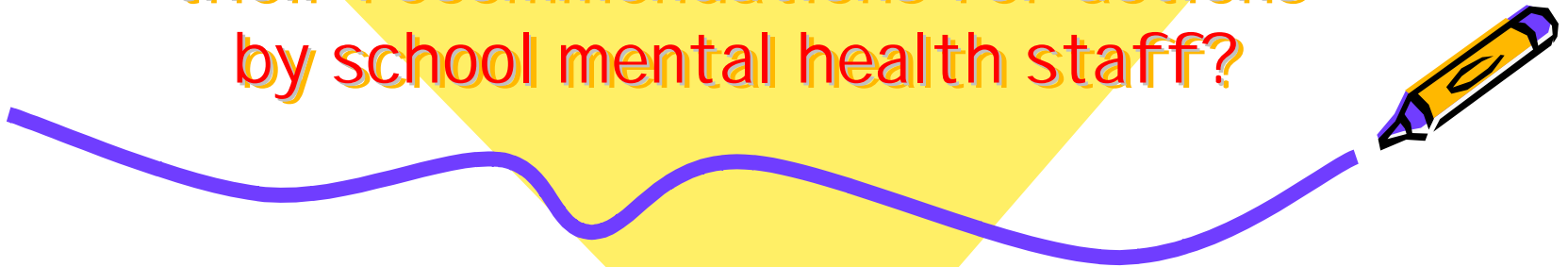Indicator #4: Have you held meetings with students, parents, and teaching staff to ask them about their needs and to ask them for their recommendations for actions by school mental health staff?
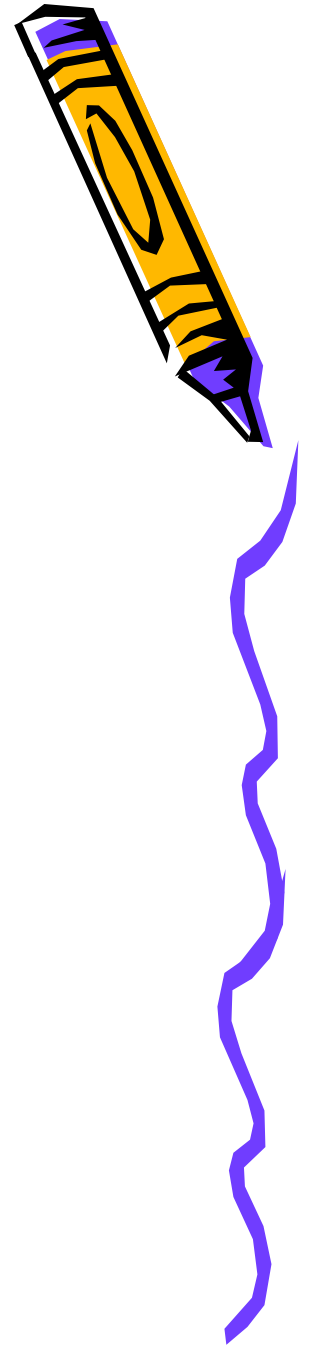
Background

- We often leave students out of the improvement process in school mental health.

- According to the National Assembly on School-based Health Care, programs should encourage "the students' active, age appropriate participation in decisions regarding health care and prevention activities".
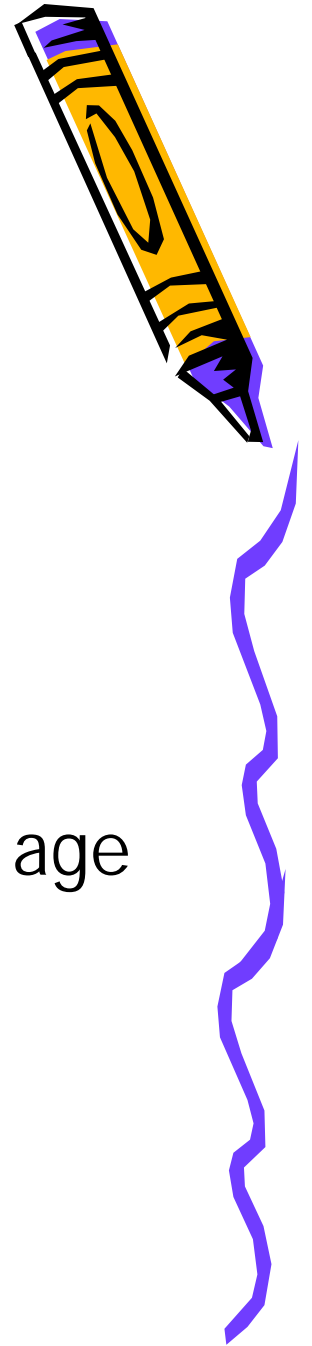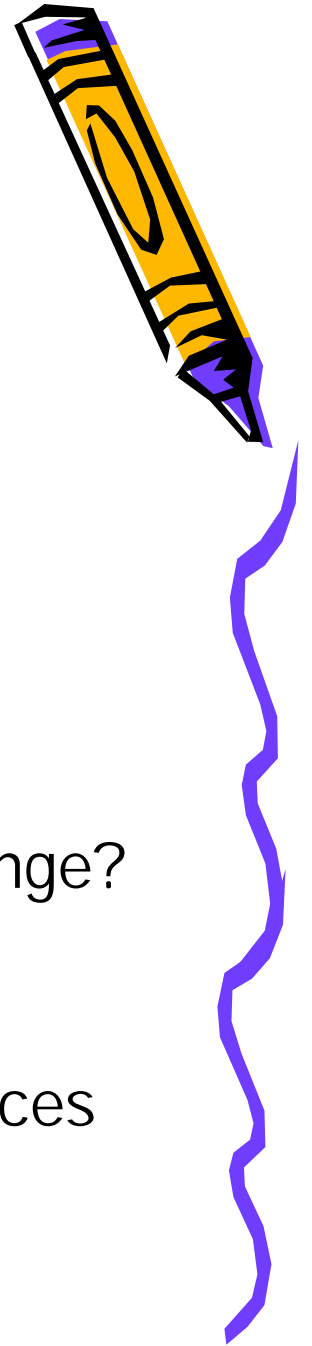
Meeting with students

