

Implementing Warm Handoffs to Support Student Mental Health Needs

WHAT IS A WARM HANDOFF?

A warm handoff is a transfer of care between two members of the health care team, where the handoff occurs in front of the student.

This transparent handoff of care allows the student to hear what is said and engages the student in communication, giving them the opportunity to clarify or correct information or ask questions about their care (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2017, para. 1.)

A warm handoff is similar to bedside rounding on inpatient units. Warm handoffs allow the student to verify the information being communicated between the school team and provide additional context if needed.



WHY ARE WARM HANDOFFS IMPORTANT

When information is exchanged between school team members, with the student present, it demonstrates team collaboration, “as well as an opportunity to transfer the student’s rapport and trust from one team member to another” (National Council for Mental Wellbeing, n.d., p. 1).

EXAMPLE LANGUAGE ON HOW TO INTRODUCE A WARM HANDOFF TO THE STUDENT

- ▶ “It sounds like you are experiencing a lot of stress right now. The school [counselor, social worker, psychologist] works with a lot of students and could even help you identify a first step you can take today. I can introduce you right now, if that would be all right.”
- ▶ “I’d like you to meet the school [counselor, social worker, psychologist] that I work with a lot. We are lucky to have them because it allows us to provide you with better care. Would it be all right if I reached out to them?”
- ▶ “From some of your answers on the questionnaire I gave you, it looks as if you may be feeling down lately. The school [counselor, social worker, psychologist] could give you some ideas of ways to help with this. Her/His office is just down the hall. Is it okay with you if I see if he/she is available to meet you?”

ENSURE THE STUDENT IS COMFORTABLE

Ensure that the student is comfortable with the introduction to and working with the school counselor, social worker, or psychologist. By ensuring that the student is comfortable with adding another member to the team you demonstrate that you respect their preferences and boundaries.

REFERENCES:

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