

Indicator #34: Are you making efforts to ensure that your school mental health program and services are welcoming and respect the students and families you serve?



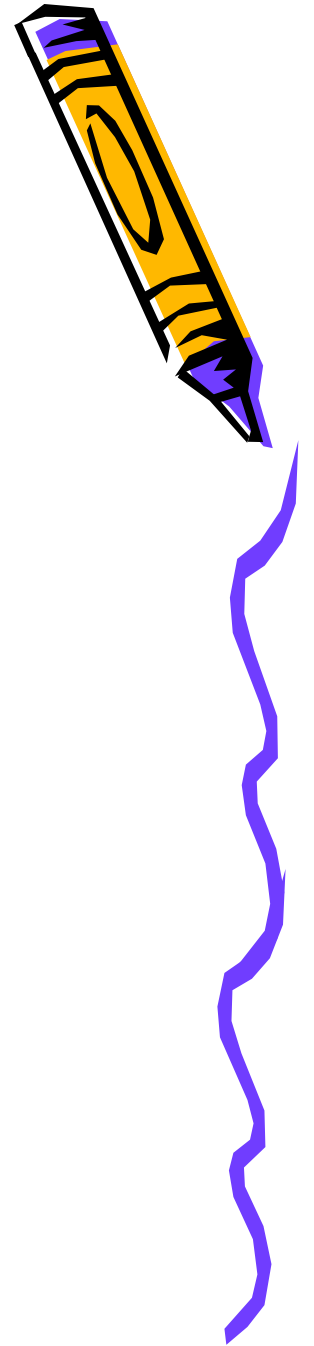
Background

- In order to best facilitate a collaborative relationship with students and families served by ESMH programs, clinicians need to make every effort to ensure that the environment of the program is welcoming and respectful.
- It is the school's responsibility to provide a welcoming environment for all families. The school must send consistent messages to families that their contributions to forming effective partnerships are valued.



Background

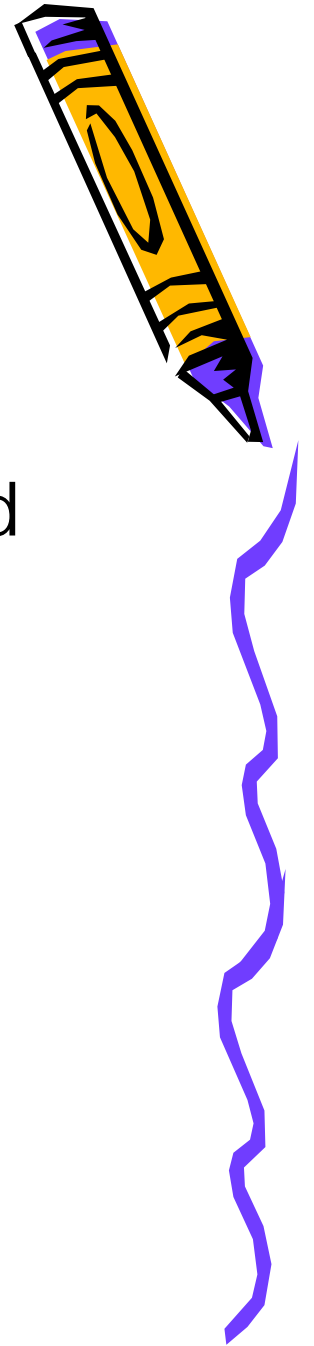
- Efforts must be made to work collaboratively with all families, including:
 - Those whose primary language is not English
 - Those with limited literacy skills



The Initial Task

Cultural awareness is crucial in fostering a welcoming environment for students and families.

- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Socioeconomic Status



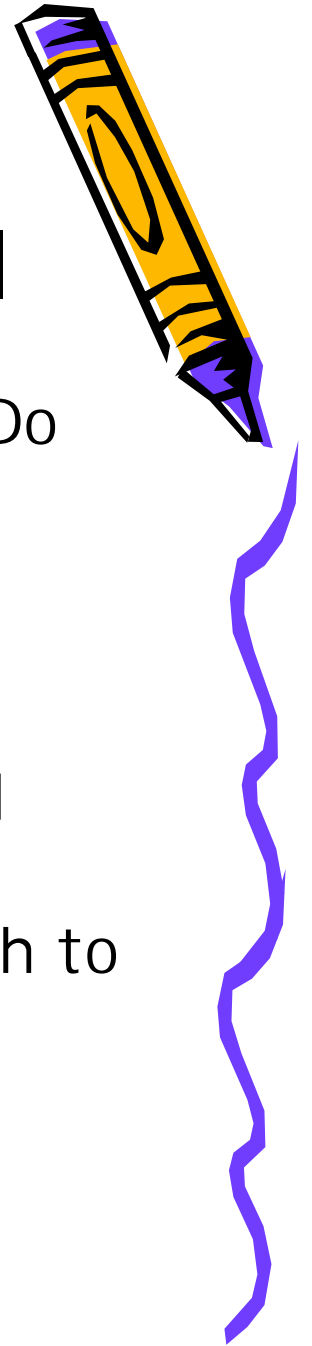
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Take the time to consider if your physical space is inviting to families and strive to make it more inviting.
- Take the time to evaluate whether you are respectful of confidentiality within your office. If there are concerns, strategize to work through them.
- Brainstorm about how to make your environment more inviting and friendly to children and their families.
- Review as a team effective strategies for engaging families in treatment and select one or two strategies as action goals for this month.



Helpful Hints - Creating an Inviting Physical Environment I

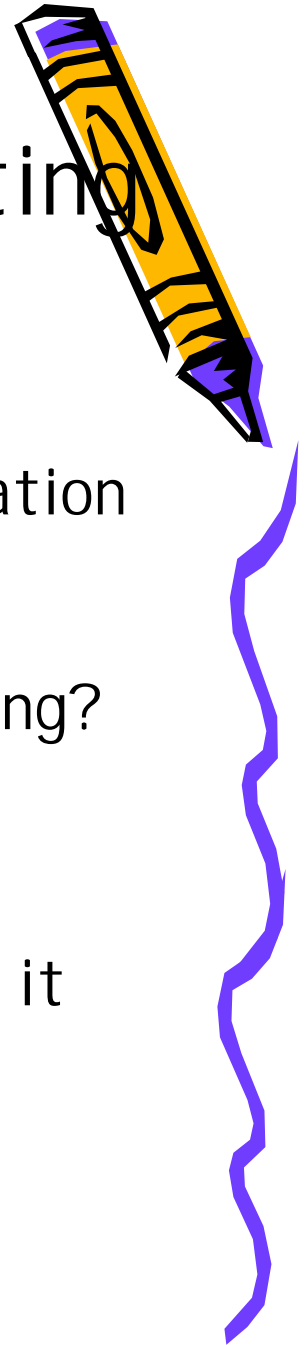
- Are there enough comfortable places to sit? Do clients have a choice in where they sit?
- Are there interesting things on the wall? Are they age appropriate and reflective of your clientele's culture(s)?
- Is the décor somewhere between Spartan and over-stimulating?
- Are there things for small hands to fiddle with to reduce anxiety or discomfort?
- Are there tissues handy? Candy/snacks?