STUDENT FEEDBACK

- Feedback from students should be solicited:
  - EARLY in process!
  - Regularly! (at least once a month)
- Solicit meaningful feedback:
  - Action-oriented (e.g., "What should we change? What can we do better?)
  - Positive AND Negative
  - From students in services AND <u>not</u> in services

How to solicit student feedback

- Involve students in planning process
- Conduct focus groups
- Invite suggestions
- Obtain student feedback via evaluation forms
  - Evaluation of clinical services (e.g., How satisfied are you with services? Did services have an positive impact?)
  - Evaluation of program (e.g., Would you feel comfortable coming for services in our program? Do you believe that our services are helpful for students?)

# What students have already told us…

- Adolescents expect school mental health clinicians to:
  - Be genuine in their interactions
  - Reliable in their attendance
  - Visible in the schools
  - Proactive in their approach to helping students

    » (Nabors, Reynolds, & Weist, 2000; Nabors, Weist, & Tashman, 1999)
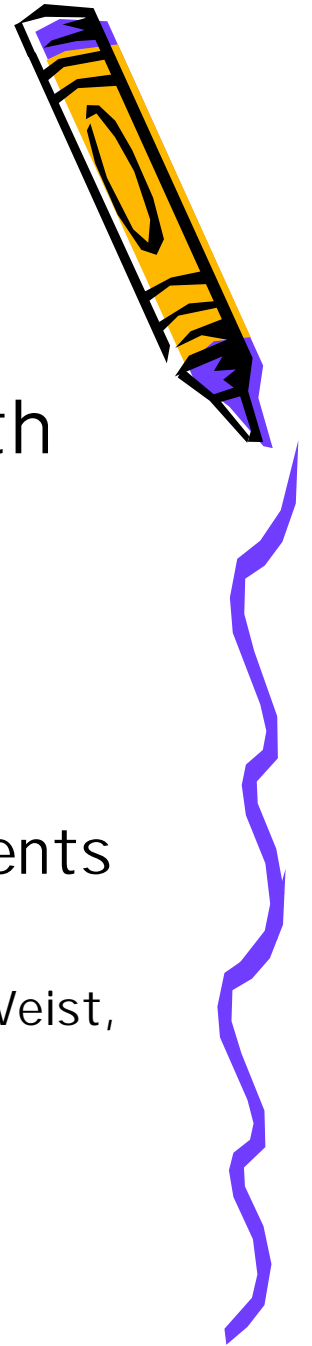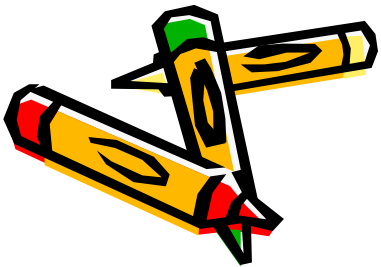
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Invite student(s) to participate on your school or program's advisory board.

- Organize a student focus group in your school to obtain feedback.

- Develop a student feedback form, distribute, and collect.

- Create a "suggestions box" for students.
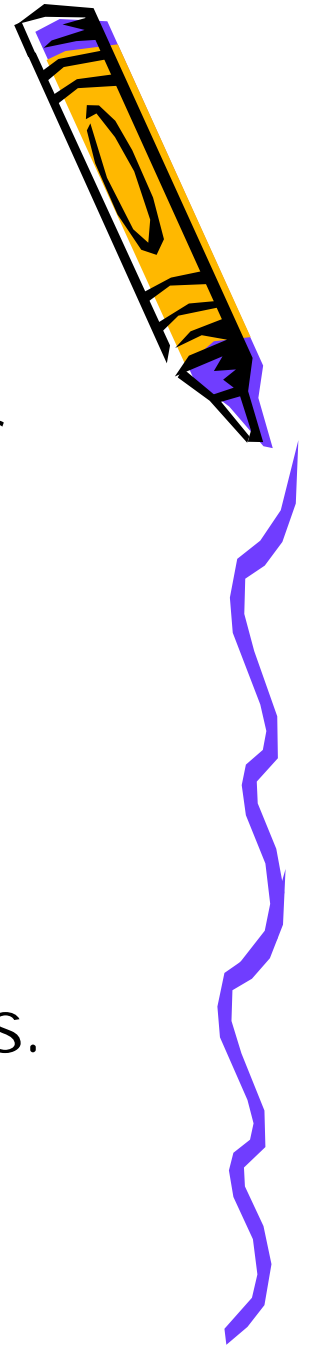
HELPFUL HINTS!

