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Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: An Ecological Model to Facilitate Home-School Partnerships

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Conjoint Behavioral Consultation:
An Ecological Model to Facilitate Home-School Partnerships

Susan M. Sheridan, Ph.D.

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What do We Mean When We Say “Collaboration?”
Why Collaborate with Families?

- Learning occurs across many settings and contexts
- There are several systems that interact to support the child’s development
- Children spend more time out of school than they do in school
- Maximizing the extent to which these systems work together on behalf of the child can close the achievement gap for students who are not succeeding in school

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- An extension of traditional (teacher) consultation that goes beyond the school setting and brings parents into the decision making process
- A vehicle by which to foster constructive, goal directed, solution-oriented services for children
- Emphasizes meaningful parental/family involvement in education
- Promotes and supports home-school partnerships in the context of cooperative and collegial problem-solving
Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

Based on the assumptions that:

- Consistency and congruency in approaches, attitudes, and actions across home & school systems are important
- Structured, joint problem solving facilitates clear communication, shared goals, and congruent practices

Conjoint Behavioral Consultation: A Definition

- A structured, indirect form of service delivery in which teachers and parents are brought together to collaboratively identify and address students’ needs (Sheridan et al., 1996; Sheridan & Kratochwill, 1992)

- All stages of consultation (from problem identification to plan evaluation) are conducted with parents and teachers together, in a simultaneous (rather than parallel) manner
Conceptual Bases: Ecological-Behavioral Theory

- Combines the empirical technology of behavioral analysis with the conceptual advances of ecological theory
- Allows for a comprehensive and functional understanding of a student’s needs
- Recognizes the importance of cross-setting intervention and data-based decision making
- Stresses the importance of looking at the entire system surrounding clients, as well as coordinating these systems
CBC Outcome Goals

- Address the needs that consultees have for students
- Obtain comprehensive data over extended time (temporal) and place (context)
- Improve skills and knowledge of all parties
- Establish consistent programming across settings
- Monitor effects (and side effects) of interventions systematically across settings
- Enhance generalization and maintenance of treatment effects

Video Example
Video Example

CBC Outcome Goals

- (How) Were various outcome goals illustrated in the videotaped example?
CBC Process Goals

- Improve communication and knowledge about the child, family, and classroom
- Increase commitments to educational goals
- Use consultee strengths to address needs
- Promote greater conceptualization of a student’s needs
- Increase the diversity of expertise and resources available to address concerns

CBC Process Goals

- Promote shared ownership for solutions
- Establish and strengthen home-school partnerships
- Strengthen the mesosystem – the connections, linkages, and relationships across home and school
- Provide opportunities for parents and teachers to become empowered
- Encourage parents to establish roles and beliefs in their ability to effectively contribute to their child’s learning and development
Video Example

Video Example
CBC Process Goals

- (How) Were various process goals illustrated in the videotaped example?

Stages of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

- Problem/Needs Identification
- Problem/Needs Analysis
- Plan Implementation
- Plan Evaluation
Problem/Needs Identification

Goals Include to:

- Identify strengths of the child, family, teacher, systems
- Behaviorally define the concern or need as it is represented across home and school settings
- Explore environmental conditions that may be contributing to or motivating problem behaviors (antecedent, consequent, and sequential conditions)
- Determine a shared goal for consultation
- Establish a procedure for the collection of baseline data across settings

Considerations:

- Priorities for consultation are identified jointly, with an emphasis on shared perspectives and decision making
- Careful specification and operational definitions of the concern is essential to ensure shared understanding of the problem, direct the focus of an intervention, and monitor progress
- Clarify specific settings within systems that will be the focus for intervention to focus and simplify procedures
Problem/Needs Identification

- Explore within- and across-setting environmental factors that contribute to or influence behaviors
  - Events that occur in one setting do affect what happens in another setting... What happens at home influence behaviors at school, and vice versa
  - Setting events: Events or factors that may occur in a time or place that is distal to the target behavior, but still influence its occurrence
  - Examples across home and school???

The class was quietly doing its lesson when Russell, suffering from problems at home, prepared to employ an attention-getting device.
Problem/Needs Identification

- Baseline data collection procedures are established and implemented to set the stage for careful, systematic, data-based decision making.
- Parents and teachers should assist in determining the most feasible and meaningful way to collect data.
- Make it easy by providing forms and/or using permanent or tangible evidence.

Video Example
Problem/Needs Analysis

Goals Include to:

- evaluate and obtain agreement on the sufficiency and adequacy of baseline data across settings
- identify setting events, ecological conditions, and cross-setting variables that may be impacting the target concerns
- collaboratively design an effective intervention plan across settings that is sensitive to setting-specific variables

Considerations:

- Baseline data collected across settings are explored
- Trends across settings (e.g., home and school) are investigated and highlighted when appropriate
  - Are there common things that happen across settings that trigger or maintain a behavior?
  - Do events occurring in one setting trigger or contribute to a behavior in another setting?
Problem/Needs Analysis

Considerations:

- Consultant should direct discussion around possible environmental conditions that may be contributing to the problem, in a collaborative and supportive manner.
- When eliciting parent’s and teacher’s perceptions about the purpose or function of the behavior, environmental (rather than internal) explanations can then be identified.
- Interpreting the problem in terms of environmental conditions provides an important link between assessment and intervention!
- Examples.....

Video Example
Plan Development

- Consultant, parent, and teacher together discuss general strategies and plans to be included in a treatment package across home and school settings.
- Strategies should be related to the environmental factors that contribute to the behavior.
  - Example: If child acts out to avoid doing schoolwork at home and school (escape), what would and would not be appropriate strategies?
- The closer the congruity and coordination of plans across settings, the better!
  - Home programs may involve home-school notes, procedures for enhancing learning environments and opportunities outside of school, etc.
- Brainstorming techniques are often useful to generate ideas openly from parents and teachers.
- Summarize the plan, being clear about what is to be done, when, how, and by whom... Write it down!

Treatment (Plan) Implementation

_Goals Include to:_

- monitor implementation of the intervention across settings.
- provide training to parents and teacher, if necessary.
- assess behavioral side effects and contrast effects; is the treatment causing any unforeseen problems or effects?
- determine the need for immediate revisions in the plan.
- continue data collection procedures across settings.
Treatment (Plan) Evaluation

*Goals Include to:*

- determine if the shared goals of consultation have been attained
- evaluate the effectiveness of the plan across settings
- discuss strategies and tactics regarding the continuation, modification, or termination of the treatment plan across settings
- schedule additional interviews if necessary
- discuss ways to continue conjoint problem solving or shared decision making

Video Example
Final Thoughts...

- Always focus on both outcomes AND process/relationships
- Engage in perspective taking – really listen!
- Use strengths of families, teachers, systems to promote effective problem solving
- Effective use of CBC strategies can:
  - Support continued, intentional approaches to joint problem solving
  - Encourage continuity and consistency in interventions to support students
  - Strengthen skills in all parties
  - Provide a context for families and teachers to feel empowered
  - Promote data-based decision making across settings
  - Provide opportunities for accountability

Thank You!!

Please contact me at:

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