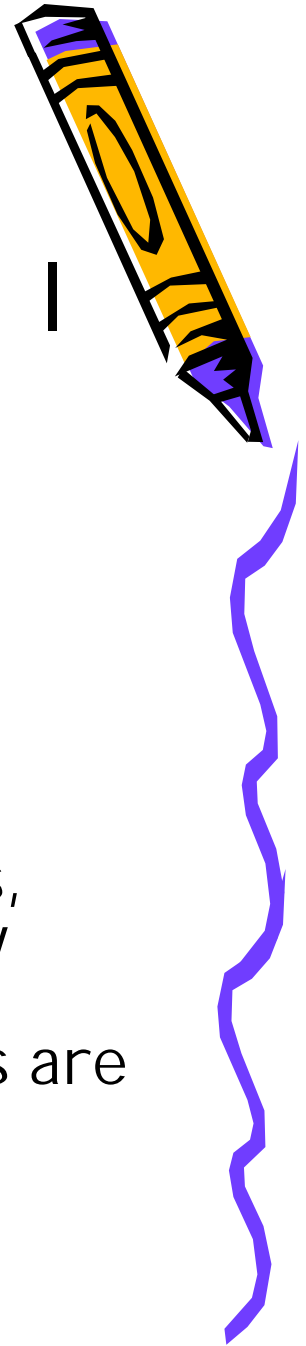
Helpful Hints - Creating an Inviting Physical Environment II

Although this may vary by practice setting and target population, consider reducing the intimidation factor:

- On display: all those books about therapy and “childhood disorders”...impressive or off-putting?
- On display: big fancy diploma from big fancy University in a big fancy gold-tone frame... impressive or off-putting?
- Furniture: casual and spillage-friendly or does it convey an image of power and authority? (i.e., don't bring fancy stuff from home!)



Helpful Hints - Creating a Respectful Physical Environment I



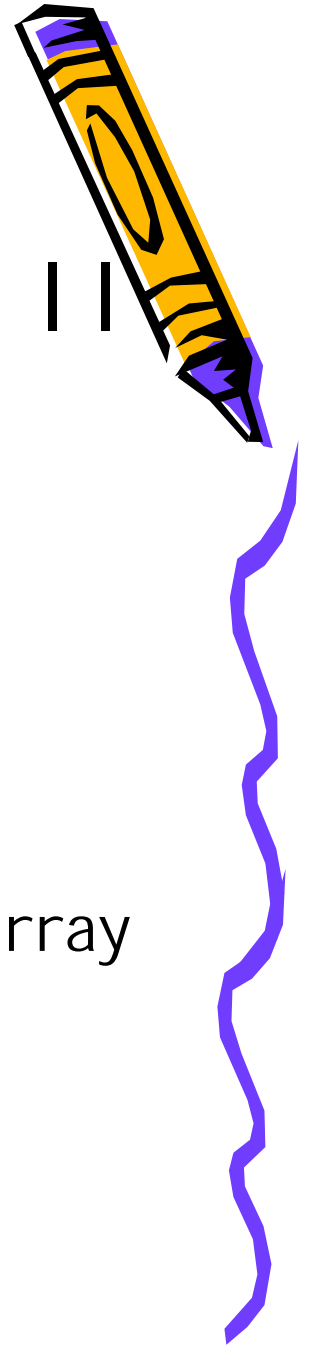
Is confidentiality suggested?

- All files or other materials with client data on them should be out of plain sight or stored.
- Avoid displaying behavioral charts or other therapeutic materials with students' names on them.
- If clients give you drawings or school pictures, ask permission before you display them! Many times, the assumption is that clinicians will proudly display such gifts. However, clinicians are responsible for reminding students that this mitigates privacy, to some extent.