- Invite student(s) to participate on your school mental health program's advisory board
  - Ask each program clinician to nominate 1-2 students to sit on advisory board
  - Nominate students receiving *and* not receiving school mental health services
  - Nominate students across age/grade levels and representing diverse backgrounds
  - Contact nominated students and explain:
    - Expectations:
      - e.g., Students will report updates/recommendations to advisory board monthly; Students will attend advisory board meetings
    - Benefits of participation
      - e.g., Students will provide meaningful information to improve their school's school mental health program
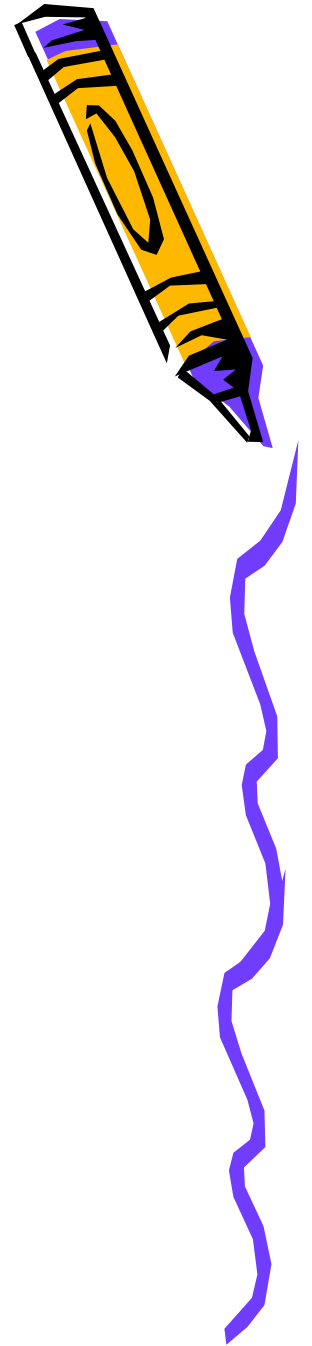
HELPFUL HINTS!

- Organize a student focus group in your school to obtain suggestions
  - Utilize existing focus group interview guide
    - Examples of questions:
      - What might prevent some students from seeking school mental health services?
      - How can our services be improved?
    - Develop probes and follow-up questions

HELPFUL HINTS!

- Develop a student feedback form, distribute, and collect
  - Include items that ask about:
    - satisfaction with services
    - reasons for utilizing/not utilizing services
    - ways to improve services
  - Distribute to students:
    - throughout services (e.g., monthly, quarterly)
   - as a classroom/school-wide activity

Helpful Hints!

- Create a "suggestions box" for students
  - Identify an "anonymous" place for suggestions box (e.g., outside office door, in main office)
  - Utilize an existing "suggestions" sheet
 - Review suggestions weekly in group supervision

Web Resources

- National Assembly of School-Based Health Care (http://www.nasbhc.org/TAT/Principles_and_Goals.htm)

- Focus groups (http://www.edc.org/NTP/focusgroups.htm)

- *What do Youth Want to Do? A Youth Needs-Assessment Process for Communities*, in Journal of Extension (http://www.joe.org/joe/1997february/index.html)
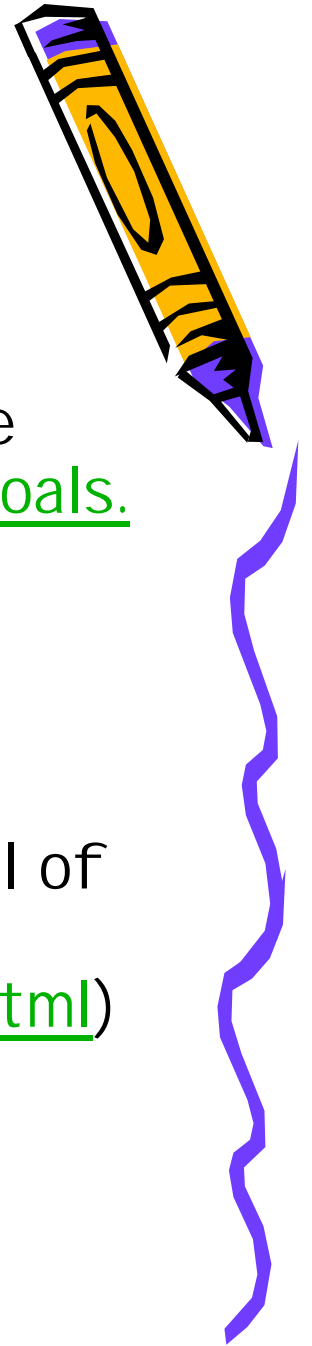
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- Stewart, D.W., Shamdasani, P.N. (1990). Focus groups: Theory and practice. *Applied Social Research Methods Series, 20.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

