Parent Connectors

TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is delivered to parents of children who have Emotional Disturbance and are enrolled in a special education program and is intended to impact parents and children.

SUMMARY
Parent Connectors, a parental-support, school- and community-based program, is designed to provide assistance and encouragement to novice parents of youth with Emotional Disturbance (ED) with the goal of increasing parental involvement within educational and mental health services. This program pairs parents of children who have experience raising a child with ED, have navigated the educational system, and have utilized mental health supports with the novice parents.

EVIDENCE
Two internal randomized controlled trials evaluating the effectiveness of the program have been conducted. These evaluations produced mixed results. For example, program effects were found for parent and child engagement with mental health services and parents’ expectations that engaging with mental health services would benefit their child, but no effects were found for parents’ involvement in their child's education or their sense of competency collaborating with mental health professionals or school personnel. Contradictory results were found for youth's academic performance and school functioning. Further, the frequency of positive communication with teachers decreased for parents in the treatment group as child emotional impairment increased; whereas, parents in the comparison group showed the opposite pattern. Collectively, the results of these studies also suggested program effects were more pronounced for parents experiencing a high level of caregiver strain.

COMPONENTS
Parent Connectors (PCs), parents who are experienced in parenting a child with ED, contact novice parents who are experiencing difficulty with their child who has ED.

Various supports are offered during these conversations, which are held typically by phone:

- Provide emotional support in a non-therapeutic capacity;
- Give information about special education policies and procedures in schools;
- Offer opportunities for families to receive resources to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing; and
- Encourage the development of a positive outlook.

Following contact with parents, PCs record their interactions in a Family Support Log.

PREVIOUS USE
Since its inception in 2007, this program has been implemented in schools and mental health settings in California, Florida, Maryland, and Nebraska.
### TRAINING

PCs and PC coaches, all of whom should have a graduate degree in counseling or a related field and experience working with children with ED, implement this program, and training is required. PCs are engaged in a 16-hour, on-site training. PC coaches engage in a 5-hour, on-site training or a telephone meeting. Together, both trainings cost $5,000 plus travel expenses. A mandatory Booster Training session for PC coaches and PCs is offered either on-site or through videoconferencing for $1,000.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for implementing this program include acquiring participant buy-in, ensuring facilitators receive training, obtaining funds for program training, and identifying PCs and PC coaches who possess the specific background requirements.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

### IMPLEMENTATION

If you are interested in implementing Parent Connectors, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

#### TIME

Including training, this program is typically implemented over 9 months. Each PC contacts 10 families weekly for a 1-hour telephone call and meets with other PCs and the PC Coach for 2 hours each week.

#### COST

The Parent Connector Resource Guide and Parent Connector Coach Manual each are required for program implementation, and each one costs $25. An administrative manual is available at no cost for those interested in implementing the program. Please contact Parent Connectors using the information listed in the Contact section for additional details on implementation costs.

### EVALUATION PLAN

To move Parent Connectors to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least two rigorously designed studies should be performed demonstrating a clear and consistent pattern of positive effects lasting at least one year from the beginning of the program or at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

### CONTACT

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.

Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact Krista Kutash, Ph.D., by phone 813-995-4195 or email Kutash@usf.edu

### SOURCE