Core Feature 2:

Family, School and Community Collaboration and Teaming

School leaders increasingly realize that supporting school mental health requires going beyond the school environment with more than just the school staff. Education and mental health researchers alike stress that physical, social, emotional and mental health are interconnected and their determinants extend beyond the school day.

Students bring life issues into the school setting. To address these issues successfully, we must outreach to families and community groups that are focused on the larger issues in the lives of families, children and youth. Likewise, we must build the learning partnerships that will help us address the needs more completely.

In co-creating this Dialogue Guide on family, school and community collaboration and teaming, we first look at the cross-sector agreements among national experts. Then we explore those issues with decision-makers, practitioners and families at state, local and organizational levels.

Across both groups, leadership and inclusivity are priority issues. While there is broad agreement, in co-creating this Dialogue Guide the array of stakeholders identified the issues that are embedded in these common concerns. Consider how you may use these Dialogue Starters in your setting or in your organization. Collectively, we have a role in bringing attention to the need for comprehensive systems of school-based mental health.

The source document, *Advancing Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems: Guidance from the Field*, summarizes the expert panel conversations on Family, School and Community Collaboration

and Teaming by coming to the following critical agreements:

- To promote student mental health, school-employed mental health staff, school administrators, community partners, policymakers, funders, providers, students and families must be committed to working together to address the interconnected academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs of all students.
- Collaborative partnerships guided by school-employed staff should work closely with communities and families to help improve student outcomes and impact academic, social, emotional and behavioral needs.
- Coordinating resources and strategies leads to efficient, effective and sustainable workflows in the busy context of the school setting. Using a collaborative team approach requires shared funding streams, data collection processes and data-sharing mechanisms, which can be complicated to navigate.
- Community partners can augment services within the school building and can link students to other services and supports in the community. In addition, they can champion what schools are doing to support mental health with key leadership, such as boards of education and policymakers.

- Successful and sustainable school mental health systems do more than co-locate services within the school building; they seek to integrate partners seamlessly so that the diverse complement of mental health supports and services are tightly coordinated to meet the student body's needs efficiently and effectively.
- Working directly with community partners broadens the availability of potential supports that can be available to students and families, enhancing access to mental health care. The roles and responsibilities of school and community partners will differ based on unique resources and needs.

The conversation among stakeholders offered a practice-based view and focused on five themes:

- Leadership issues in creating the Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
- Navigating the Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems
- Building inclusive teams
- Boundaries created by language and funding
- Pandemic recovery and system redesign

This Dialogue Guide incorporates both sources. The guide offers *Reaction Questions* and *Application Questions* from which you can choose Dialogue Starters that will allow you to take these conversations into your work.

Resources

Resources to inform this content are available at:

- [School Mental Health Quality Guide: Teaming](#)
- [A Tip Sheet for Families](#)
- [A Tip Sheet for Decision Makers](#)
- [Effective School-Community Partnerships to Support School Mental Health](#)
- [Resources for families coping with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders](#)
- [Leveraging Youth Advocacy to Advance School Mental Health](#)
- [Youth Engagement: Eight Successful Youth Engagement Approaches](#)
- [A Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People](#)
- [Dialogue Guide Response Strategies](#)

Practice Issue 1

Leadership Issues in Creating Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems

Reaction Questions:

1. In your view, is leadership a title or a role?

2. Using the *Four Quadrants* response strategy, where would you place the family role in school comprehensive systems? Explain your placement.

3. Using the *Four Quadrants* response strategy, where would you place the youth role in school comprehensive systems?

4. We use the term "system" to describe comprehensive efforts. In your view, what makes a system real?

5. What do your colleagues say about the need and the efforts to build a comprehensive system? How do you respond to them?

Application Questions:

1. For years, the literature has described risk and protective factors that impact student well-being. What are some of the most well-known risk factors? What are the most well-known protective factors?

2. In your view, which school practices reflect an understanding of risk and protective factors? Which do not?

3. How might school leaders prepare to assume their role in comprehensive systems?

4. In what ways might school staff and community clinicians work together to deepen and extend services throughout and beyond the school day?

5. How might school leaders get to know the skills and limitations of their current staff?

   • In assigning school and community staff to roles in comprehensive systems, how can we use the full spectrum of skills?

   • Give some examples of how school and community staff can fill these needs.

6. Do current school staff and community providers know enough about each other to predict potential problems and address them? If not, what can we do to improve their understanding of each other's role?

7. Using the *If You* response strategy, choose a role that you believe has influence in leading a comprehensive system. Which role did you choose? Why did you choose that role and what are your priorities in that role?

8. Using the iceberg visual in the response strategy *What Lies Beneath*, describe what is known and unknown. What is above the surface in creating a comprehensive school mental health system? What is beneath the surface?

Practice Issue 2

Navigating Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems

Reaction Questions:

1. "Navigating" is the term that stakeholders consistently use in describing the effort to receive services. The term suggests that there is a significant challenge in building and delivering services. Choose one of the following and describe these challenges:

   • From the family perspective

   • From the youth perspective

   • From the school perspective

   • From the agency and/or provider perspective

2. Reduce barriers between service providers' demands that we need in order to build working relationships. Using a *1-10 Scale* (10 high), describe the extent to which schools have relationships with the full range of potential partners necessary to build a system that meets the needs of families and youth. Explain the insights behind your rating. Who are these partners?

3. Consider the multiple issues with privacy policies. What is the upside of privacy policies? What is the downside? What are the issues in navigating privacy?

Application Questions:

1. Using the iceberg visual in the response strategy *What Lies Beneath*, describe the effort to focus on family and youth roles in building comprehensive systems. Which issues are above the surface? What action initiatives are at the surface? What is beneath efforts toward deeper engagement?

2. Families are the support system across the life span. From the family perspective, what do you want from a school mental health system? From a youth perspective, what do you want from a school mental health system? What can school mental health systems do to understand their role in a "life span view"?

3. Using the *If You* response strategy, envision an effective school/provider/family collaboration. Choose an influential role in that collaboration. Which role did you choose and what are your priorities?

4. Envision an effective school/provider/family collaboration. Using the *Give and Get* response strategy, describe what each shares and learns about being "real partners" in a collaboration:

   • School and provider

   • School and family

   • Provider and family

Practice Issue 3

Building Inclusive Teams

Reaction Questions:

1. How do you and your networks/colleagues define:

   • Teaming?

   • Inclusive teaming?

2. How do beliefs about leadership impact inclusive teaming?

3. What are the typical roles that families are asked to play on teams? What new roles are being created?

4. Teams generally represent people and roles in implementing a practice. How could this impact inclusive teaming positively? How could this impact inclusive teaming negatively?

5. Some teams are said to be "one person deep" when it comes to representing a constituency. What issues are apparent in a "one-person deep" teaming design?

Application Questions:

1. Research suggests that it is important to have "one team" that coordinates aspects of a comprehensive system. In your view, what would this overarching team look like?

2. How would they connect to the full range of issues and efforts?

3. Using a *1-10 Scale* (10 high), rate your agreement with this statement: "In Comprehensive School Mental Health Systems, everybody is a leader, and everybody is a learner." Explain your rating.

4. Using the *Four Quadrants* response strategy, place the issue of trust-building across school staff, community providers and families. Explain your response.

Practice Issue 4

Barriers Created by Vocabulary and Funding

Reaction Questions:

1. Why do schools and agencies fail to align initiatives that have related goals?

2. How does the use of "professional language" divide schools and families?

3. How do differences in professional language divide school and clinical providers?

4. Using a *1-10 Scale* (10 high), rate the extent to which schools and agencies have a relationship that is deep and ongoing enough to develop their potential connections. Explain the insights behind your rating.

Application Questions:

1. Using the *Ifs, Ands and Buts* response strategy, respond to this statement: "We must learn to communicate complex information more simply!"

2. Using the iceberg visual in the response strategy *What Lies Beneath*, where would you place **differences in vocabulary** as a barrier to system building?

   • Where would you place **funding** as a barrier to system building?

   • What else is above and below the surface?

Practice Issue 5

Pandemic Recovery and System Redesign

Reaction Questions:

1. Given the role that families played during the pandemic, how should school include family voice in their recovery planning?

2. Using the *Give and Get* response strategy, what may schools "get" from learning about recovery with families in active roles? What could schools "give" to help families take an active role in recovery and redesign?

3. While the pandemic brought intense stress for students, families and schools, some positive efforts emerged. In your experience,

   • What effective efforts were launched?

   • What should we learn from these efforts?

Application Questions:

4. In your view, how will the shared experience in online learning during the pandemic influence options going forward?

5. Teletherapies grew rapidly during the pandemic. Reportedly, these options served some youth and families well.

   • In your view, will telehealth and teletherapy become accepted options for delivering services?

   • What does the introduction of new telehealth and teletherapy providers mean for collaboration in comprehensive systems of school mental health?