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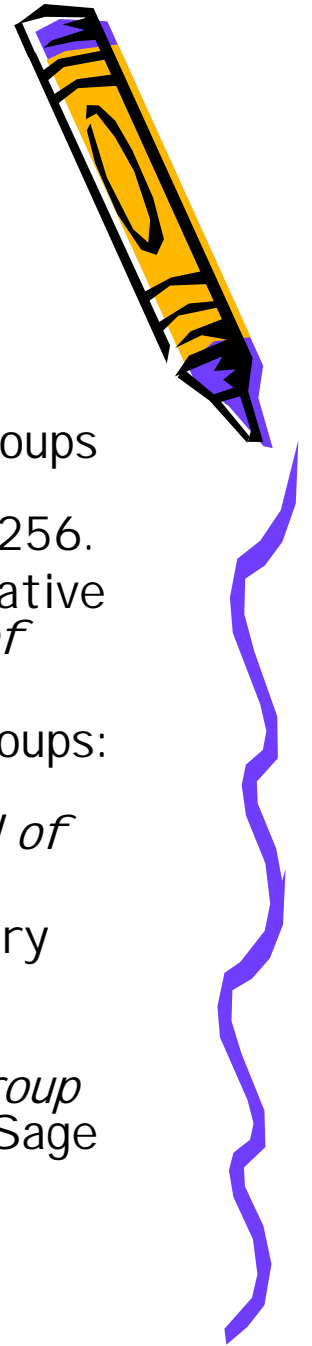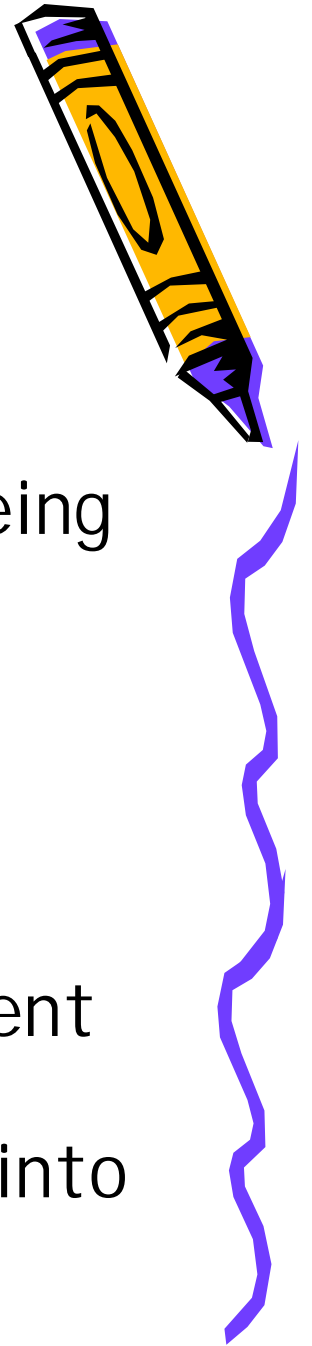
Meeting with parents
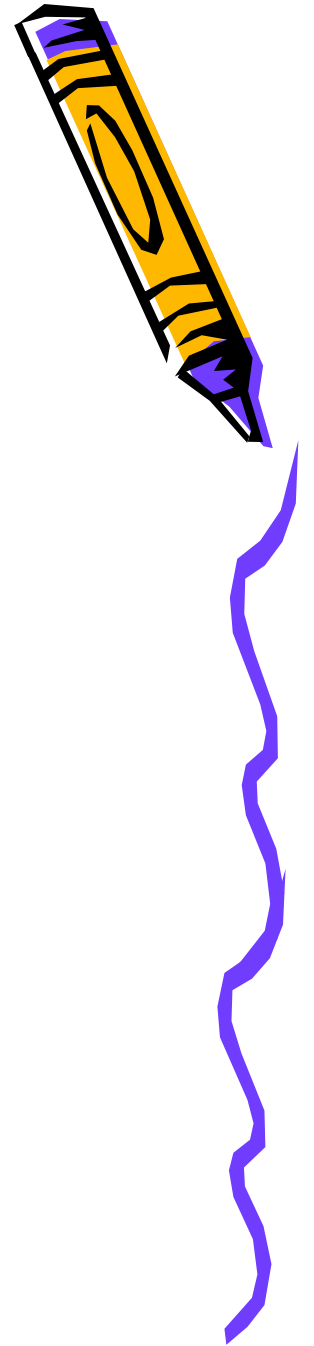
Background

- Families are essential partners in improving the mental health and well-being of children and need to be involved meaningfully in both treatment and program planning efforts.

- ESMH staff needs to include family involvement as part of best practice efforts and should strive to obtain parent views and develop strategies to incorporate related feedback into day-to-day functioning of the program.

Background

- One strategy for involving parents is to hold meetings with families to obtain feedback about their needs and concerns related to mental health.

- Feedback from parents can be obtained through focus groups, listening sessions and forums, and through facilitated discussions, interviews, and structured conversations.

- Families need to be informed about how their feedback will be integrated into the program and given regular updates on program changes.

Background: Questions for Parents/Guardians

- What are the mental health needs of your children?
- Is the ESMH program helping to address those needs?
- What are the stressors in your community?
- What are the gaps in mental health care in the school and the community?
- Are you or your children using the services or would you be willing to use the ESMH services if needed? Why or why not?
- How can the ESMH program improve outreach and collaborative efforts with parents/guardians?
- How can ESMH services be improved and what aspects of current services are most helpful?
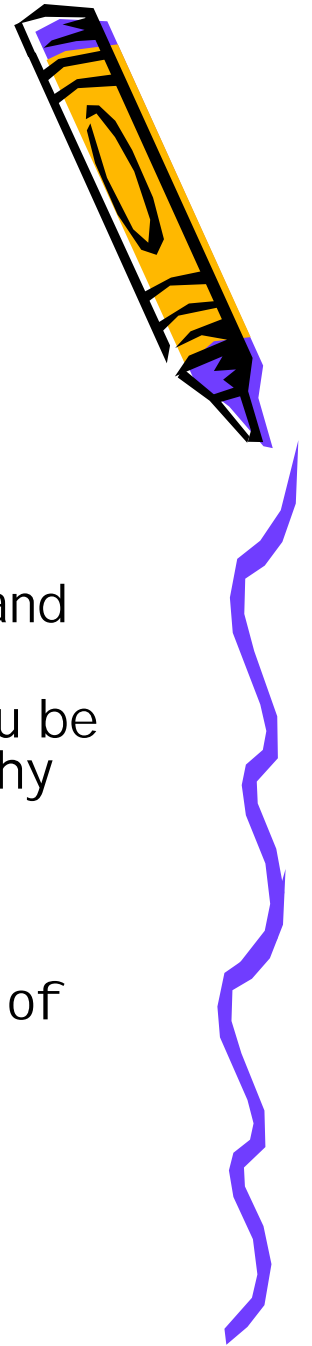
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Organize a parent/guardian focus group or forum to solicit input about school mental health programming.

- Develop a set of key questions for parents/guardians to respond to related to their opinions about mental health services in ESMH programs.

