

Nebraska Collaborative Capstone Project Summary

Description

The Nebraska Collaborative has chosen to focus on and address the overarching problem of overutilization of punitive measures to address adolescent behavior within the school setting. We will be partnering with Operation Youth Success (OYS), Douglas County Youth Impact, Douglas County Attorney's Office, Douglas County Juvenile Court, Omaha Public Schools (OPS), Nebraska State Probation, Nebraska Families Collaborative (NFC), Omaha Police Department (OPD), Westside Community Schools many contracted providers for probation, and a number of other key stakeholders to be identified as we progress.

District 4J Probation began the 2015-16 school year by placing a probation officer in each of the two schools identified to participate in the pilot, South High School and the Blackburn Alternative Program. The pilot will include both preventative and responsive strategies to address out of school suspensions and expulsions affecting youth under the supervision of a probation officer. As a preventative measure, at each location, the Probation Officer (PO) and School Resource Officer (SRO) will lead a weekly multidisciplinary team of staff to review the circumstances of each system-involved youth at the school. This team will function similarly to a Tier 2 behavior intervention team, reviewing and adjusting plans where circumstances have changed or current intervention is not adequate. This team will also determine how individual students will be supported in the case of an out-of-school disciplinary placement. This support may include the collaborative efforts of school staff, juvenile justice staff and other key stakeholders.

Rationale

A review of current literature as well as local anecdotal evidence indicates justice system involved youth are at a higher risk for out-of-school behavioral interventions in the school setting. The Omaha Public Schools system serves roughly 54.9% of the youth on a term of probation. These youth range from the fifth to the twelfth grade. An out-of-school placement has been defined for our purpose as an out of school suspension or expulsion.

All youth under the supervision of Nebraska State Probation undergo a Youthful Level of Service Inventory (YLS), which allows for officers to determine a juvenile's risk to recidivate. Several meta-analyses that have determined the validity of the tool. Campbell, et al., (2014) found youth scoring in the areas related to school (Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom, Disruptive Behavior on School Grounds, Low Achievement, Problems with Peers in School, and Problems with Teachers in School) are significant factors in recidivism reduction, should professionals establish appropriate interventions to mitigate the risk factors.

Utilization of an Integrated Model to address identified issues in an evidenced based manner has been shown to provide for increased success (Guevara & Solomon, 2009). Our proposed Integrated Model will include the use of evidence based principles, organizational development and collaboration. "Establishing consistent opportunities for training among staff of multiple agencies creates an environment of partnership" (Gonsoulin & Read, 2011, p. 7). The multi-disciplinary team approach to problem-solving around student behavior and success has similarly been shown to lead to improved outcomes (Irwin & Farr, 2004). Improvement in the treatment of system-involved youth in the school setting, not only allows for increased consistency in the school setting, but also ultimately reduces recidivism rates.

Strategies

In order to effectuate this change, we have identified the justice system-involved youth at our target school locations. We have collaborated with OPS officials to determine existing services within the school available to these youth, and have identified the role of the probation officer to be co-located within the school. The collaborative group from Nebraska has chosen to achieve the aforementioned goal with the following strategies:

1. Identify and potentially increase program and service alternatives to address the presenting problem behavior of youth presently involved in the juvenile justice system;
2. Improve and formalize cross-system collaboration through convening and facilitating a multi-disciplinary team approach to developing student-focused incident prevention plans;
3. Increase the utilization of non-punitive response as a consequence to problem behavior of youth involved in the juvenile justice system;
4. Decrease the incidence of significant behavior infractions, and thus the need for suspensions and expulsions among the youth presently involved in the juvenile justice system by identifying and implementing pro-social supports, and gaining an understanding of why the youth is behaving in a negative manner.

Action Steps

1. Our collaborative will identify evidence-based practices to identify the potential augmentation of existing school discipline matrices and behavior intervention strategies (October 2015 – June 2016);
2. Cross-system planning will be conducted to increase communication among identified partners, ascertain school-based and community resources and, facilitate the development of a formalized collaborative response (November 2016 and Ongoing);
3. Identified key stakeholders will attend trainings on trauma informed practices, restorative justice practices and will learn how to implement appropriate interventions for the identified youth and family members (January 2015 – June 2016);
4. Identified partners will assist in the development of memoranda of understanding, allowing each agency to formally commit to this reform (January 2016 and Ongoing).

Success Measurement

Through the OYS initiative, our efforts will be tracked and measured in collaboration by a research coordinator with the University of Omaha's Center for Justice Research and OPS' Research Department. The Developmental Evaluation will determine fidelity of implementation as well as our overall outcomes and the identification for areas of improvement.

The performance of this project will be measured using four different data points:

1. Preventative Metrics;
2. Implementation or Process Measures;
3. Failure Indicators;
4. Success Indicators.

References

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