Indicator #14: Do you participate in methods or activities (e.g., meetings, focus groups, surveys) to obtain feedback on an ongoing basis from key stakeholders on how the program is functioning and how it can be improved?

Background

- The term stakeholder refers to individuals, agencies, and groups who have some stake or investment in the development, implementation, and evaluation of a given endeavor.
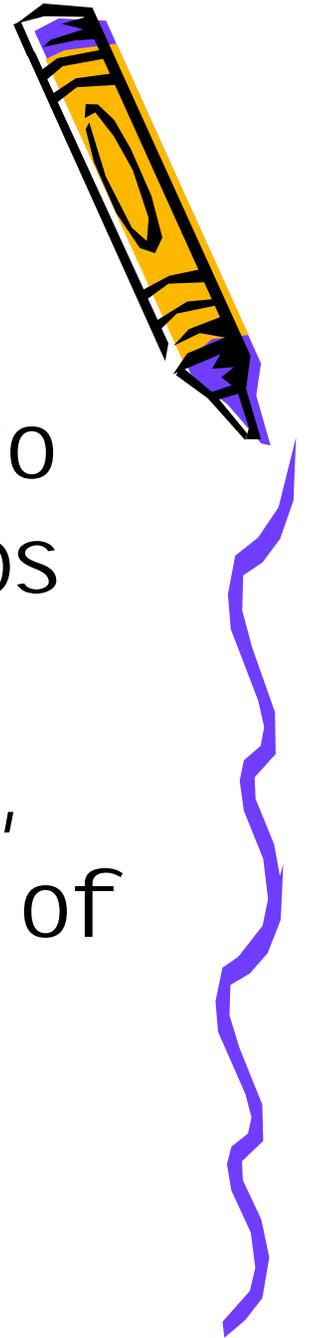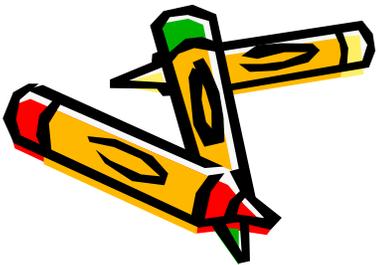
Background

- Key stakeholders for ESMH programs include: youth, parents and guardians, teachers, school administrators, school and community health staff, local and state government officials, staff from other child-serving agencies, community leaders, faith leaders, business leaders and staff, employees and administrators of civic organizations, funders, and advocates.
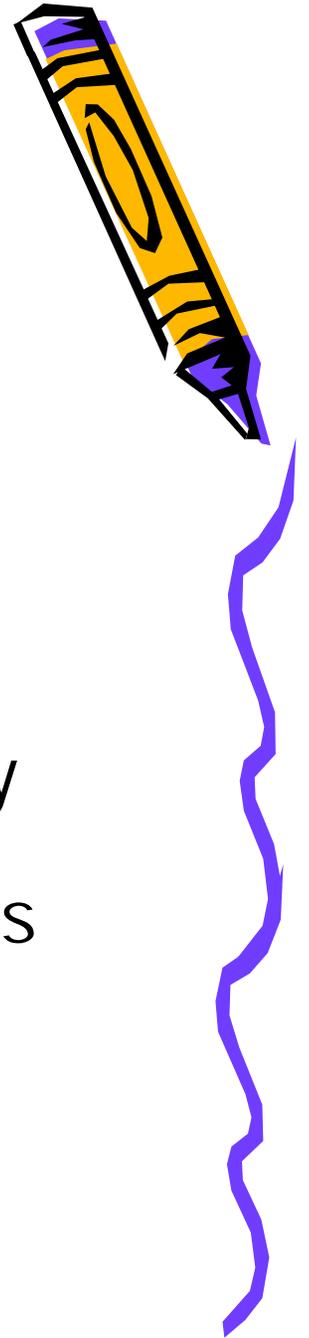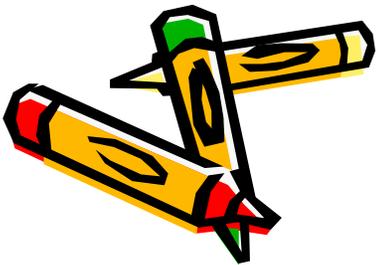
Background