- Host a morning breakfast/round table for parents/guardians to update them on mental health services and to obtain feedback about these services and their recommendations for improvement.

Menu of Suggested Activities

- Brainstorm about how to successfully obtain feedback from parents/guardians and how to incorporate their suggestions into the program.

- Work with a parent liaison to determine strategies for and content of a parent meeting.

- Attend pre-existing meetings such as PTA meetings and solicit feedback and recommendations through a brief presentation about available mental health services.
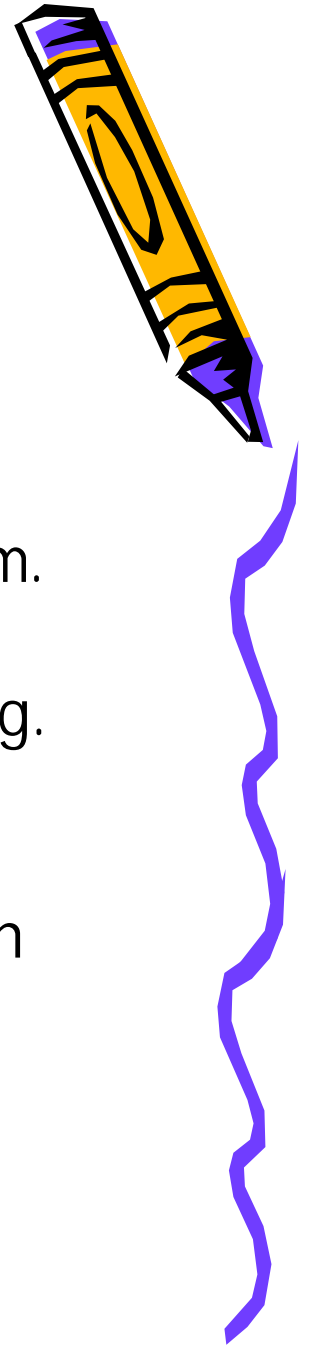
HELPFUL HINTS!

- Try to enlist a parent/guardian to help you plan, solicit other parents to participate, and actually help conduct focus groups, forums, and discussion/listening sessions.'

- Host meetings at a time that is convenient for working parents/guardians and for parents/ guardians who have young children. Be willing to have multiple meeting times to cover the same issues so that more parents can attend.

- Make arrangements for childcare to help increase the likelihood that parents/ guardians will be able to attend.
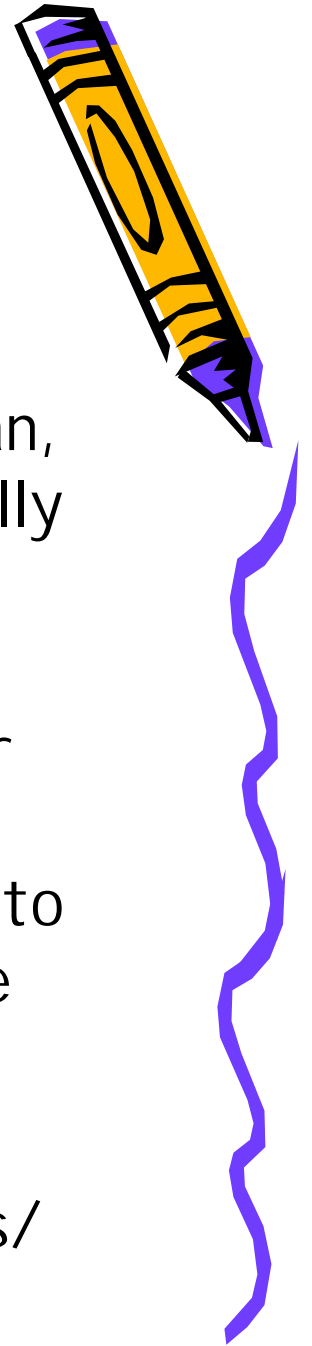
HELPFUL HINTS

- Develop procedures for documenting feedback derived from the meetings and for sharing how changes ultimately are implemented.

- Be sensitive to cultural and language differences.

- Respect and encourage all opinions to be shared.

- Avoid jargon and overly intellectual presentations.

- Be easy to access (open office times, email, comment box) so that parents/guardians can easily provide feedback.

Web Resources

- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Tips on Conducting Effective Community Presentations & Focus Groups (http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/Downloads/ed/EdExtranet/InformationResources/Events/EffectivePres.doc; http://www.smallschoolsproject.org/index.asp?siteloc=tool&section=data)

- Center for Mental Health in Schools, Parent and Home Involvement in Schooling; School-Family Partnerships (http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu)

- Comer School Development Program (http://info.med.yale.edu/comer)

