



The Massachusetts Psychological Association
2023 Annual Conference

Raising the Next Generation: Innovation to Address the Evolving Needs of Youth and the Profession

Saturday, November 4th, 2023
Norwood, MA

Collaborating with School-Based Mental Health Personnel (1.5CE)

Presented by Laura Rogers, Ed.D.

The ballooning of child and youth mental health needs prior to, during, and in the aftermath of COVID-19 led to the declaration of a national emergency in 2021. Schools offer the primary access for mental health services for children and adolescents. While roughly half of all schools surveyed nationally reported that they believe they can meet the mental health needs of their students, one of their three primary strategies is referral to community-based providers. The need for collaboration and consultation between community-based psychologists and school teams continues to grow, and yet little attention is paid to helping professionals communicate effectively to build the collaborative relationships essential to providing integrated behavioral health services to children and youth. Community-based psychologists can offer not only direct services to students and their families, but they can be a valuable source of consultation and professional development to school-based providers.

This workshop is designed to help community-based psychologists and school-based psychologists improve their communication so that they can provide child-centered care more effectively as members of an integrated team. We will identify common sources of conflict and evidence-based strategies for reducing conflict and enhancing communication across professionals working in different contexts.

Conflict in care teams often arises when members of a team do not understand their own and others' roles and responsibilities. To fill the gap in understanding, we often make assumptions about the "others" that interfere with effective collaboration. In this workshop, we will review the various members of school-based behavioral health teams, their training, roles, and responsibilities within a school context. We will identify the ways community-based psychologists typically construct their own roles and responsibilities arising from the complex relationships they have with child/youth and their parents or guardians. This review will be conducted through an interactive series of questions and reflections in dyads and small groups.

We will then consider intentional communication strategies that shift from those rooted in transactional relationships and assumptions about others to communication approaches that foster collaborative and compassionate relationships across colleagues. These strategies support culturally responsive communication with colleagues and provide a foundation for supporting behavioral and educational outcomes for students. We will use several case studies to practice

collaborating across roles to communicate about students' needs and family perspectives, and to develop interventions, set goals, and monitor outcomes.

The workshop will conclude by considering ideas for enhancing school-based collaborations through providing consultation and professional development to specific stake-holders (school-based mental health providers, teachers, and parents) and by collaboratively identifying community-based services and resources for vulnerable students.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will recognize the roles and perspectives of school-based mental health personnel and how these contrast with their own roles and perspectives when working with youth and their families;
- Participants will recognize the key sources of conflict in interprofessional teams;
- Participants will learn new strategies for improving communication and building relationships;
- Participants practice more collaborative/compassionate communication in clinically relevant situations;
- Participants will identify opportunities for building collaboration with schools to promote child and youth mental health.

Laura Rogers studied at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and completed her psychology training at Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Beaverbrook Child Guidance Center. She helped to design and lead the Francis W. Parker Charter School from 1995-2008, serving in several roles, including as school psychologist. She was a faculty member and the Co-Director of the School Psychology Program at Tufts University from 2008-2020. She currently is a Research Associate Professor at Tufts and is the principal investigator of a federally funded collaborative training grant focusing on enhancing the behavioral health training of school psychologists working in high needs schools. She has focused on improving collaborative, interprofessional behavioral health care in schools for the past thirty years.