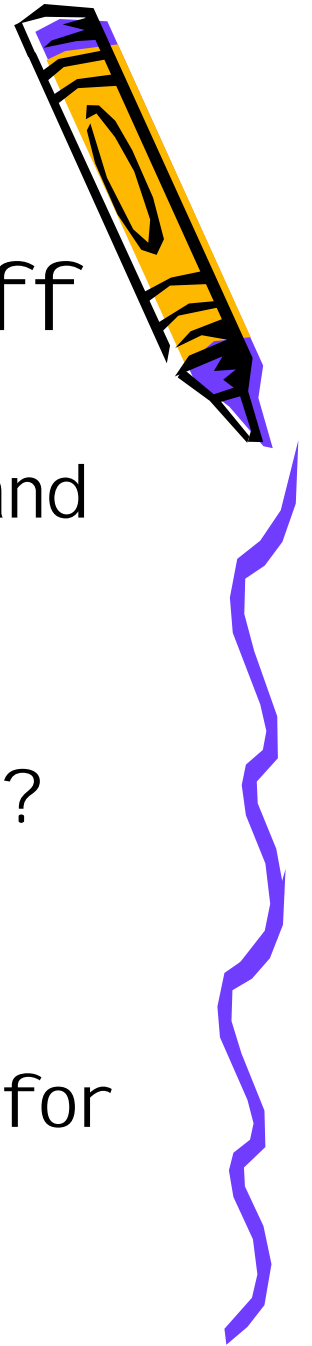
Helpful Hints - Creating a Respectful Physical Environment I I

- Is your office accessible?
 - Accommodating doorways
 - Materials and handles within reach
- For clinicians working with teens:
 - Are there materials that indicate you are comfortable and able to discuss a diverse array of issues and concerns? (e.g., posters, pamphlets)



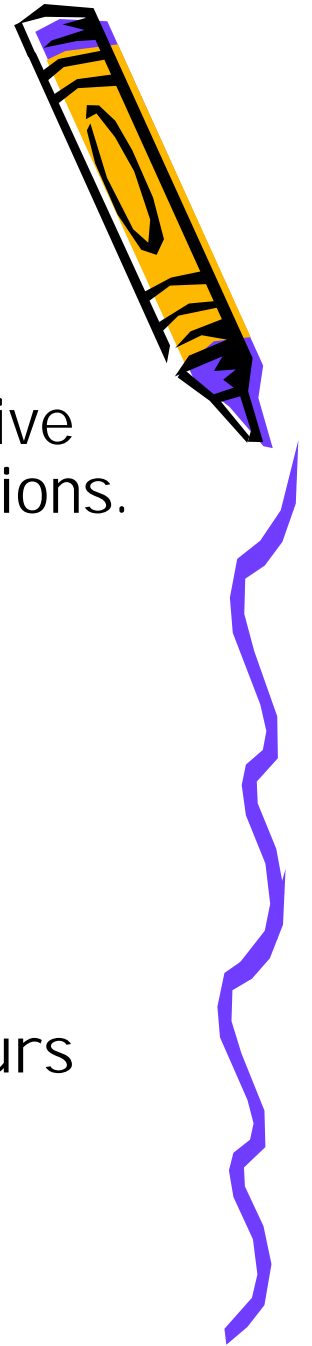
Helpful Hints - Ensuring Respectful Encounters with Staff

- Do the administrative staff mirror the clinician's tone of sensitivity, respect, and protection of confidential information?
- Can staff communicate with bilingual clients, clients with limited English proficiency, or hearing-impaired clients? Are translators available?
- Does the clinician have organizational support (e.g., training, materials, resources) related to ensuring respect for diverse clients?



Helpful Hints - Respectfully Engaging Family Members

- Convey mutuality—operate from the perspective of a collaborator versus an expert. Ask questions.
- Ask how you can be helpful.
- Discuss confidentiality parameters.
- Avoid labeling and jargon when discussing children's presentations.
- Assess for and discuss perceived stigma.
- Maintain flexible appointment times to accommodate caregivers outside of school hours