Web References

- Community Toolbox, University of Kansas. Assessing Community Needs and Resources. (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/chapter_1003.htm)
- Focus Groups (www2.edc.org/NTP/focusgroups.htm)
- National Education Association (www.nea.org/parents)
- National PTA. Developing a Parent/Family Involvement Policy (http://www.pta.org/)
- The Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Policy information (http://www.ffcmh.org/policy.htm)
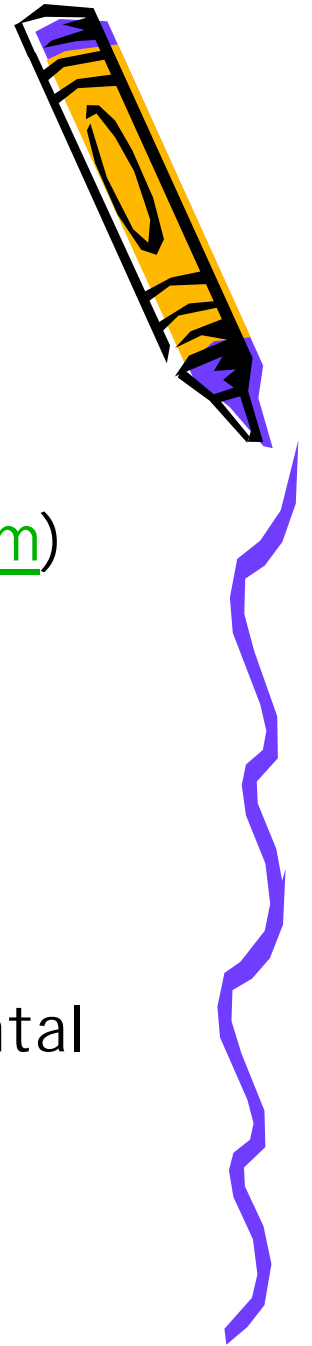
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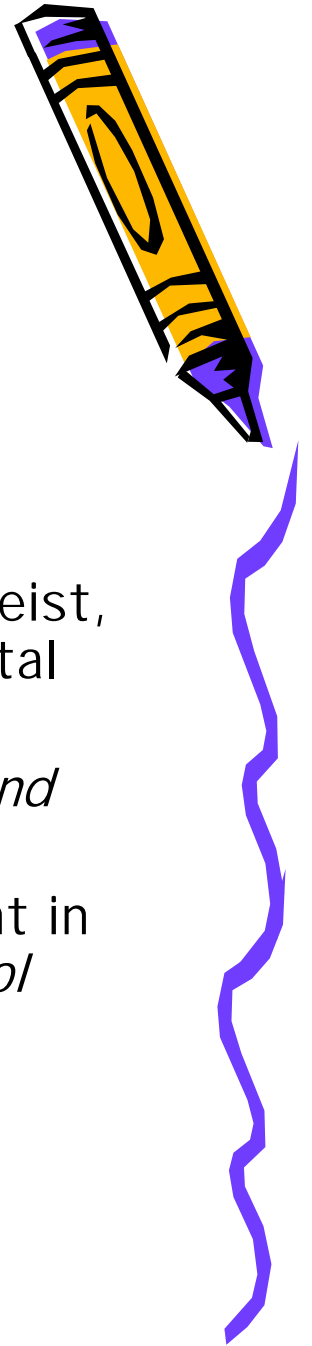
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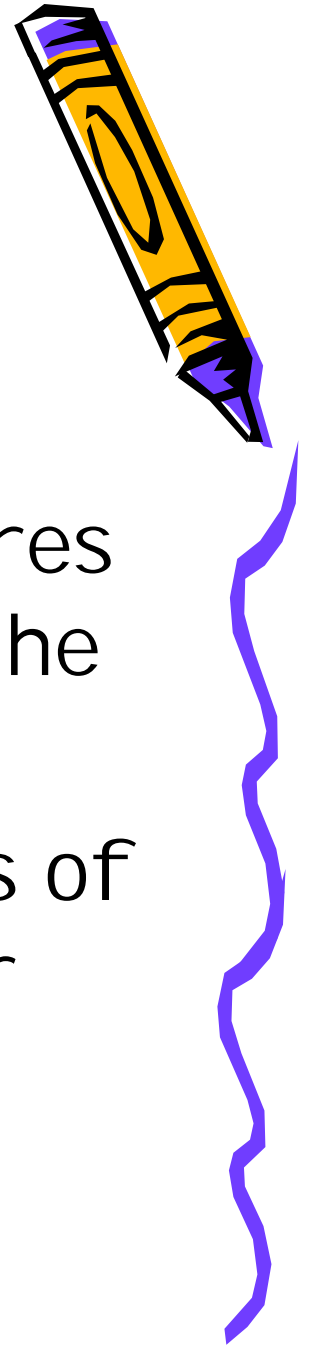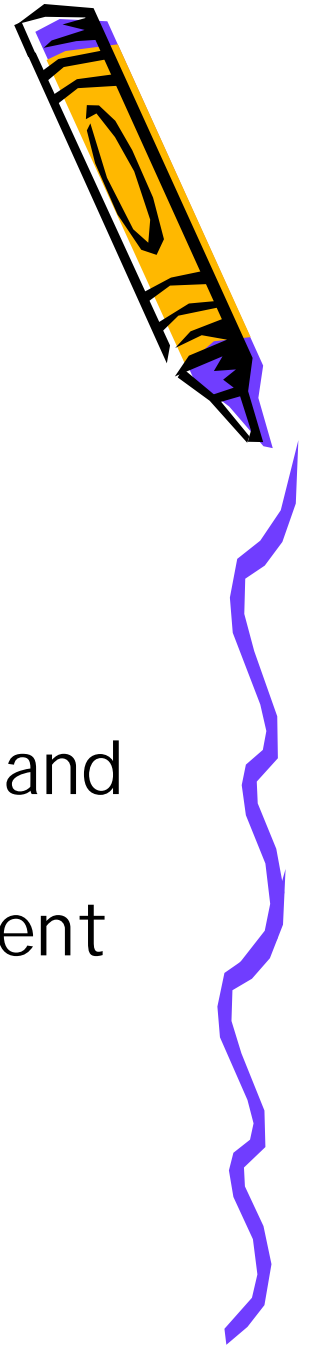
Meeting with teachers
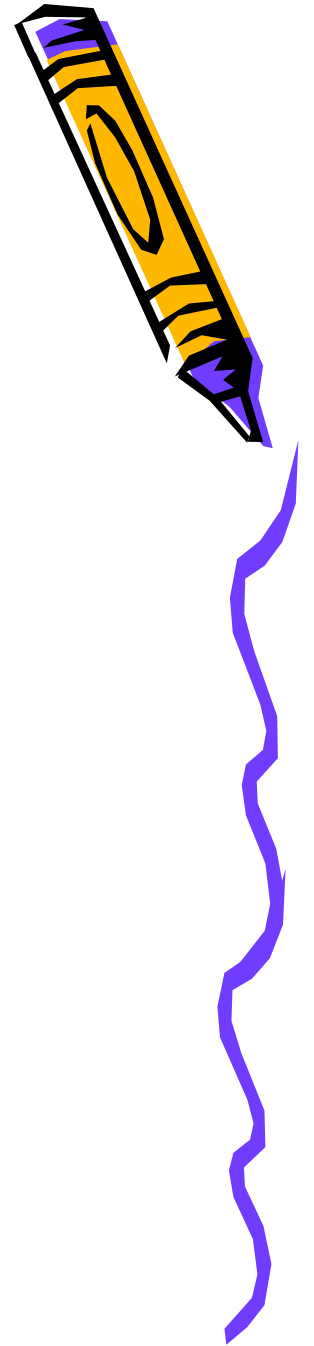
Background

