Partnering Effectively with Schools: An Interdisciplinary Task
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Background

Need for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- 14 to 20 percent of youth attend school with significant behavioral health concerns, but impact their school performance (CDC, 2001)
- Federal education reform initiatives emphasize the need to maximize behavioral health resources through partnerships among schools, families, & communities
  - Psychologists are increasingly coordinating services with school staff and programming across educational systems, but lack training for practice in educational settings (Paternite et al., 2006)
  - The Surgeon General identifies educators as ‘gatekeepers’ in recognizing & addressing student mental health difficulties, though many report feeling unprepared to do so effectively (Rothi, Leavy, & Best, 2008)
- Interdisciplinary collaboration between behavioral health & education is fraught with challenges, including differences in language, culture, expectations, and even goals (Ball, Mellin, & Greene, 2010)
- Education and behavioral health professionals must be trained to negotiate the needs of multiple systems while delivering effective services.

Specific Aims

Aim 1: Provide behavioral health staff and trainees with interdisciplinary training and experience in educational systems, school consultation, and school-based services.

Aim 2: Enhance educators’ ability to address complex behavioral health difficulties through consultation and interdisciplinary training in behavioral health.

Interdisciplinary Training

Interdisciplinary Training For Psychologists

- Mentored experiences within the context of a school-community behavioral health partnership
- Training, weekly supervision in school partnerships, and coaching in interprofessional consultation were offered to behavioral health staff and trainees
- Change in interdisciplinary skills assessed via a cross-walk of standards for effective school-mental health service delivery (Ball et al., 2010).

Interdisciplinary Training For Educators

- Large-group trainings: Emotional Regulation, Crisis Response, Community Resources, and Collaborative Problem-Solving
- Small-group workshops: Addressing child-specific concerns (e.g., Selective Mutism; Resource Mapping)
- Behavioral Health Consultation: Technical assistance in addressing children’s behavioral health concerns

District & Student Population

- 8 School Buildings
- 526 Teachers
- 548 “Other” Staff
- 5,950 Students
- 19% Food Assist.
- 15% with IEPs

Results

- Trainees enter with a range of perceived competence in working with schools - but become increasingly proficient over the course of fellowship
- Interprofessional collaboration most commonly involved school mental health professionals (64%), school administrators (26%), and teachers (24%)

Interdisciplinary Training for Psychologists

Recognized and endorsed by professionals involved in expanded school mental health: An exploratory study (Ball et al., 2010)

- Educators most commonly requested interdisciplinary collaboration for concerns regarding classroom functioning (89%) and identified mental health concerns (82%)

Interdisciplinary Training for Educators

- Proportion of students with identified mental health concerns
- Percentage of students receiving mental health services

Special Aims

- Psychologists are increasingly coordinating services with school staff and programming across educational systems

Discussion & Next Steps

Conclusions

- To facilitate success for children with complex behavioral health needs, professionals from traditionally disparate behavioral health and education systems must work together to increase interdisciplinary competency

Limitations

- This study is a pilot of interprofessional training, with a limited sample size
- The field is lacking in reliable, standardized measurement tools in interprofessional competencies

Next Steps

- Identify whether collaboration between schools & community agencies increases interprofessional collaborative skills and competencies for both educators & psychologists
- Determine whether increased interprofessional competency is linked to increased ability to meet the social & emotional needs of youth & families

References: