Incorporating Family-Driven Principles in Schools: The School Responder Model

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Origins of the School Responder Model (SRM)

Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network 2007-2011

Participants: CT, CO, IL, LA, OH, PA, TX, WA

Major issues:
- Keep kids out of the system as much as possible
- Train adults
- Focus on family engagement

Models for Change – MacArthur Foundation

Coordinated by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice

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Students with disabilities are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than those without disabilities.

Students suspended or expelled are nearly 3x as likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the next year than their peers.

More than 1 in 4 boys of color with disabilities receive an out-of-school suspension.
Justice System Contact and Graduation

Students who are arrested are twice as likely not to graduate as those who are not arrested.

Students who are processed in court are four times as likely not to graduate as those who are not processed through court.
SRM as an Alternative to the School-Justice Pathway

- **School Infraction**
  - Responders complete behavioral health screening
  - School discipline

- **Out-of-School Suspension**
  - Clinical assessment for youth who flag on screening

- **Arrest**
  - Treatment plan and connection to behavioral health services

- **Entry into the Juvenile Justice System**

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JULY 25-28, 2018 | WASHINGTON, D.C.

KEY COMPONENTS
OF THE RESPONDER MODEL

Cross-Systems Collaborative Team
Voices from a range of stakeholders should be at the table from the outset of planning. Active involvement from law enforcement, schools, service providers, and families lays the foundation for a robust program structured for success.

Family and Youth Engagement
Family engagement is critical to ultimate success. Families must be actively involved at every stage of planning and implementation. Including grassroots community-based organizations may also foster acceptance among community members.

Implementation of a Behavioral Health Response
A behavioral health response that provides behavioral health screening and connection to clinical assessment and services is the cornerstone of a responder model.

Creation of Formal Structures
Responder initiatives must be institutionalized through formal structures that include:
• Training
• Policies and procedures
• Memoranda of Understanding between agencies
• Structured decision-making tools such as grids or matrices

Screening
• Brief triage process for every youth
• Often done by non-clinical staff
• Identifies youth in need of a clinical assessment and/or at urgent risk of harm
• Critical to use validated tools

Assessment
• Done by clinical staff
• In-depth, time consuming process
• Identifies clinical needs and forms the basis for a treatment plan

Services
• Develop a comprehensive list of local resources
• Establish formal referral processes between the responder and providers
• Institutionalize communication loops between the school responder and providers

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Where have SRMs worked before?

**NEVADA**
- 15% reduction in referrals to probation

**CONNECTICUT**
- In the first year of utilization, court referrals fall by an average of 45% at participating schools, concurrent with decreased arrests, re-arrests, suspensions, and expulsions.

**OHIO**
- For youths referred for behavior or truancy issues, 40% decrease in likelihood of additional infraction after participation in SRM program.

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Diversion v. Superintendent's Hearings

Weeks 1-30

Total: 245

- 123 Diversion
- 122 SUP Hearing

2016-2017

Total: 158

- 35 Total Incidents
- 123 Diversion
- 71.5% SUP Hearing
- 0.8% Diversion

Total: 35.5%
What Are Some of the Challenges of Family Engagement?

- Inability to open effective lines of communication with families
- Struggles to obtain consent for service provision for students
- Lack of family voice in system planning and quality assurance
Full Podcast Series: Family and Youth Engagement to Keep Kids in School

• Episode 1: Engaging Students to Provide Behavioral Health Supports in Schools
• Episode 2: Authentic Family Engagement: It’s More than a Pizza
• Episode 3: Helping Students Thrive by Supporting Their Parents and Caregivers

https://soundcloud.com/user-500128145

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Who do you need around your SRM planning table?
Barriers to Family Engagement

Use your mobile device to participate in the poll.
Rank order the listed barriers to family engagement from highest to lowest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank the barriers to family engagement below from highest to lowest:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health stigma and lack of trust among families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural resources (e.g., time, staffing, space)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited decision-making roles for parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power imbalances between school staff and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative attitude towards parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Structural Barriers to Family Engagement

- Cultural and linguistic factors
  - Role of parents in school setting
  - Language accessibility
  - Racial/Ethnic identity
  - Traditional expectations for involvement
  - Mental health stigma and lack of trust

- Limited Resources
  - Time
  - Incentives
  - Personnel
  - Language accessibility
  - Transportation
  - Meeting space
  - Technology

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Structural Barriers to Family Engagement

- **Traditional Methods of Engagement**
  - One-directional communication
  - Participant/volunteer v. Decision-maker roles

- **Power Imbalances**
  - Staff v. families
  - Cultural hierarchy
  - Access in school building
Attitudinal Barriers to Family Engagement

- Perception of families as disinterested
- Limited opportunities to build relationships
- Parents’ sense of belonging/comfort in school setting
- School climate and culture
FAVOR, Inc.

FAVOR, Inc. is a non-profit statewide family organization serving families, children and youth dealing with a broad spectrum of behavioral and mental health needs by providing family peer support and policy initiatives.

The organization was established in 2001 and became fully incorporated as a private non profit organization in October 2002.
FAVOR’s Role in The School Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)

Family Engagement Technical Assistance Process

- School staff presentations
- Family focus groups/community conversations
- Brief report with recommendations to remedy gaps in family engagement.

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What word pops out at you when you think of School & Family Engagement?
**Definition of Family Engagement**

**Family engagement in schools** is the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving students’ academic learning and other school activities.

**Family engagement in behavioral health** is the process by which families and providers develop and maintain a connection while simultaneously demonstrating and communicating information, needs, attitudes, and values. This definition suggests that engagement is an ongoing process necessary to develop and keep a positive alliance.

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A Family Story…

What experiences did the family struggle with?

What resources would this family have liked the school to have offered to her and her family? And when?

What was the school’s solution?

How can your school create support services for families and youth?
Ladder of Family Participation

- Family-initiated, shared decisions with organizations
- Family-initiated and directed
- Agency-initiated, shared decisions with families
- Families consulted and informed
- Families assigned but informed
- Families consulted as tokens
- Families used as decoration
- Families manipulated


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• **Identify** and maintain a key staff member who will be the champion for supporting family engagement activities

• Establish Utilize the family organization in training of families, youth and staff.

• Maintain **regular communication** between families and school staff to understand what engagement strategies benefit each families.

• Identify, develop and support Parent Advisory Councils and Parent Teacher Student Organizations.
• Creating a safe space to openly discuss concerns and working together to collaborate
• Mental health needs and barriers at school
• True family engagement happens when there is trust between school providers, parents, and students
• Parent involvement in the planning of their child’s Individualized Educations Plan (IEP)
• Consistency in providing tangible supports/resources, opportunities and inclusion
• Power dynamics amongst providers, youth, and families
• Cultural diversity and responsiveness when interacting with students and families
Thank you!

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