- Working to effectively meet the needs of students in schools requires that ESMH clinicians understand the needs of the school community.

- Assessing the needs and resources of the school staff will increase their support of the programming.

Background

- ESMH clinicians need to outreach to school staff to break down traditional separations between mental health and education.

- Partnering with school staff to understand the needs of students also will reduce duplication of services or the development of services that are not thought to be effective.

Background

- This information can be gathered through needs assessments, focus groups, or more informal interviews with teachers.
- When conducting focus groups:
  - Limit the number of participants to 5-7 people
  - Invite participants that have diverse viewpoints
  - Have clear, open-ended questions
  - Be aware of time constraints
  - Assess needs, resources, and possible solutions
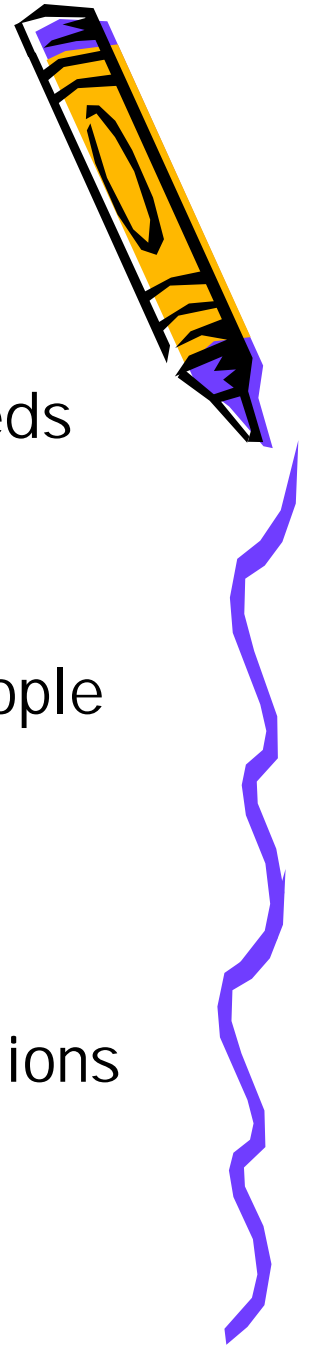
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Meet with teacher teams by grade level as one strategy to ensure that you have a thorough understanding of the issues.

- Survey staff through questionnaires prior to hosting focus groups. Use this information to guide the development of questions.

- Access existing data (e.g., needs assessments) to guide your questions and so you are aware of what information has already been collected.
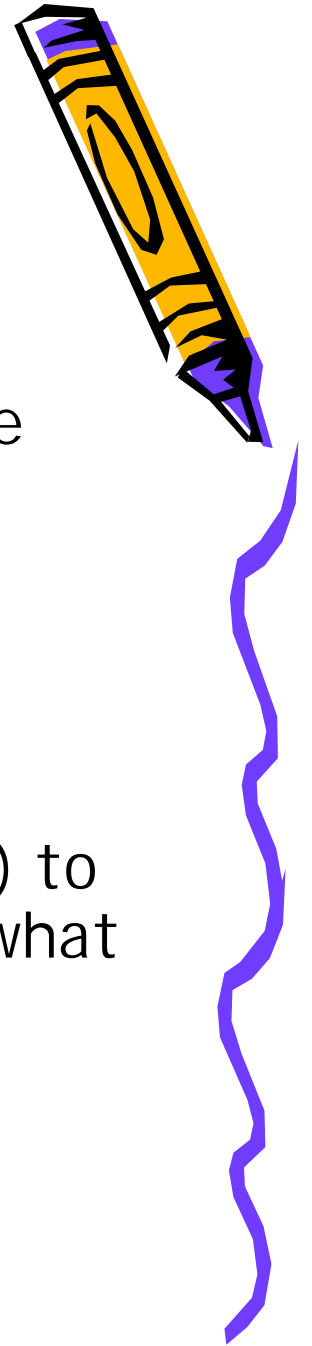
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Use existing staff teams that already have regularly scheduled meetings as way of conducting the focus groups.