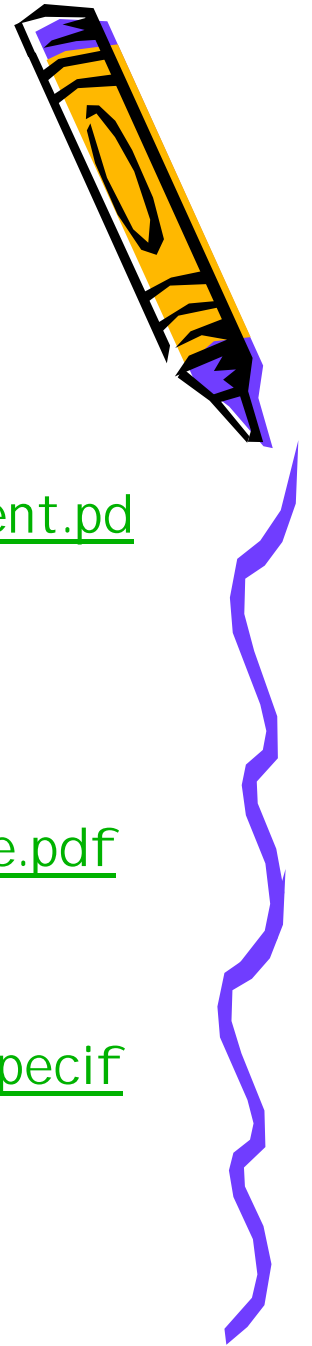
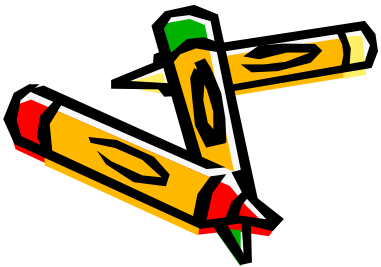
Web Resources

- Center for School Mental Health Analysis and Action (<http://csmha.umaryland.edu/>)
- Cultural Concerns in Addressing Barriers to Learning, Good information regarding bilingual and non-English-speaking children and families (<http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/cultural/culture.pdf>)
- Multicultural Mental Health Evaluation (MCMHEVAL), a listserv regarding evaluation of mental health services for diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic populations. Also provides technical assistance and material development (<http://tecathsri.org/lists.asp#multi>)
(<http://tecathsri.org/multicultural.asp>)
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (<http://www.nichcy.org/>)



Web Resources

- Center for Mental Health in Schools, Parent and Home Involvement in Schools
(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/parenthome/parent.pdf>)
- Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
(<http://www.pflag.org/education/schools.html>)
- Center for Mental Health in Schools, Welcoming and Involving New Students and Families
(<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/welcome/welcome.pdf>)
- University of Maryland, Sexual Orientation Specific Resources
(http://www.inform.umd.edu/EdRes/Topic/Diversity/Specific/Sexual_Orientation/)



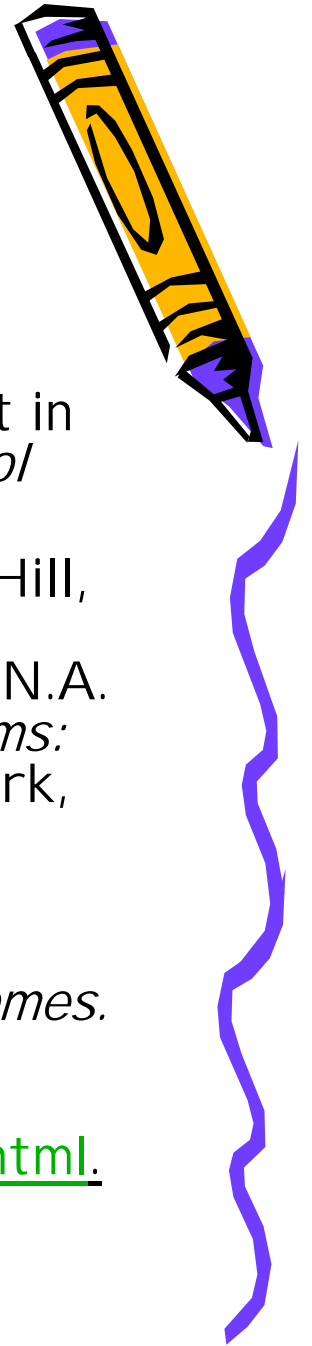
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