

Strategies to Engage Families in Treatment

- ❑ Telephone youth and adult caregivers prior to their initial appointments to remind them of their upcoming sessions.
- ❑ Expand your telephone intake procedure to go beyond basic information gathering and focus on the complex array of potential barriers to service involvement. It is helpful to view this initial contact as the beginning of service provision. The provider should attempt to establish a working alliance with the caregiver and develop strategies that will help all family members attend an intake appointment. The strategies may include the following:
 - Strengthening parents' confidence in their ability to bring the child to an initial mental health appointment and enhancing their perceptions of potential impact on their child.
 - Reaching out to other family members who are critical to successful involvement in services.
 - Clarify the need for child mental health care for the caregiver and the provider.
 - Identify attitudes about and previous experiences with mental health care that might dissuade the adult from bringing the child for services.
 - Develop strategies to overcome concrete obstacles, such as lack of time, transportation, child care, and other issues.
- ❑ During the first interview, the service provider may do the following:
 - Clarify the roles of the worker, agency, intake process, and possible service options.
 - Set the foundation for a collaborative working relationship.
 - Identify concrete, practical issues that could be addressed immediately.
 - Develop a plan to overcome barriers to ongoing involvement with the agency.
- ❑ Employ some of the evidence-supported approaches in addressing parental concerns and barriers during the course of treatment. These include:
 - The referral source, the client, and the therapist meet to collaborate in identifying needed resources (e.g., transportation, housing) that may impact engaging families in services.
 - Utilize enhanced family treatment - Examine and attempt to address parental concerns or barriers not directly related to the parent-child interaction, but in a larger context of their lives (e.g., attitudes toward therapy, financial concerns, marital relations, and work concerns).
- ❑ Utilize case managers and paraprofessionals to the child mental health service delivery system. They may aid in the following:
 - Encourage and enable families to enroll their children in mental health services and assist families in continuing with services that were recommended for the child.
 - Provided families with information, emotional support, and help with specific barriers, such as lack of transportation or child care.

Reference:

McKay, M. M., & Bannon, W. M. (2004). Engaging families in child mental health services. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 13, 905-921.