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Processes and Procedures for Maximizing Success in Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

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Processes and Procedures for Maximizing Success in Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

Workshop Presented at the Annual Convention of the National Association of School Psychologists
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Overview of Home-School Partnerships

“... parents take their child home after professionals complete their services and parents continue providing the care for the larger portion of the child’s waking hours... No matter how skilled professionals are, or how loving parents are, each cannot achieve alone what the two parties, working hand-in-hand, can accomplish together” (Peterson & Cooper, 1989; pp. 229, 208).
Home and School as “Partners”

- Refers to a mutual effort toward a shared goal.
- Working as partners is an *attitude* – not solely an activity to be implemented.
- Home and school as partners is a *philosophy* and a way of thinking about sharing information and resources to promote children’s learning and development.
The class was quietly doing its lesson when Russell, suffering from problems at home, prepared to employ an attention-getting device.
Home and School as “Partners:”
Defining Features

1. A student-centered philosophy whose goals are to…
   a) Enhance success for students
   b) Improve learning opportunities and outcomes for children, including those that are… in nature.
      - Academic
      - Social
      - Emotional
      - Behavioral
   - Both families and educators are essential for children’s progress in school.

3. An emphasis on the interface between families and schools: the *relationship* or how families and schools work together to promote the academic and social development of students is underscored.
4. A preventive, solution-oriented focus, one where families and educators strive to create conditions that facilitate student learning and development.
Child Benefits

- Improved Academic Performance
- Better School Attendance
- Better Study Habits
- Fewer Discipline Problems
- More Positive Self-Image
- Increased Social Skills
- Feel Positively About Parent’s Involvement
Parent Benefits

- Develop Positive Attitudes About School
- Initiate Greater Community Support
- Develop Increased Self-Confidence
- Report Improved Parent-Child Relationships
- Report Increased Contacts with School
- Develop Effective Parenting Skills
- Report Wanting More Involvement
Teacher Benefits

- Become More Proficient in Professional Activities
- Allocate More Time to Instruction
- Become More Involved with Curriculum
- Develop More Student-Oriented Activities
Dimensions that Influence Home-School Communication

- Family Orientation: Opening the Door
- Positiveness: Thinking the Best of Families
- Sensitivity: In the Parents’ Shoes
- Responsiveness: Doing Whatever Needs to Be Done
- Friendliness: Treating Parents as Friends
- Child and Community Skills: Being a Resource
Assumptions and Attitudes Necessary for Effective Partnerships

See supplemental handouts
Conjoint Behavioral Consultation

“… a structured indirect form of service-delivery, in which parents and teachers are joined together to address the academic, social, or behavioral needs of an individual for whom both parties bear some responsibility.”

(Sheridan & Kratochwill, 1992; p. 122)
CBC Can be Discussed at Two Levels:

Level 1: The *Linear* CBC Problem-Solving Model (Content)

Level 2: The CBC *Process* (Dynamic/Relational Approach)
Level 1: A Linear Approach to CBC

Step 1: Pre-Consultation Contact

Step 2: The Conjoint Problem Identification Interview (CPII)

Step 3: The Conjoint Problem Analysis Interview (CPAI)
Level 1: A Linear Approach to CBC

Step 4: Intervention Implementation

Step 5: Conjoint Treatment Evaluation Interview (CTEI)

Step 6: Follow-Up Contact
Level 2: A Process-Oriented Approach to CBC

This approach considers the relational dynamics of consultation. Further, it pays heed to the following process goals as outlined by Sheridan, Kratochwill, and Bergan (1996):
CBC Process Goals

- Increase communication and knowledge about the family.
- Improve the relationship among the child, family, and school personnel.
- Establish a home-school partnership.
CBC Process Goals

- Promote shared ownership for problem definition and solution.
- Recognize the need to address problems as occurring across, rather than within, settings.
- Promote greater conceptualization of the problem.
Maximizing Success by Focusing on Process Goals

Case Studies illustrating various process goals of CBC will be presented by:

- Nicki Pechous
- Shannon Dowd
- Emily Warnes
- Sam Song
- Ariadne Schemm
The Case of “Travis”

Background Information:

- 8 years old, 3rd grade male with LD/reading
- Low SES family, single mother, poorly educated, unemployed
- Little structure at home
- School is primarily low SES
The Case of “Travis”

Presenting Concerns:
- Home: Tantrumming, swearing, disrespectful
- School: Working independently, swearing, name calling, disrespectful

Target Behaviors for CBC:
- Home: Tantrumming during TV
- School: Independent seat work; changed to swearing
Relational Goal: 
Increased Understanding of Family

