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**Family Engagement Strategy 7: Community Partnerships and Mental Health Services**

**Goal:** Increase the capacity of the school and staff through strategic partnerships with community partners to include mental health resources.

**Top Tips:**

- Make a goal to add one new community partnership each year to the school. Start with organizations closest to the school. Ask- What services do you offer? Are you taking new referrals? What are the costs?
- Choose 12 organizations to highlight during the year and spotlight one a month through social media, exhibit tables, and in family newsletters
- Decide which services are most in need at your school and then directly seek community organizations who offer that services.
- Consider hosting events at community spaces to help families feel comfortable going there more often such as youth and community centers
- Always highlight at least one community resource during parent events with a resource table, flyers, and through online messaging.
- Intentionally seek out services that offer resources in different languages and be sure to advertise these options
- Create a family and teacher team (or a sub-committee of an existing council) interested in building more community partnerships and charge them with any of the above items.
- As staff are able, have them join community councils and groups that meet outside the school. There is a community perspective that can be very beneficial for education staff.

**For Big Schools, Middle and High Schools:**

- Most of the above tips can be used in higher grades and bigger schools; however, if this feels overwhelming begin with one grade level who IS interested in more community partnership and have them try a few ideas first. Once one grade level or classroom has experienced success, have them serve as mentors to a new grade or classroom. Start small, grow slowly.
- Ask the students. What do they see as a need not currently offered in the school? Would they attend group sessions after school that talked about different topics



related to their age group such as financing and budgeting, lifeskills, or interviewing best practices. Ask community partners to host these 30 minute sessions for middle and high school students.

### **Doing WITH families, not TO families:**

- Let families know the school is trying to increase resources for students and families through building more community partnerships.
- Have an easy way for families to volunteer to help or lead in building these partnerships, offer services from their own workplaces when applicable and/or request specific services they hope the school can offer.
- If you are a parent or classroom teacher trying to lead this work, offer one resource/organization at a time and provide some sample language the school can use in newsletter or social media to promote. Be sure to follow-up with how many families contacted the organization to show this is something families and students need.

### **Equity and Inclusion:**

- Must find organizations that offer resources and services in the languages of your families and students.
- Be aware that many services have stigmas attached to them so offer discrete ways families can get more information without school staff or other families knowing.
- Remember transportation, costs, child care and hours of operation can cause barriers. Work to remove these barriers when you can and advertise these options.

### **Measure Success**

- Ask for community partner feedback on new school referrals? Have they seen an uptick in referrals from the school? Do they feel more connected to the work of the local district?
- Add a question to annual surveys that captures this goal. For example you could ask, “Have you ever learned about a community resource or mental health service from the school that you later contacted for services or information?” or “On a scale of 1-5, how well does the school help you learn about community and mental health services available to you and your student?”

This strategy sheet is part of a series called “KY’s 11 Goal Post Strategies for Family Engagement”.  
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