- Obtaining feedback from stakeholders and meaningfully incorporating it is critical to buy-in, ongoing support, relevance of the program, and future sustainability.
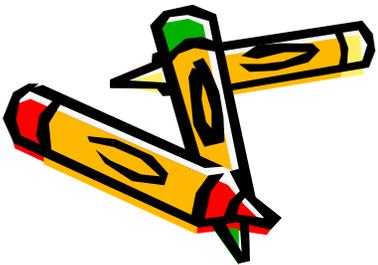
Background

- A variety of strategies/techniques exist for obtaining feedback from stakeholders including:
  - Focus group/talking circles
  - Peer review teams
  - Questionnaires/surveys
  - Key informant structured interviews
  - Informal interviews/questions
  - Attending and participating in school-based teams and community meetings
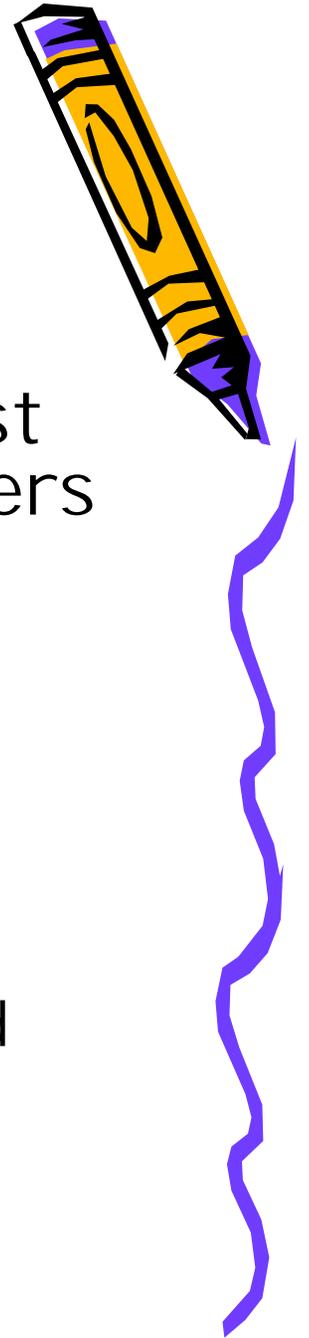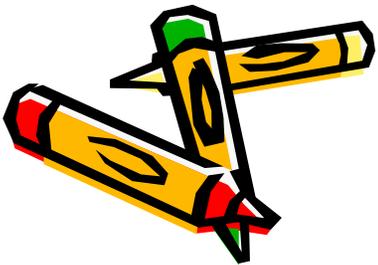
Background

- Regardless of method, feedback is often solicited about the following topics:
  - Satisfaction with services, processes, and program structure
  - Program impact in effecting change
  - Program's ability to meet needs in the community
  - Service utilization
  - Areas of needed improvement
  - Strengths of the program and its services
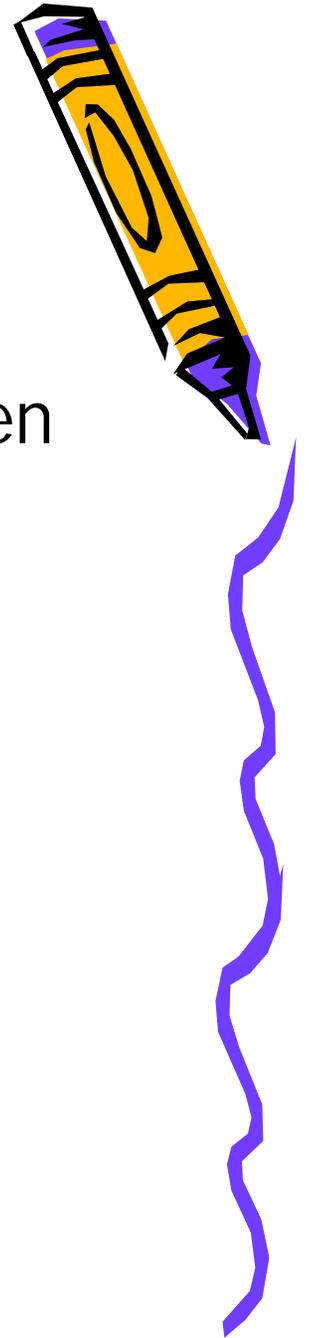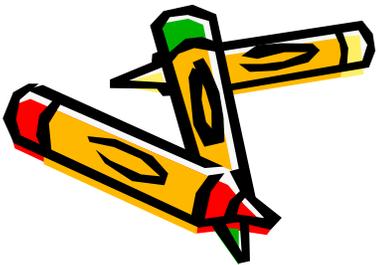
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Organize a focus group with stakeholders to solicit feedback on key program components (prevention, consultation, assessment, treatment, collaboration, referrals to resources, case management, crisis management).
- Create a structured interview that can be used to interview advisory board members, clients, families, and other key stakeholder about their experiences and viewpoints related to school mental health.
- Create a questionnaire that solicits feedback related to satisfaction with services, impact of services, and areas of needed improvement.
- Set up a comments box or email account for feedback from stakeholders.
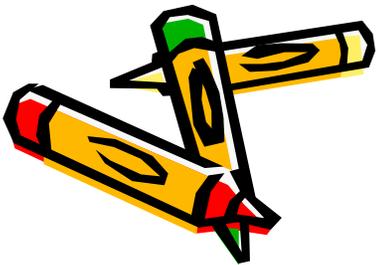
Menu of Suggested Activities

