communities, and advocates to continue their push for equity and accountability for all students.

1. Consistent, state-adopted **standards** for all students that are aligned with the demands of postsecondary education and work.

2. Statewide annual **assessments** aligned with statewide standards.

3. Richer **public reporting** on academic outcomes and opportunities to learn for all groups of students, including, for the first time, school-level per-pupil spending and access to rigorous coursework.

4. Clear requirements that statewide **accountability** systems must expect more progress for the groups of students who have been behind, base school ratings on the progress of all groups of students, and expect action when any group of students is consistently underperforming.

5. Resources to support **teachers and leaders**, and a demand that states and districts report on and address inequities in the rates at which low-income students and students of color are assigned to ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.

6. Continued targeting of federal **funding** to the highest poverty schools and districts.

7. A role for the U.S. Secretary of Education in **enforcing** the law.

The Education Trust | www.edtrust.org

What does the research say?

- Family treatments have proven effective with:
  - externalizing disorders, particularly conduct and substance abuse disorders
  - reducing the family and school behavior problems associated with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

- Family treatments can be an effective stand-alone intervention or an augmentation to other treatments.

- Several studies suggest that family treatments or treatment augmented by family treatments are effective for depression and anxiety.

- Engaging parents in the treatment process and reducing the toxicity of a negative family environment can contribute to better treatment engagement, retention, compliance, effectiveness, and maintenance of gains.
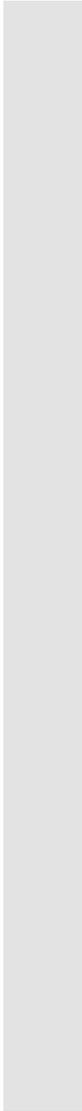
What does the research say?

Barriers to family engagement

- Family
- Practitioner
- Systemic
- Others?

What does the research say?

- Families frequently cite practical obstacles such as time demands and scheduling conflicts, high costs, lack of transportation, and child care

- They also raise issues related to:
  - the program approach (e.g. goals and activities are not in alignment with families' needs, low perceived benefit and relevance)
  - providers (e.g. perceived as judgmental or not empathic)
  - program context (e.g. few programs in low-resource neighborhoods)

- When personal stressors (e.g. low social support, family conflicts) are high, families' attention may be focused on these concerns, reducing their commitment and capacity to engage

The Reframe Game

What strategies have you found effective in engaging families?

What does the research say?

- Supplying simple reminders to adult caregivers of upcoming sessions has proved to be an effective method of increasing attendance at initial appointments - 32% increase in attendance when clients were reminded of their appointment through a telephone prompt

- Reaching out to other family members who are defined as critical to successful involvement in services

- Referral source, client, and practitioner meeting to collaborate in identifying needed resources (eg, transportation, housing) that may impact engaging families in services

- Frequently discussing adult issues (eg, attitudes toward services, financial concerns, marital relations, and work concerns)

It starts with the first contact

Strengthening parents' confidence in their ability to bring the youth to an initial meeting and enhancing their perceptions of potential impact on their child

(1) clarify the need for child mental health care for the caregiver and the provider

(2) maximize the caregiver's investment and efficacy in relation to help seeking

(3) identify attitudes about and previous experiences with mental health care that might dissuade the adult from bringing the child for services

(4) develop strategies to overcome concrete obstacles, such as lack of time, transportation, child care, and other issues

Motivational Interview Telephone Call

Snapshot of MI Telephone Call Script

Question #1 "What are some of the difficult experiences that you have had to suffer in the last year as the result of these problems?" *[Estimated time of completion = 5 min]*

Question #2 "When I get to know you better what qualities and strengths would I come to admire about you as a (person, parent, spouse, etc.)?" *[Estimated time of completion = 3-5 min].*

Question #3 "What do you think will happen to _____ (your teen, child, marriage, or you personally) if the problems you described earlier remain unfixed in the next three months, six month, or even year from now?" *[Estimated time = 3-5 min].*

Question #4 "Have you have seen a counselor for any of these problems before?" If "yes": "What have other counselors missed with you? The reason I ask is that I don't want to make the same mistakes twice." *[Estimated time of completion = 2-3 min].*

Question #5 "Do you want to fix the problem or problems you listed _____ (list them) fast, medium, or slow speed" *[Estimated time = 1 min].*

It all comes back to the relationship!

- A large literature supports the critical influence of the therapeutic alliance on family engagement and retention

- Families who experience a personal bond with the provider and a collaborative relationship for developing tasks and goals of treatment are more likely to remain engaged in intervention

- Providers who effectively engaged families typically:
  - identified the potential benefits of services
  - discussed family expectations for process and outcomes
  - worked with the family to develop a plan to address practical (e.g. scheduling, transportation) and psychological engagement challenges (e.g. other stressors, family member' resistance to treatment).

Effective Family Engagement

"It might be argued that without youth <u>and</u> family participation, effective services will never be provided to youth and families in need."

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