

6F: Tips for School-Based Teams

Children and Youth In Care } TIPS for School-Based Teams

School-based teams can consist of principals or vice principals, child welfare workers, counsellors, Aboriginal support staff, teachers, students and caregivers. Some students may also wish to include a trusted support staff, a coach, or a community member. By supporting children

and youth in care in a positive and proactive way, the team is helping prevent crises and helping the children and youth become resilient, confident, and successful individuals.



Establish Team Goals

Identify roles and responsibilities of each team member to ensure children and youth in care receive all supports they require.

Identify one or more caring adults in the school or a case manager who can regularly touch base with children and youth in care to ensure they are doing well, and help them to focus on their strengths and abilities.

Ensure students are involved in developing their short-term and long-term goals and identifying their strengths and needs.

Celebrate successes and give positive feedback to children and youth in care and their caregivers in areas such as attendance, behaviour and achievement.

Encourage and support children and youth in care to develop positive relationships with peers and connections to school and community.

Plan ahead for transitions and offer children and youth and their caregivers additional supports during these times, if required. If a child or youth in care is suddenly moved to a new school, try to arrange an opportunity for them to connect with their old friends and teachers. You might also want to consider organizing a “buddy” for the new student.

When new children and youth in care are registered, gather as much information as possible about past academic achievement, enrolled courses, assessments and any significant mental health issues or special programming needed to help with planning. You might want to call the previous school to expedite the transfer of student records and gather some preliminary information.

Find alternatives to suspension and expulsions to keep students connected to the school community and supports they require. Organizing a quiet and calm place where students could go and do school work with a supervising teacher and peer mentors, can help them stay connected and keep up with work when they are too upset to concentrate in class.

Report school absences to parents/caregivers and child welfare workers, follow up on prolonged absences (two days or longer) and help student re-integrate in the classroom upon their return.

Ensure children and youth in care are aware of suitable programs and supports available to them to attend post-secondary institutions or skills and career training.



BUILD A STRONG TEAM

Host a meeting with local agencies that serve children, youth and families to connect and share information about what community resources are available to support.

Identify a mutually agreeable processes to communicate regularly with team members about the student's wellbeing, progress and celebratory achievements.

Share and document relevant information about significant experiences in the student's life (e.g. trauma and recent transition), past assessments (including student safety matter), critical incidents, and medical diagnoses, so the team can better understand the student's challenges and emergent needs.

Encourage a collaborative team approach, based on trauma informed practice and 'wraparound' principles.

Agree on a process to inform each other about personnel changes to ensure smooth transitions and continuation of the collaborative approach.

Ensure that relevant cultural supports are available for students, including elder support for Aboriginal students.

Evaluate progress regularly and work collaboratively on issues or conflicts that may occur.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE SAYING

"Adults should be aware of how valuable and necessary their support is to youth, and should recognize the difference that they can make in a young person's life."

"Problem is that in foster care, you move around a lot so it's hard to start up school again."

"It's their job –our lives."

"I wanna go [to college], it's good to have an education."

"Make sure every youth has an adult who will support them with college applications or attend their graduation..."