- Mother had personal needs and lacked boundaries between self and children
- Mother negative about son, chaotic circumstances at home, and school
- Mother self-disclosed her own limitations, challenges in parenting; wanted what was best for children but lacked parenting skills
- CBC provided opportunity to learn about home life and identify *implicit goals* about what was realistic for this family
Increased Understanding of Family: Implicit Goals of CBC
Discussion of Video

- Statements that illustrate negativity between mom and son
- Influence of mom’s comments on teacher’s perceptions

Strategies used by consultant:
- Accept mom “where she was at”
- Nonjudgmental and accepting stance
Increased Understanding of Family: Implicit Goals of CBC
Discussion of Video

Consultant:
- modeled perspective taking for mom and teacher
- reframed negative comments
- modeled positive statements about child
- reinforced consultees and remained concrete
- focused on relative roles of participants

Toward end of CBC, mom became more positive about son and school, and...
Case Outcomes

**Behavioral Focus:**

Although objective information about the intervention and behavioral change is not available, several important outcomes were achieved indirectly:

- Travis’ tardies decreased tremendously
- He was eating breakfast before school
- Mom was spending more quality time with Travis
Case Outcomes

Relational Focus:

- The relationship between mom and teacher seemed improved
- Reframing and a positive focus resulted in less “complaining” about child
- Mom became more aware of school policies and problems
- Mom was able to communicate concerns that teacher addressed
The Case of “Brandy”

*Background Information:*

- 7 year old, 1st grade female
- Upper middle class family, dual parent household, youngest of 4
- Older siblings superior athletes
- Private Catholic school, grades K-8 with high academic expectations
- Very positive teacher who expressed “no problems” at school
The Case of “Brandy”

_Presenting Concerns:_

- Home: Temper tantrums, refuses to eat, struggles with reading, perfectionistic, “spoiled”
- School: None

_Target Behaviors for CBC:_

- Home: Verbal refusal to eat
- School: None
Relational Goal: Strengthening Relationships Among Participants (Parent/Child)

- Parents had very negative interaction style
- Consistently compared Brandy to siblings and pointed out flaws
- Displayed difficulty making positive statements about Brandy
- Father made negative statements about mother who was present, and drew parallels between Brandy and mom
Strengthening Relationship Among Participants (Parent/Child)
Discussion of Video

- Statements that illustrate dad’s negative comments about daughter
- Teacher attempted to maintain a positive stance about child
- In practice, problems with over-empathizing with negative parent...

**Strategies** used by consultant:
- Reframing
- Emphasizing positives in child
- Ignoring negative comments
Strengthening the Relationship Among Participants (Parent/Child)
Discussion of Video

Consultant:
- reframed negative comments
- worked with teacher to model positive statements about child

Dad:
- reported using more praise with daughter
- made repeated comments about positive changes in Brandy’s behaviors at home
Case Outcomes

**Behavioral Focus:**
- Dad reported that verbal refusals to eat were reduced significantly
- Dad reported overall improvements in child’s attitude, reading, etc.

**Relational Focus:**
- Positive interactions with the teacher increased; positive tone of teacher matched by dad
- Improved relationship between father and daughter
The Case of “Stephen”

Background Information:

- 8 year old, 3rd grade male
- Middle class family, dual parent household, oldest of 2
- Both parents very involved with children
- Private Catholic school, grades K-8 with high academic expectations
- Very concerned and dedicated teacher
- Negative history between parents and teacher
The Case of “Stephen”

Presenting Concerns:

- Oversensitive, cries when things don’t go his way, immature, attention seeking behaviors/remarks in class

Target Behaviors for CBC:

- Home & School: Crying
Relational Goal:
Promoting a Greater Conceptualization of the “Problem” – Perspective Taking

Teacher was very concerned that the crying behavior negatively affected peer relationships

Parents down-played evidence of a “problem”
- Focused on problems with peers, school
- Normalized Stephen’s crying behavior
- Discussed previous teacher’s skills
Promoting a Greater Conceptualization of the “Problem” – Perspective Taking
Discussion of Video

- Statements that illustrate mom’s different perspective of Stephen’s behaviors
- Teacher attempted to help parent “see” the problem from a school perspective
- Nonverbal messages conveying misunderstanding of each other’s perspectives

**Strategies** used by consultant:
- Listening
- Acknowledging different perspectives
- Reframing from “problem” to “opportunity”
Promoting a Greater Conceptualization of the “Problem” – Perspective Taking
Discussion of Video

Consultant:

- Reframed focus from problem to skill development
- Used effective nonverbal listening skills to convey understanding and acceptance of various viewpoints
- Used verbal acknowledgement of different perspectives
Case Outcomes

**Behavioral Focus:**

- Treatment plan that focused on teaching self-control and self-monitoring was more palatable to parents than focus on “Stephen’s problem”
- Reduction in crying outbursts (and duration) reported

