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Organizational Consultation

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Organizational consultation builds on skills school social workers have in abundance. The ability to assess a situation, to collect data, to engage others in problem solving, to plan an intervention, to monitor the implementation, and to evaluate the results of an intervention are primary strengths of social workers. Using these skills at the organizational level may be a new approach for more clinically trained school social work practitioners, but the knowledge, skills, and behaviors already exist and can be expanded to the broader system level.

Organizational consultation focuses on school structures and processes. It examines how factors such as leadership, administration, and staffing patterns as well as information exchange, coordination of activities, and decision-making processes work together to achieve school success. The aim of this consultation model is to help create an environment that increases student academic, behavioral, and socio-emotional growth; motivates staff to engage in best practices; and boosts morale. Changing organizational systems in order to change lives is a challenging process that takes time, but it is key to the success of the mission and vision of the school system.

Background

Most social work is practiced within an organization. Schools, as host organizations for social workers serving students, families, and communities, are complex systems and subsystems that can support or thwart needed changes. While there is evidence that organizational culture and structure affect client outcomes (Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Yoo & Brooks, 2005), social