

Facilitating Families in Over-Coming Barriers to Their Engagement in Clinical Services

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Exercise

Please pair with the person next to you and each share something private about yourself that you may not want anyone else to know.

Barriers to Family Engagement in Clinical Services

- List 5 barriers in your experience that inhibit/discourage a family from engaging in clinical services for their child.

Barriers To Family Engagement

- Poverty, single parent status and stress
- Time, transportation, child care, competing priorities
- Attitudes about mental health, stigma
- Previous negative experiences with mental health or other social service institutions
- Lack of collaboration/respect

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Barriers to Involvement in Child Mental Health Interventions

- Exclusion by providers
- Stigma associated with mental illness and seeking care
- Concerns about confidentiality
- Cultural mistrust/differences
- Mental illness/substance abuse
- Lack of trust

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What would make a families' experience with your service positive?

Imagine you are a parent interfacing with your agency for the first time. Describe what would make the experience positive for you and your child. Start your description with the initial phone call and end at the point where you meet with the service provider the first time.

Overcoming Barriers

Connecting and developing a positive, trusting, collaborative relationship with the family is a prerequisite to helping overcome barriers to engaging in clinical services.

Strength Based Collaborative Relationships

- Everyone desires respect
- Everyone needs to be heard
- Everyone has strengths
- Judgments can wait
- Partners share power
- Partnership is a process

Narrative Reminders

- Externalize the Problem
Am I remembering that it is not the person, not the family –
It is the Problem that is the Problem
- Be Hospitable
Are we doing our best to help families to feel welcome and safe?
- Remain Curious
Can I speak mostly by asking questions to learn from others and
to listen more fully

Gallant, 2010

Narrative Reminders

- Collaborate
Can I connect with people in a way that together we will explore their relationship with Problems and together bring forth their wisdom, skills, beliefs and hopes?
- Double Listen
Am I listening to people in a way that helps me to hear what they value in life?

Gallant, 2010

Strength Based Relationship Building

Key elements include:

- Listening
- Demonstrating respect and empathy for family members
- Developing an understanding of the family's past experiences, current situation, concerns, and strengths
- Responding to concrete needs quickly
- Cultural sensitivity and understanding
- Establishing the purpose of involvement with the family
- Being aware of one's own biases and prejudices
- Validating the participatory role of the family
- Being consistent, reliable, and honest

Skills for Dealing with Families

- The delivery of services to vulnerable client populations rests on the engagement of clients in the helping process.
- Therefore it is critical for interviewers to develop and utilize focused culturally sensitive engagement skills that address the range of barriers that can exist within families, environments, and agencies interfering with the process of engagement.

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**Elements of the
Engagement Process**

1

Clarify the helping Process for the client...

- Carefully introduce self, agency intake process, and possible service options.
- Do not assume that client has been given accurate information about services.
- Do not assume clients know what is expected of them and what they should expect from intake process/worker

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**Elements of the
Engagement Process**

2

Develop the foundation for a **collaborative** working relationship...

- Balance the need to obtain intake information (agency assessment, insurance forms, etc.) with helping the child and family to “tell their own story” about why they have come.

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**Elements of the
Engagement Process**

3

Focus on immediate, practical concerns...

- Be ready to schedule a second appointment sooner than the following week.
- Parents often need help negotiating with other “systems” (i.e. school).
- Responding to parents concerns provide an opportunity for worker to demonstrate their commitment and potential capacity for help.

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Elements of the Engagement Process

4

Identify and problem-solve around barriers to help seeking

- Every first interview must explore potential barriers to obtaining ongoing services
- Specific obstacles, such as time and transportation must be addressed.
- Other types of barriers include previous negative experiences with helping professionals; discouragement by others to seek professional help; differences in race or ethnicity between the interviewer and the client; families experiences with racism and its impact on their willingness to receive services from a "system" need to be carefully explored.

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Tips on Engaging Culturally Diverse Families

- Exercise a genuine interest in learning more about the client's culture. This includes not only gaining knowledge about group tendencies through direct experience and readings but more importantly understanding how contextual factors may influence interaction (i.e., power dynamics related to differences in class, gender, race, etc., as well as the clients' values and perceptions).

Chung and Bemak (2002)

Tips on Engaging Culturally Diverse Families

- Understand and accept the context of family and community for clients from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a common value among Asian cultures is, "Everyone and everything are interrelated across space and time"
- Be knowledgeable about the psychosocial adjustment that must be made by clients who have moved from one environment to another. This minimizes the chance of misinterpreting the resulting behavior as pathological.

Chung and Bemak (2002)

Tips on Engaging Culturally Diverse Families

- Be highly sensitive to the oppression, discrimination, and racism that are encountered by many people and often on a daily basis as a way of better understanding the nature and impact of these experiences on human behavior.
- For those clients who feel underprivileged and devalued, it is essential to know and access community resources and services that support, empower, and promote social change.

Chung and Benak (2002)

Questions That Facilitate Collaboration, Trust and Participation of Families

- Reversal Questions
- Pessimistic Questions
- Coping Questions

Reversal Questions

Reversal questions draw on a families competency and convey confidence in the families ability to contribute to solutions

- Do you have any advice for me about how I can help your child?
- What do you think would be helpful to work on first that will make a difference?
- What could I do that would be most effective in getting to know your child?

Selekman, 1997

Pessimistic Questions

Pessimistic questions can be an effective engaging tool for creating hope and possibility with parents who feel overwhelmed and describe their child's mental health issues as chronic, oppressive, or out of control.

- What keeps you going?
- What has prevented you from throwing in the towel in your situation?
- Is there anything that you have tried that has helped even a little bit?
- Why are you willing to keep trying?

Berg and Miller, 1992

Coping Questions

Coping questions tend to elicit family members expertise in creative problem-solving

- What steps are you taking to prevent your situation from getting much worse?
- What others steps are you taking that seem to be helping?
- How was that made a difference?
- How did you get that to happen?

Berg and Miller, 1992

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