

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES IN MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Multi-tiered Systems of Support, MTSS is an evidence-based school framework that helps educators build relationships with students and connect students to needed supports. ⁵

Partnering with families is an engagement strategy that should be included across all tiers of support.

Tier 1

► Universal Strategies ¹

- **By building a relationship from the beginning**, assuring families how important their voice is needed and desired, you build trust with families that says to you want to hear from them, and you are listening.
- **Developing authentic partnerships with families is to believe in the value of hearing from families** to provide input not only about their child but enlisting them to weigh in on policies and procedures.
- Knowing how to capitalize on the family's expertise of their child will help you **strengthen and grow a collective family voice to inform your school and district to develop best practices.**
- **When families are seen as equal partners** in sharing the responsibilities of educating their children, staff, as well as families, begin to realize that no one has all the solutions. **There is a mutual respect, trust and open-mindedness that leads to partnership.** There is a **shared vision and ownership** of the work being done on behalf of schools, families, and youth.

► Is Prevention and spans many mental health practices and supports ¹

- **Develop positive relationships with families before Tier 2 or 3 supports are needed.**
- Make every effort to meet with families when and where they are comfortable. Be creative!
- When building a relationship with parents, find out how the student learns at home.
- Leverage district resources and engage families and community members in identifying and responding to "whole child" needs of students.
- Partner with Local Mental Health Authorities and other community members to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid, YMHFA and teen Mental Health First Aid, tMHFA to **school staff and families.** Invest time and resources in families, providing education and developing structures and programs to promote family voice and family leaders. It is a **Best Practice to provide YMHFA to families of students.**

Tier 2

► Requires some additional planned interventions and positive engagement with caring adults to prevent emotional or behavioral concerns from emerging or worsening. ²

- Cultural competence and **system of care values demands inclusion of families in all levels of systems** and all tiers with the MTSS. **Cultural competence, responsiveness and humility will open the door to authentic relationships with families.** Students benefit from authentic partnerships.
- Interventions and positive engagements should provide support that **is family driven, youth guided, community based and culturally grounded.**
- Include the family in developing a Behavior Intervention Plan, BIP, incorporating positive behavior strategies.
- By partnering with families, the students know both the teacher and their families care for them.
- Always use person first language. Avoid labeling a student, that only leads to stigma and can alienate the family. Always provide comments in a strength based, positive manner.

Tier 3

► Approximately 5 percent of students on average will experience significant mental health concerns that call for **more intensive and individualized services that are paired with the lower-level strategies within the MTSS framework.** This includes treatment services provided by a school-based or school-connected health professional or referral to community-based providers. ³

- Continue incorporating strategies from Tier 1 and 2 while providing culturally responsive supports to caregivers and families.
- As the school team builds, continue ensuring parents are partners.
- **If positive relationships have been established early communication will be easier with families** if next steps into Tier 3 supports are needed.
- **Consider promoting parent engagement by designating a behavioral health parent-liaison at each SHAC, School Health Advisory Committee.**
- Provide referrals to CRGG, Community Resource Coordination Groups. Know local statewide organizations like Texas Family Voice Network, TxFVN to refer families for additional resources.
- Learn more about parent peer support providers with lived experience parenting a child or young adult with a mental health, substance use or developmental disability and link families to those individuals.
- **A culturally responsive step would be employing a Certified Family Partner who is a trained provider of support to caregivers and families of youth with high level behavioral health needs.**

Tier 4

► Exceeds the duties or competencies of the school counselor, **referrals are made to other district or community resources** ⁴

- **Consider partnering with the Local Mental Health Authority** can provide more extensive services. Wraparound Services - Family Partners - Crisis Services and in school behavioral health skills trainings.
- Education Services Centers, ESCs now have a mental health liaison from which the school can receive consultation for mental health education coordination.



Are you a family member of a child or youth that has a mental or behavioral health condition? Are you interested in standing with other families to provide a united voice for systems change? If so, please contact us to learn more about Texas Family Voice Network.

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Students benefit from a collaborative partnership with family and community. While there is not a set way to engage families and strengthen relationships, the first step is to examine you and your school staff's understanding of the value of partnering with parents and caregivers.

Learn more about system of care values and develop a system of care approach to providing support to students and their families that is family driven, youth guided, community based and culturally grounded.

Cultural competence and system of care values demands inclusion of families in all levels of systems and all tiers within the MTSS, Multi-tiered System of Support. Cultural competence, responsiveness and humility will open the door to authentic relationships with families.

1,2,3,4,5 Adapted from The Collaborative Task Force on Public School Mental Health Services – Year 1 Report November 2, 2020