- Create a peer review process for reviewing cases that offers an opportunity to process quality of services (defined presenting concerns, comprehensive history and background, well-informed diagnostic formulation, clear treatment goals and strategies to achieve them, improved functioning and enhanced assets, patient and family collaborative involvement in treatment)
- Hold a retreat for key stakeholders to process their experiences with the program and to consider future directions of the program.
- Join school-based teams (School Improvement Team, Student Support Team, etc) and participate in community activities (volunteering, attending local events/festivals, joining local clubs/ organizations). Obtain feedback about the program on an informal basis through these activities.
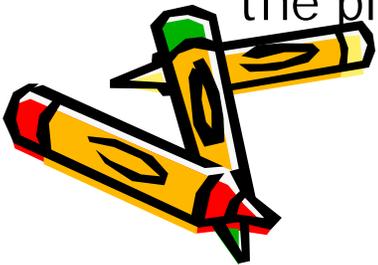
Helpful Hints

- When possible ensure stakeholders confidentiality in their responses. Ideally measures should be obtained from someone other than the individual's clinician or supervisor and can be coded to protect confidentiality.

- Try to ask open-ended questions that would allow stakeholders to elaborate on their feedback vs. responses that only need a yes/no answer.

- In holding retreats with staff, it may be helpful to have an outside facilitator lead the group to help encourage openness and increase comfort levels.
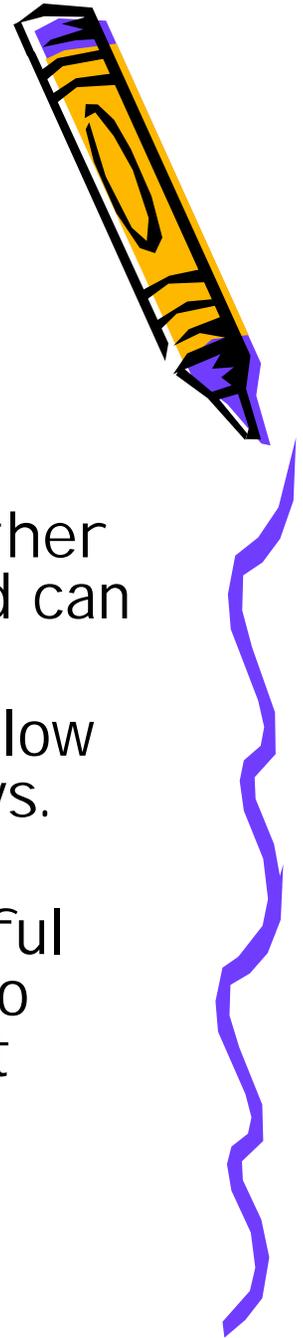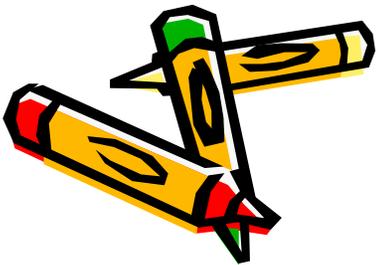
Helpful Hints

- Providing a summary of feedback to stakeholders and showing how it is incorporated will increase the likelihood of future willingness to provide feedback and will likely increase positive support and buy-in for the program.

