CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN
CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH

Creating New Partnerships – Avoiding Growing Pains

As you navigate through a new partnership, it is easy to get lost in the excitement of it. Establishing a partnership that has shared visions and goals is compelling and inspiring but maintaining a sustainable partnership and reducing those 'growing pains' can prove to be a challenge. Once your partnership is established, using these tips below can get you started in working towards maintaining an intentional and collaborative relationship with your partner(s).

Communication

Open communication is arguably the backbone of effective partnerships. Determining a communication strategy right from the start and sticking to it ensures that all partners are on the same page. Transparent and honest communication fosters a safe and inclusive environment, builds trust and reliability, and reduces feelings of confusion and doubt. Communication allows both sides to share a mutual understanding of goals, objectives, roles, and responsibilities and how to achieve them.

Monthly Check-Ins

Having monthly check-ins throughout the partnership goes together with communication. These types of check-ins, whether they be virtual or in person, allow partners to discuss any challenges, barriers, and successes, ensuring everyone is informed and on the same page, fostering an open, safe, and inclusive environment. Monthly meetings like this provide an opportunity for partners to explore their progress and see if the proposed timeline is still attainable. These check-ins also hold all parties accountable for their commitments to this partnership regarding any deliverables, products, or actions they are responsible for.

Meeting Minutes

It is impossible to remember everything said and promised during a meeting, especially when you have other responsibilities you are splitting your attention with. Meeting notes from monthly check-ins and other partnership-related meetings provide a tangible record of the discussion and the next steps. This documentation establishes accountability from both partners. Having the notes to refer to, and sharing them with your partner(s), is an effective recap of the discussion and can serve as the initial talking point at your next meeting. It may be beneficial for you and your partner(s) to collaboratively create a template for the meeting minutes, highlighting the areas you would like to touch on during these meetings (e.g., updates, challenges/barriers, next steps).

Flexibility

Plans change, and that is okay. Timelines may need to be adjusted, project leaders may leave, or an unexpected challenge may arise. Although it can be frustrating and unforeseen, the ability to adapt to these changes helps maintain a resilient partnership. Collaboratively developing a contingency plan with your partner(s) can ease the stress and worry associated with an unexpected bump in the road. It can be something discussed at monthly check-ins when speaking about barriers and challenges that are arising. When it comes to flexibility, all parties must be willing and open to changing their priorities within the project.

Connectivity

As you move through the partnership, accessibility to the right people and resources is essential to maintaining a collaborative and efficient environment. Turnover in professional roles is something we are all familiar with, and sometimes because of this, communication of project goals and timelines get lost in translation. Going hand in hand with the tips listed above, your partner(s) needs to understand which people and departments are involved and what resources are necessary to sustain the partnership and keep the project moving forward. Sharing contact information is a way to ensure this.

For more information on building intentional partnerships visit CICMH's **Campus-Community Partnerships Toolkit**.