

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Family Involvement in School-Based Mental Health Information for Educators

Definition

Educators who understand that families generally are the ones most knowledgeable about their own children will be more likely to find a returned respect and spirit of collaboration with families. Educators who consult with families regarding concerns they may have about a child's mental health will benefit from family input and mutual collaboration. Teachers and other school personnel who are more informed about both family involvement in schools and children's mental health will be more likely to have success in teaching children with mental health needs. It has been established that children have greater academic success when families are involved in schools. Children with mental health disabilities certainly have the same, if not a greater need for their families and educators to work together. Educators who can approach families in a non-judgmental and cooperative spirit are more likely to have success in working with the child with mental health needs.

Why do we care?

- Children have more school success when families are involved in their education
- Positive family and staff interaction help to achieve overall positive school climate
- Schools with strong family involvement see greater student achievement
- School staff and families who work collaboratively for a student will be more likely to have student cooperation

What can we do about it?

- Educate yourself about mental health diagnoses in children and adolescents
- Work in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation with families to insure success for every child in school
- Adopt positive and effective communication strategies with all families
- Refer children to a mental health professional in your school if you have concerns
- Contact families with concerns about their child
- Refer families to support and advocacy groups if the family requests that you do so

Key Resources/Links

Center for the Advancement of Mental Health Practices in Schools

College of Education, University of Missouri

Excellent website with strategies for involving families in schools. *Tips for Involving Parents* <http://mhps.missouri.edu/involvingparents/index.shtml>

Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health

"The Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health is a grassroots coalition of family and advocacy organizations dedicated to:

- Improving services for children with mental health needs and their families
- Building a network of information and support for families across Maryland"

www.mdcoalition.org 410-730-8267, Toll Free 1-888-607-3637

NAMI Maryland

"NAMI Maryland is an advocacy organization for family and friends of people with serious mental illness, and people who have a mental illness."

<http://md.nami.org/> 410-863-0470, Toll Free Helpline 1-800-467-0075

Mental Health Association of Maryland

"The Mental Health Association of Maryland works to ensure that people with mental illness reach their rightful place as participation, productive members of our community."

<http://www.mhamd.org/> 410-235-1178, Toll Free 1-800-572-MHAM (6426)

Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland

"Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland promotes awareness and provides support to maximize the quality of life for individuals and families affected by learning and other disabilities."

<http://www.ldmaryland.org/> 1-888-265-6459

CHADD/Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Maryland Chapters

"CHADD is the nation's leading non-profit organization serving individuals with AD/HD and their families."

Local chapters are in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, Howard, and Montgomery Counties.

<http://www.chadd-mc.org/>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. *Facts for Families.*

"The AACAP developed Facts for Families to provide concise and up-to-date information on issues that affect children, teenagers and their families." Fact sheets are available on line on topics such as childhood depression, Lying, Grief, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren and Grief. These are a small sample of the topics.

http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/facts_for_families

Knowledge Exchange Network

The website for the National Mental Health Information Center, a component of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This website provides information on a multitude of topics. Examples of topics available are: "Your Child's Mental Health: 12 Questions Every Parent Should Ask", "The Myth of the 'Bad' Parent", "Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents".

<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>

Reference

Lowie, J. A., Lever, N. A., Ambrose, M. G., Tager, S. B., & Hill, S. (2003). Partnering with families in expanded school mental health programs. In M. D. Weist, S. W. Evans, N. A. Lever (Eds.) *Handbook of School Mental Health: Advancing Practice and Research*, pp. 135-147. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers: New York, NY.

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