

A Checklist for Effective Parent-Professional Collaboration

Notes:

- This checklist was adapted for the March 26, 2014 PNSAS Student Assistance Liaison Professional Development WebEx entitled “Is It Resistance or Something Else?” from appendices in a CASSP discussion paper entitled “Parent/Professional Collaboration: The Current Reality and Challenges for the Future” by Joyce Robin Borden and Glenda Z. Fine, published in November of 1996. Used by permission. See original citation at the bottom of this document.
- Some of these items may fall outside the scope of your job duties. However they do provide a philosophical framework for approaching parents as collaborative partners.

For Professionals:

- Have I put myself in the parent’s place and mentally reversed roles to consider how I would feel as the parent of a child with an emotional disability?
- Do I see the child/adolescent in more than one dimension, looking beyond the diagnosis or disability?
- Am I able to keep in mind that the child/adolescent is a person whom the parent loves?
- Do I really believe that parents are equal to me as a professional and, in fact, are experts on their child?
- Do I consistently value the comments and insights of parents and make use of their reservoir of knowledge about the child’s total needs and activities?
- Do I judge the child/adolescent in terms of his or her progress and communicate hope to the parents by doing so?
- Do I listen to parents, communicating with words, eye contact posture that I respect and value their insights?
- Do I ask questions of parents, listen to their answers and respond to them?
- Do I work to create an environment in which parents are comfortable enough to speak and interact?
- Am I informed about the individual child’s case before the appointment or group session, placing equal value on the parents’ time with my own time?
- Do I treat each parent I come in contact with as an adult who can understand a subject of vital concern?
- Do I speak plainly, avoiding the jargon of medicine, sociology, psychology or social work?
- Do I make a consistent effort to consider the child as part of a family, consulting parents about the important people in the child’s life and how their attitudes and reactions affect the child?
- Do I distinguish between fact and opinion when I discuss a child’s problems and potential with a parent?
- Do I make every effort to steer parents toward solutions and resources, and explanations as well as brochures about potential services, other supportive arrangements, and financial aid?
- Do I tell each family about other families in similar situations, recognizing parents as a major source of support and information and, at the same time, respecting their right to confidentiality?
- At the request of parents, am I an active part of their information and referral network, expending time and energy to provide functional contacts to points in the service system and to parent support networks?

- Do I express hope to parents through my attitude and my words, avoiding absolutes like “always” and “never”?
- Do I see my goal for interactions with parents the mutual understanding of a problem so that we can take action as a team to alleviate the problem?
- Do I actively involve the parents of each child in the establishment of a plan of action or treatment and continually review, evaluate and revise the plan with the parents?
- Do I make appointments and provide services at times and in places which are convenient for the family and are *within the scope of my job description and duties and the letter of agreement*
- Do I obtain and share information from other appropriate professionals (*with appropriate signed releases of information*) to insure that services are not duplicated and that families do not expend unnecessary energy searching for providers and services?

Questions for this checklist were stimulated by: Alexander, R. & Tompkins-McGill, P (1987). Notes to the experts from the parents of a handicapped child. *Social Work*, 32 (4) pp. 361-2.