Are We Practicing What We Preach? Family Partnership in Residential Care

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National Center for Adoption Competent Mental Health Services

Building Bridges to Improve Mental Health

BRIEF:

ARE WE PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH?

Family Partnership in Residential Care

About the literature review and sub-study

The International Research Committee of the Association of Children's Residential & Community Services (ACRC) completed an overarching systematic review of the literature on family partnership concerning youth outcomes using a tiered concept of family partnership developed by the Family-Run Executive Director Leadership Association (FREDLA). Although family engagement is known to be vital in achieving positive outcomes, the extensive literature review revealed very few studies indicating family partnership in TRC programs. The overall review found that the most common family involvement methods were family therapy and family visits to the program, and the most common family engagement methods were activities, therapies, and skill building occurring at the home with family present. No studies indicated family-driven care which is a full partnership with families.

Several journal articles have been published from this review, including Are We Practicing What We Preach? Family Partnership in Therapeutic Residential Care for Children and Youth, which is the focus of this brief. This sub-study delved into a subset (30 studies) from the full systematic review that indicated some form of family involvement or engagement. The sub-study explored the different partnership methods exemplified in each, extracting study details, TRC program details, sample size, family partnership tier, and associated methods, examining if TRCs are indeed "practicing what they preach."

Defining "Family Engagement" – A Continuum of Partnership

Recognizing that the term "family engagement" is defined and used in multiple ways, the main and sub-studies utilized tiered definitions of family partnership developed by FREDLA that occur along a continuum that differs in intensity and authenticity. The tiers of family partnership (pg. 2) include family involvement (family's inclusion in their child's care), family engagement (collaboration between therapeutic residential care program and families), and family-driven (families as full partners throughout the organization).

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Family Partnership in Residential Care