MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE SYSTEM

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH
PRESENTERS:

Mental Health Triage Therapists:

- Shereen Anderson, MS, LMFT
- Alyson Laidlaw, MS, LMFT
- Londa Wagner, MS, NCC, LMFT

Disclosures:
- We have no financial conflicts of interest
- We will not discuss off-label use of medications
WHAT IS THE MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM?

• A program designed to assist in meeting the needs of District #742 students who are in urgent need of mental health care.
THE BIG PROBLEM...

• Timely access
  • People began recognizing that children in need of mental health services were slipping through the cracks

• Long waits for counseling/diagnostic assessments and psychiatric evaluations
THE GOAL

• Provide timely access to mental health services for children
  • birth to age 21
  • attend school in the St. Cloud School District
SCHOOL-BASED TRIAGE THERAPIST

- Employed by St. Cloud School District
- Licensure: LMFT, School Counselor
- Offices within the schools
- Initial program was funded by grant dollars
- Eventually transitioned to a district-funded program
MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE SYSTEM...HOW IT WORKS

• Phone consultation with referral source
  • School staff / contact person
  • Physicians
  • Parents
  • Other community agencies

• Determine if child meets specific criteria
  • Danger to self
  • Danger to others
  • Impaired functioning
DEFINITION OF IMPAIRED FUNCTIONING

• Severe attention difficulties
• Severe depression and/or anxiety
  • Anhedonia
  • Mood swings
  • Sad, irritable mood
• Behavior issues
  • Argues, oppositional, defiant, bullying peers
  • Damages property
  • Lies, cons, blames others for own behavior
TRIAGE-MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Crisis response – BAN, ER
- Reserved diagnostic assessments weekly
  - Several area mental health agencies
- Seven crisis psychiatric evaluations monthly
  - Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health / St. Cloud Hospital
- Access to psychological testing
- Reconnect with previous services
- In-home family therapy
- Partial Hospitalization Program
- County Mental Health Services
MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE THERAPISTS

- Gather information / Assessment Process

- Utilize MHTS Questionnaire
  - Meet with parents
    - flexible, mobile
  - Consult with school staff
    - meetings, staffings, phone calls, brainstorming ideas
  - Pursue medical records or assessments that have been done in the past by other providers
  - Meet with child
    - flexible, mobile
  - Administer Inventories: Vanderbilt, BASC, CDI, RCMAS, ASQ:SE
  - Observe child in school / home / daycare setting
MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE THERAPISTS

• Paperwork
  • Triage Therapist helps the parent(s) wade through the sometimes overwhelming paperwork
    • School District
    • Mental Health Agency
    • Releases/registration/insurance
    • Developmental information, etc.

• Review all information and data; Compile information into a report
WHERE THE “TRIAGE” COMES IN...

- **Triage** (tree-äzh’, tree’-äzh) noun. 1. prioritization of patients for medical treatment: the process of prioritizing sick or injured people for treatment according to the seriousness of the condition or injury

- Mental Health Triage Therapists review each case

- Students are “triaged” by comparing the level of the need for services

- The student with the highest needs at that time is offered the appointment
MENTAL HEALTH TRIAGE THERAPIST

• Attends each psychiatric evaluation
• Attends feedback session after psychological testing
• Reports back to the school the results and recommendations from the evaluation
• Provides follow-up
  • PE reports are sent to the triage therapist
  • Consultation
  • Liaison between school and mental health agencies
QUESTIONNAIRE

• Danger to self

• Danger to others

• Traumatic stressors

• Mood
QUESTIONNAIRE

- Functioning
  - Health concerns
  - Behavior
  - Chemical history
  - Sleep
  - Appetite
  - Sensory
  - Self-regulation
QUESTIONNAIRE

• School behavior
  • Academic
  • Attendance
  • Activity level
  • Social
  • Other behaviors
OTHER ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

• Advocate for parents and children
• Liaison between school and community resources
• Staff education/staff development
• Mental health resources for teachers/parents
• Consultation
• Crisis response
EVALUATION OF TRIAGE PROCESS/PROGRAM

• Database

• Checking in with partners to assess efficiency, effectiveness, timeliness

• Learning each agencies preferences and requirements

• Providers’ specialties, age range, insurance coverage, licensure, etc.

• Communication and relationship building
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