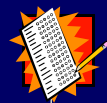## Module 5

Successful Strategies for Promoting Collaboration and Coordinated Service Delivery

CSMH

Test your Knowledge

- School staff members often have little knowledge of a child's foster care status. (T/F)
- A lack of understanding of roles played by adults who live and work with foster care students (e.g., child welfare caseworkers, families) serves as a major barrier to collaboration. (T/F)
- Maryland has recently instituted Family Team Decision-Making meetings, which are meant to convene birth and foster families, caseworkers, and other service providers to collaborate in the decision-making and treatment planning process. (T/F)

Lesson Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Describe common barriers that can impede on collaboration among adults who live and work with children and youth in foster care, including:
  - Confidentiality concerns
  - Lack of unclear understanding of roles
  - Lack of collaboration or coordinating liaison
- Describe the advantages and disadvantages of having school mental health clinicians act in liaison roles to improve communication and collaboration across systems of care
- Describe the purpose and major components of Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM).

Brainstorming Activity

- What are some examples whereby children in foster care may be impacted by a lack of communication and collaboration among service providers (e.g., between biological and foster families)?

What Systems Work With Children in Foster Care?

- Children in foster care are nested within several systems:
  - Child welfare services
  - School system
  - Parents (foster & biological)
  - Mental health services (school or off-site)

Collaboration between systems

- "Good foster care comes out of respectful and creative collaboration" (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- Barriers to collaboration include:
  - Confidentiality concerns
  - Unclear lines of responsibility for the child's educational performance
  - Lack of meetings to facilitate collaboration

Research Studies That Illustrate the Lack of Collaboration Between Systems

- The Journal of Social Work (Altshuler, 2003) uncovered the lack of communication between child welfare caseworkers and educators. The study revealed the following problems:
  - Lack of understanding (re: confidentiality restraints)
  - Lack of communication
  - Perceived lack of caring or commitment to students
  - Lack of mutual trust

Research Studies (cont.)

- A study focused on the children's perspective of the foster care system which demonstrated the problems in collaboration and coordination between systems (Finklestein, Wamsley & Miranda, 2002)
  - Children reported that educators did not understand the bureaucratic processes of foster care- like related appointments and the need to make up school work
  - Children reported delays in registering for school due to the system not being structured to accommodate those in foster care

Research Studies (cont.)

- A study found that schools, child welfare agencies and other service providers typically do not share information. This occurs through confidentiality issues as well as assumptions that each role is separate rather than a part of something bigger (Finkelstein, Wamsley, & Miranda, 2002)
  - School staff often don't have a child's background information and do not realize how a child's previous experiences can influence classroom behavior
  - Caseworkers do not have easy access to a child's educational records & thus do not know a child's educational issues

Impact of Confidentiality Requirements Upon Collaboration and Coordination

- Confidentiality requirements emerge from federal and state statutes, child welfare agency regulations, and professional mandates
- The requirements are meant to protect children's privacy but can negatively impact communication
- In some states, Family Team Decision-Making addresses the need to protect privacy and improve information-sharing

Brainstorming Activity

- Brainstorm different ways that you might achieve a balance between respecting the privacy of children in foster care, while still attempting to ensure that they receive attention for possible mental health issues. Discuss how children might perceive the pros and cons of teachers knowing about their foster care status.

Ideas to Increase Collaboration

- Improve within-school and school-community collaboration
  - Integration of mental health services, and community resources. This requires outreach and networking with other professionals
  - Create a team consisting of mental health professionals and interested school staff and community members

Ideas to Increase Collaboration (cont'd)

- Strengthen school-caseworker collaboration
    - Hold routine meetings to address student's needs
    - Hold a workshop to address foster care needs and mental health concerns

Ideas to increase collaboration (cont'd)

- Improve school-parent collaboration
    - Schools should provide a warm and welcoming climate with accessible information
    - Invite parents to participate in meetings with educators

Benefits of Collaboration

- Benefits of collaboration
    - Frequent meetings will facilitate sharing and collaboration
    - Generates support and ideas for improving school-based mental health

Small Group Discussion

- Reflect on how your own service provision might benefit from greater collaboration. Identify and discuss both the specific benefits and the challenges of developing a more collaborative relationship across systems.

Proposed Solution

- School mental health providers can act as supportive advocates and liaisons among systems of care
    - School mental health liaisons are well-placed to communicate among systems of care (e.g. schools, caseworkers, and foster families)

Another Proposed Solution

- Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM)
    - Consists of meetings with families (birth and foster), extended families, community members, providers of services, and child welfare staff
    - Goal is to bring together all of those important in a child's life to engage in case-planning and decision-making

(Re)Test Your Knowledge

- School staff members often have little knowledge of a child's foster care status. (T/F)
  - True
- A lack of understanding of roles played by adults who live and work with foster care students (e.g., child welfare caseworkers, families) serves as a major barrier to collaboration. (T/F)
  - True
- Maryland has recently instituted Family Team Decision-Making meetings, which are meant to convene birth and foster families, caseworkers, and other service providers to collaborate in the decision-making and treatment planning process. (T/F)
  - True

Moving Towards Action

Ideas to apply what you've learned:
- I can identify ways in which a school-based mental health provider could serve as a liaison to increase communication and collaboration across systems of care
- I can learn about and offer information to foster care caseworkers and parents about the best ways to communicate with and gather information from the school at which I work
- I can increase school's staff awareness about the mental health and bureaucratic issues that arise with children in foster care

Practical Resources

- Mythbusting: Breaking Down Confidentiality and Decision-Making Barriers to Meet the Education Need of Children in Foster Care (www.abanet.ord/child/education/mythbusting2.pdf)
  Mythbusting is an online, searchable publication that addresses the issues surrounding confidentiality and other barriers
- School Mental Health (www.schoolmentalhealth.org)
  This website provides information and fact sheets on children's mental health for clinicians, educators, families, and youth

Practical Resources (cont.)

- Casey Family Programs www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/MentalHealthReview.htm
  Published in 2006, this review contains major findings from studies about the evidence base for mental health care
- Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) www.acy.org/upimages/FTDM_Issue_Brief.pdf
  This issue brief describes the evolution of FTDM, and the reasoning behind this increasingly team-oriented, family-centered approach