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Consultation in Schools
Evaluation Interview
April 21, 2014

For the consultation project I worked with the guidance counselor of a 7th grade student who was engaging in school refusal due to heightened levels of anxiety. Self-esteem and self-confidence are also contributing factors surrounding her anxiety. She had a history of missing school in the past, especially after school vacations, long weekends, and sick days. Her family has always been very supportive of her and although they want the best for her, they were not providing her with the skills she needed to cope with her anxious feelings. According to the guidance counselor, the student has also been able to manage her anxious feelings in the past; however with the added pressures and increased workload of the seventh grade she began to fall apart more than usual due to lack of coping strategies. The crisis team was called to the school and she also went to the emergency room due to overwhelming panic attacks. The school has continued to be very supportive, decreasing the workload and school demands, having her do school work in student services, attend her small group classes, and lunch groups. However, she was still unable to manage when she grew overwhelmed.

Her growing number of absences lead to a placement in the middle school stabilization program, which is a 45-day placement meant to be a transition placement to get students back to school. In the middle school stabilization program (MSP) students learn coping strategies and engage in schoolwork in a smaller more therapeutic setting. They have the opportunity to learn how to self-monitor, break workloads down into shorter periods, and earn rewards for completed work and good behavior. The school day begins later and ends earlier. The program can be different for students who are there, however they all follow the same daily schedule.

Upon observation of the student involved for purposes of the consultation project, I was able to see first-hand the program they have set in place for her at MSP. They do a lot of monitoring and reality checking with her because she is very capable of doing the work yet still

self-reports that it was too overwhelming. She engages in a lot of work avoidance tasks and often does better when someone is sitting there with her more one-to-one. They have started her on a healthy cooking and eating routine along with exercise. She also has a mentor that she sees outside of school. The mentor is part of a mentoring fitness program and they are able to go rock-climbing, go to the Y along with other fitness related activities. The commitment to this program lasts for a year and can be extended longer. Also at MSP, they have her utilizing and trying out different relaxation applications on her iPad.

The guidance counselor as well as the social worker from MSP were both very pleased that the parents were starting to consider medication along with outside therapy support for the student. The general understanding is that it would really help along with the coping strategies she is learning for her to be able to move forward. At her most recent meeting, they were discussing her coming back to the middle school gradually and learning how to generalize the skills she is learning. According to the guidance counselor, she is fairly nervous about coming back even though she presents well on the surface. The guidance counselor feels that once all the pieces and supports are put in place for her return the student will do well. It is unclear how much she will be back by the end of the year. The student is going to start back in her smaller group classes for English, reading support, and lunch in student services. She is much more anxious about going back to her larger group classes and with the gradual transition back they are not sure how realistic it is going to be to get her back in those larger general education classes full time by the end of the year.

In order to track her progress I kept track of her attendance before her placement in MSP and her attendance after her placement at MSP. Before she was placed in MSP she was absent a total of 11 school days since the beginning of January. She entered MSP in the beginning of

February and her attendance improved where she was only out of school a total of 7 days, with 5 of those attributed to illness. Her time at MSP has been going really well, almost too well in terms of her being so comfortable there she does not want to transition back. They do not want her to get too comfortable to a point where she cannot return to the school. She does seem to be doing better now that supports are falling more into place both at home and in school. In looking at the Goal Attainment Scaling, the student is better able to identify and express her emotions and is able to identify appropriate coping strategies. She is still working on generalizing these skills. The student is able to identify triggers of her anxious feelings at the expected level, after processing with an adult she is able to identify the triggers of her feelings, however is unable to do so in the moment. The guidance counselor is satisfied with the intervention piece that is taking place at MSP and how they are working towards generalizing her coping strategies.

In the future if she does regress again, the school and her parents may need to consider an outside placement in order for her to finish middle school. It may be harder for her to go to an outside placement considering she is so well connected at the school. When she gets to the high school it will be better because they have programs inside of programs. Another option to consider besides the outside placement would be to modify her workload even more in order to keep her with her friends and teachers that she knows and is comfortable with. The hope is that once medication comes into play and she transitions back gradually with the current supports along with outside therapy, she will be in a better place to stay and finish her middle school years.

The guidance counselor felt that the consultation piece went well. She liked being able to see things from another perspective and how it can apply to the case. The guidance counselor also mentioned that it is not very often where they can just sit and talk about a specific student

for an extended period of time, so it was nice to take the time to look at things from all different views in order to move forward with the best support plan.

Overall I feel that I was able to learn a lot about the consultation process, including its rewards and challenges. I agree that it is helpful to have the time to sit with another individual and talk about a specific student and how to best plan for them because in reality this does not happen that often with the volume of students and the time it would take to work with them all individually. I also agree with the guidance counselor that talking with another person allows for a broader understanding of the problem.

I do feel that in this case particularly there were more challenges than I had originally anticipated. When the student entered the stabilization program, I felt that my role had drastically diminished. The topic of school refusal was also challenging because there is only so much one can do to get a student to come in. There were many moving parts to this case, along with the involvement of many different people. Gathering data from the stabilization program was also challenging because they were changing the data they were collecting so often and would not keep the data they gathered because they felt it was not meaningful since each day looked the same. Having so much out of my control with this case did feel odd to me, especially for the purposes of the assignment. I wish I could have been more involved with the intervention aspect of the case. Communication with so many people in different buildings was a challenge as well. There were also moments, in talking with the guidance counselor that the main outcome for the assignment may have been misunderstood.

The consultation piece was very helpful in learning about how to do consultation according to Best Practice. Listening to the recordings was the most helpful aspects because I was able to go back and listen to what I said in response to the consultee and also see how I

could improve. I do feel that if there was not a recording more information would have come out or have been discussed that may not have been brought up due to the individual's awareness of being recorded. I did find that the consultee was the most uncomfortable with that aspect of the process.

I have observed consultation being done by my supervisor that looks very different and is more goal oriented because she only has an hour a week scheduled with two programs that she works with to consult with the teachers. She does a lot more classroom based consultation, which has given me a great opportunity to see how consultation works in a more whole group setting and how to troubleshoot with a teacher on the spot. However, I do believe that having the time to gather the information, process it and then have the opportunity to come back and talk with the consultee has many benefits and allows for one to see things that might have been missed. Having that time to think about the problem may even allow for one to target the cause quicker instead of jumping to conclusions.

Level of Attainment	JP will be able to identify and express her emotions in 4/5 situations.	JP will be able to identify appropriate coping strategies in 4/5 situations.	JP will be able to identify triggers of her anxious feelings in 4/5 situations.
-2 Much less than expected			
-1 Somewhat less than expected			
0 Expected level of outcome			JP is aware of what triggers her anxious feelings after processing with an adult in most situations, but cannot identify them in the moment.
+1 Somewhat more than expected	JP is better able to identify her emotions and express herself, she has become more self aware.	JP is able to identify coping strategies and is continuing to work on generalizing utilizing these coping strategies.	
+2 Much more than expected			