- Meet with teachers during the professional development days before school starts.
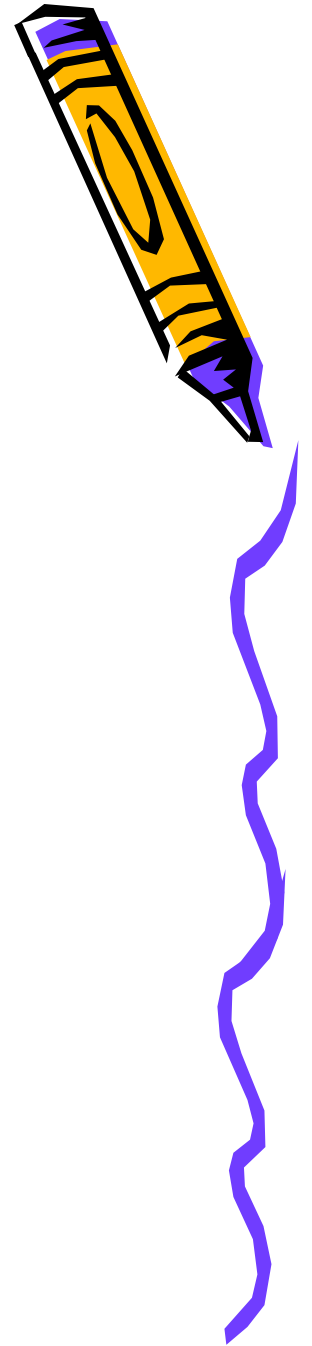
Helpful Hints

- Be aware of time limitations for teachers. Scheduling focus groups during the day may be challenging.

- Provide treats and resources for participations.

- Provide feedback to school administrators promptly on the information gathered through the focus groups/interviews.
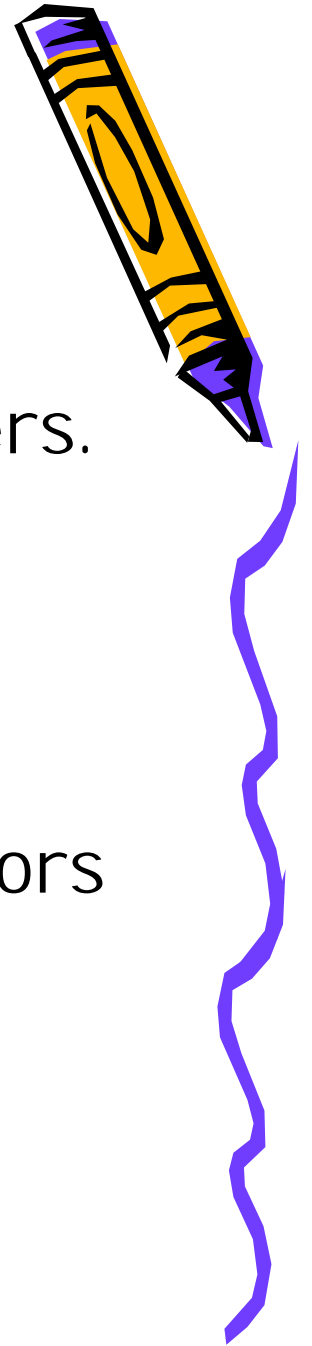
Helpful Hints

- Frame findings in a positive manner as opportunities for program enhancement rather than deficits in resources, students, or staff.

- Try to triangulate sources of information for greater accuracy (i.e., if only one person mentions an issue, then it should not be included). Data with a least two reference points is acceptable, with three being the ideal.

Helpful Hints

- Use the information gathering sessions as a time for school staff to begin to get to know you.

- Avoid using "mental health" jargon.

- Work to establish a common understanding of the issues facing students and the most pressing needs for teachers.

- Make sure to assess both student and staff needs and resources.

Helpful Hints

- After the data collection period, be responsive to the needs identified by staff and their recommendations for actions.

- Be open about what is feasible for the program and do not over promise what services can be provided.

- If you are not able to provide some of the services, work with teachers to identify additional resources for the school community and to facilitate community connections.

Web Resources

- Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Tools for school improvement planning (www.annenberginstitute.org/tools/tools/index.htm)
- Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, Resources on collaboration and comprehensive planning for services for children (www.air.org/cecp)
- The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, Children's Health Collaboration (www.healthinschools.org/collaboration.asp)
- Focus Groups (www2.edc.org/NTP/)

Web Resources

- Stakeholder Involvement in Educational Performance http://www.jstor.org/view/01623737/ap040056/04a00040/0
- NCREL, Needs assessment for professional development (www.ncrel.org/pd/needs.htm)
- Small School Project, Overview and guide for focus groups with sample tools and guidelines (www.smallschoolsproject.org/PDFS/focusgroups.PDF)
- Social Development Research Group, Research on effective practices and interventions that impact youth development (http://depts.washington.edu/sdrg/)
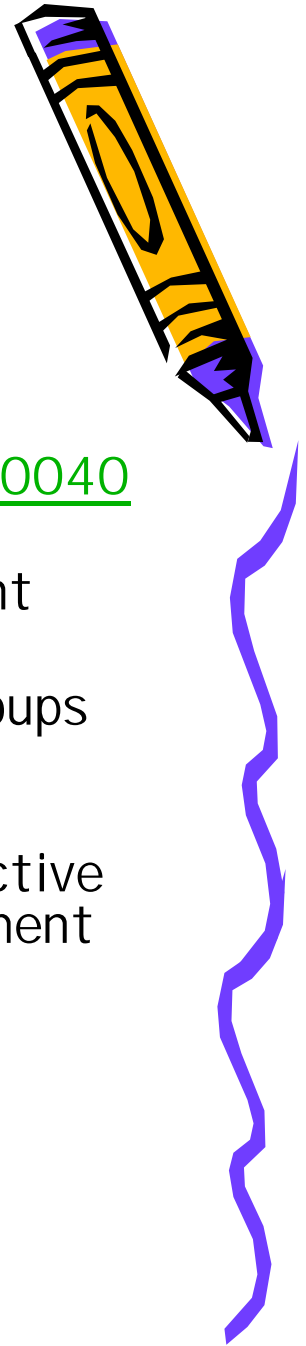
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