**Relational Focus:**

- Better working relationship between teacher and parents
- Teacher and parents currently working together on other issues
- Parents still reticent to accept support services for Stephen
The Case of “Sam”

**Background Information:**
- 11 year old, 5th grade male
- Middle class family, single parent household, oldest of 2
- Spends every other weekend with dad, who is unreliable
- Private Catholic school, grades K-8 with high academic expectations
- Very concerned and dedicated teacher, who is involved with 2 CBC cases simultaneously
The Case of “Sam”

Presenting Concerns:
- Home: anger control, sibling fighting, and complying with homework
- School: anger control, staying on task, and quality of work

Target Behaviors for CBC:
- Home: Anger episodes
- School: Anger episodes/out of seat behavior
Relational Goal: Establishing a Home-School Partnership

- Mother and teacher did not communicate or collaborate around concerns for Sam; clear lack of engagement between parent and teacher.
- Concerns expressed by parent and teacher were similar but not shared previous to CBC.
- Concerns were expressed and discussed in a parallel, disconnected manner.
Establishing a Home-School Partnership
Discussion of Video

- Parallel speaking during initial stages of interviews
- Parent and teacher seemed disengaged

**Strategies** used by consultant:
- Making the process overt (provided rationales, expectations)
- Emphasizing the “team” concept (using ‘we,’ etc.)
- Highlighting similarities across settings
- Engaging in shared eye contact
- Encouraging future independent conjoint problem solving
Establishing a Home-School Partnership
Discussion of Video

Mom and teacher clearly invested in working together

Benefits of communicating and sharing in a plan were clear

Consultant reinforced continued independent problem solving among parent and teacher
Case Outcomes

*Behavioral Focus:*

- Goals at home were met, and parent reported that the plan was responsible for behavior change.
- Goal at school met for one week, however teacher stopped implementing the plan.
- Teacher identified an alternative concern that took precedence over target behavior.
Case Outcomes

Relational Focus:
- Mom demonstrated increased skills in problem solving
- Mom stated that she was more confident in handling problems independently
- Teacher gained a much better understanding of the child
- Ongoing collaborative problem solving increased without consultant involvement
The Case of “Jared”

Background Information:

- 15 year old, 9th grade male with history of BD classification in 6th grade and medications for ADHD (not current at the time of CBC)
- Low to middle SES dual parent family in a rural farming community
- Youngest of 3 boys, all with ADHD diagnoses
- History of alcoholism in family
- Public high school with 800 students from surrounding communities
The Case of “Jared”

*Presenting Concerns:*

- School: Disruptive, out of seat, lack of work, rudeness, lack of respect toward teachers
- Home: Failed to bring homework home, or initiate homework

*Target Behaviors for CBC:*

- School: In seat work completion, sitting quietly, raising hand when necessary
- Home: Bring homework home and initiate by 8 pm
Relational Goal: Shared Ownership for Problem Solution

- Mom concerned about Jared being placed in BD classroom
- Teacher’s perception of Jared quite negative ("I can’t stand him in my classroom")
- Parents and teachers had parallel concerns about
  - Jared not getting what was needed from each other (structure at home, attention in class)
  - Disruptive behaviors interfering with demonstration of skills
  - Failure to communicate about schoolwork
Shared Ownership for Problem Solution
Discussion of Video

- Prior to CBC, little discussion between parent and teacher
- Lack of clarity about academic expectations was apparent

**Strategies** used by consultant:
- Drawing distinct similarities across settings
- Structuring an intervention that required cooperation and communication
- Increasing responsibility for successful outcomes by including all participants, including Jared, in CBC and in plan
- Making the process overt
Shared Ownership for Problem Solution
Discussion of Video

- Plan tied home and school together; in order to be successful, performance across settings was necessary
- Jared took responsibility for problem solution
- Teacher made positive comments about Jared
- Mom and teacher reported satisfaction with knowing more about work and expectations
- Generalization to other settings/academic subjects began to further increase shared responsibility
Case Outcomes

Behavioral Focus:
- Goals achieved at home and at school
- Jared began bringing his homework home and behaved appropriately in the classroom
- His math teacher reported that “Jared is right where we want him”
- His grades improved from 4 D’s to 3 A’s and one D
- Jared began to come in after school for help; teachers reported increased motivation
Case Outcomes

Relational Focus:

- Jared’s parents and teachers viewed each other in a more positive light as both had fulfilled their responsibilities as consultees.
- The teachers were able to see an obvious change in behavior and appreciated Jared as a student; agreed that a BD resource room placement was unnecessary.
- Jared’s mother came to see her son as having academic potential as his grades improved.
Summary