

Connecting for kids: Enhancing cross-sector partnerships to address youth social, emotional, and behavioral health needs

Allison A. Stiles, PhD, Melissa Heatly, PhD, Laura Jean Shipley, MD, & Corey Nichols-Hadeed, JD
University of Rochester Medical Center



Background

Integration of fundamental systems of care has the potential to improve access to behavioral health (BH) services for youth through reducing traditional barriers. Yet, systems remain siloed and the field lacks clear guidance on how best to facilitate cross-sector collaboration.

This pilot study aims to:

- 1) evaluate the initial impact of a semi-structured dialogue between primary care and schools on enhancing professionals' attitudes, knowledge, and skills
- 2) Examine the acceptability and feasibility of this format to inform a larger scale study focused on enhancing cross-sector collaboration.

Method

Participants: Primary care professionals [PCPs] (n=22) and school professionals [SPs] (n=22) within the greater Rochester area (N=44).

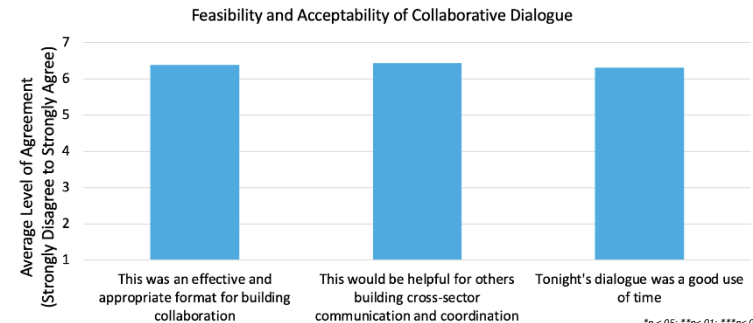
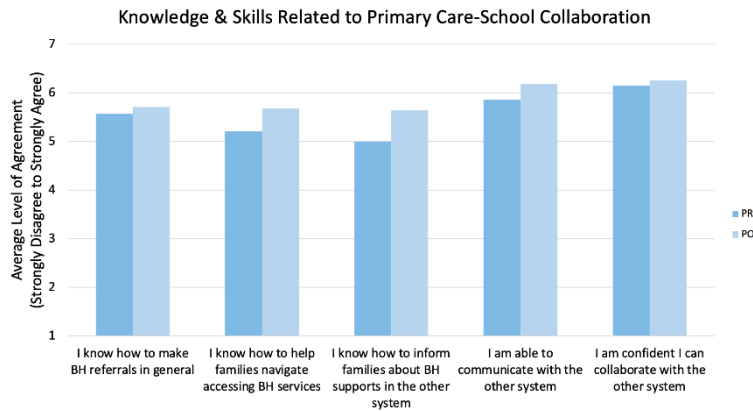
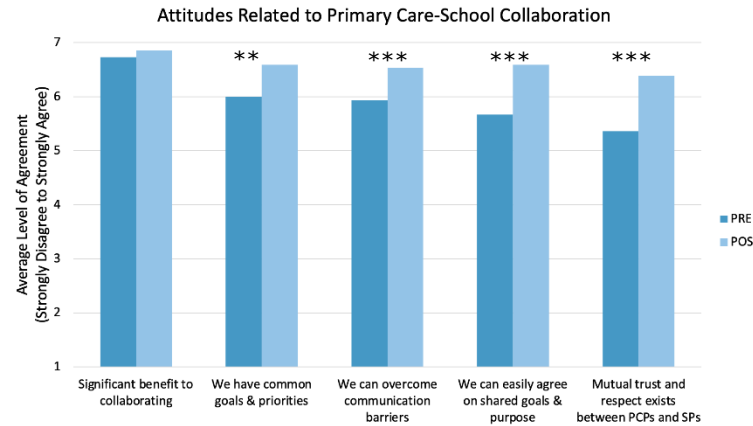
Procedure: A child psychologist and a pediatric primary care physician co-facilitated 2-hour dialogues between educational and pediatric primary care teams.

Participants identified a) a shared vision, b) strengths & barriers in existing communication, and c) action steps for enhancing collaboration to support youth BH

Data Collection: Data were collected via pre-post surveys; participants rated items on 7-point likert-type scale (strongly disagree-strongly agree); assessed baseline and perceived changes in attitudes, knowledge, and skills; feasibility/ acceptability ratings

Analyses: Paired samples t-tests were run to compare pre-post means; descriptive statistics were also utilized

Results



Results Summary

Results yielded significant increases in beliefs that PCPs and SPs 1) have common goals, 2) can overcome barriers, 3) can agree on shared goals and purpose, and 4) have mutual trust and respect.

Analyses revealed significant increases in participants' knowledge of how to help families access BH services and inform families about BH supports in the other system.

Discussion

Findings indicate that the dialogue is an effective avenue for enhancing school and primary care teams' attitudes and knowledge related to cross-sector collaboration.

Of note, participants came away from the evening with stronger beliefs regarding the existence of mutual trust, that shared goals can be identified, and that barriers can be overcome – attitudes that represent a *critical foundation* for future collaboration.

Importantly, participants' increased knowledge of how to help families navigate complex systems to access BH support suggests that the dialogue could have immediate impact on youth with BH needs.

School and primary care teams generally agreed that the collaborative dialogue is an appropriate and useful format for increasing communication across systems.

Future research should continue to explore the longer term impact of collaborative dialogues and the ability to create sustained partnership overtime.

Acknowledgements

This study's Collaborative Dialogue is the product of an interdisciplinary workgroup, "Connecting for Kids," comprised of many local community partners in Rochester, NY.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001