



Parent Partnerships Project for Children's Mental Health: Training for Professionals

Background

In the fall of 2003, PACER Center's Parent Partnership Project for Children's Mental Health conducted a survey to better understand what parents and families need from the children's mental health system in Minnesota. The research team developed a survey questionnaire, a telephone interview, and a focus group session directed at learning what was working in the children's mental health services system and what could be improved. There were 213 participants, including diverse families. These talking points can be used to educate other groups and organizations about concerns within the children's mental health system.

Professionals working with children with mental health issues need training

- **Many professionals were reported to be inadequately trained to deal with the broad range and complexity of the mental health problems.**
 - Pediatricians and school personnel were seen to need training in order to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health.
 - Pediatricians and school personnel are often the first persons a family will turn to for help.
- **Schools were often reported very resistant to providing services for children with behavioral or mental health needs.**
 - Schools need to have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility in providing behavioral and mental health services for children.
 - Families need to know what kind of services they can expect for their child.
 - Services must respect the beliefs and values of those seeking services.

Talking points recommendations:

- Training for existing practitioners in education and the medical fields is critical so they can recognize and provide appropriate help and services for children with behavior and mental health needs.
- Receiving any degree in education and renewal of teaching licensure should be contingent on talking college courses on dealing with behavior and mental health needs of children.
- Professionals must be trained in working with the families in the cultures they will encounter in their work.