- Don't just ask for feedback. Explain why it is needed and how it will be used.

- Make sure that all techniques for obtaining feedback are sensitive to language barriers and cultural diversity.
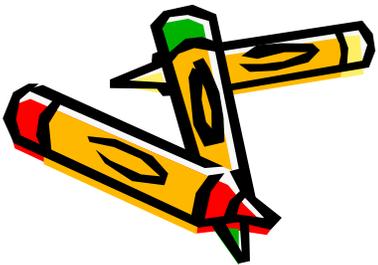
Web Resources

- Academic Development Institute, School Community Journal (http://www.adi.org/publications.html) under Recommendations for Research on the Effectiveness of School, Family, and Community Partnerships)

- Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships (http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm)

- Coalition for Community Schools, Community Schools Assessment Checklist (http://www.communityschools.org/pubs.coal.html under Strengthening Partnerships)

- Community Toolbox, University of Kansas, A Framework for Evaluation: A Gateway to Tools (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1338.htm); Conducting a Focus Group (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1018.htm)
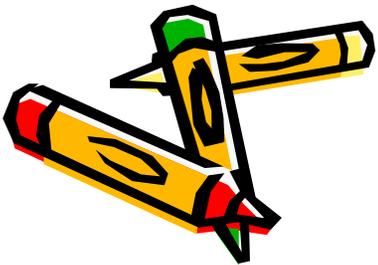
Background References

- Acosta, O.M., Tashman, N.A., Prodente, C., & Proescher, E. (2002). Implementing successful school mental health programs: Guidelines and recommendations. In H. Ghuman, M. Weist, & R. Saarles (Eds.), *Providing mental health services to youth where they are: School and community-based approaches.* New York: Taylor Francis.

- Ambrose, M.G., Weist, M.D., Schaeffer, C., Nabors, L.A., & Hill, S. (2002). Evaluation and quality improvement in school mental health programs. In H.S. Ghuman, M.D. Weist, & R.M. Sarles, (Eds.), *Providing Mental Health Services to Youth Where They Are* (pp. 95-112). New York: Taylor & Francis.

- Gilliam, A., Davis, D., Barrington, T., Lacson, R., Uhl, G., & Phoenix, U. (2002). The value of engaging stakeholders in planning and implementing evaluations. *AIDS Education and Prevention, (14),* 5-17.
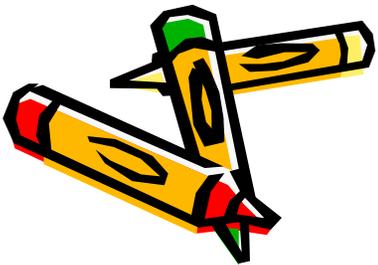
Background References

- Lever, N.A., Adelsheim, S., Prodente, C., Christodulu, K.V., Ambrose, M.G., Schlitt, J., & Weist, M.D. (2003). System, agency and stakeholder collaboration to advance mental health programs in schools. In M.D. Weist, S.W. Evans, & N.A. Lever (Eds.), *Handbook of school mental health programs: Advancing practice and research* (pp. 149-162). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

- Nabors, L., Lehmkuhl, H., & Weist, M. (2003). Continuous quality improvement and evaluation of expanded school mental health programs. In M.D. Weist, S.W. Evans, & N.A. Lever (Eds.), *Handbook of school mental health programs: Advancing practice and research* (pp. 275-284). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

- Nabors, L., Ramos, V., & Weist, M.D. (2001). Use of a focus group as a tool for evaluating programs for children and families. *Journal of Education and Psychological Consultation, 12,* 243-256.

- Nabors, L.A., Reynolds, M.W., & Weist, M.D. (2000). Qualitative evaluation of a high school mental health program. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29,* 1-13.