"During Meetings I Can't Stand It When...."

A Guide for Facilitators and Team Members

The Achieve My Plan (AMP!) youth advisory group compiled a list of things that commonly happen in team-based planning meetings* that can be frustrating for young people. Here are some suggestions and strategies that meeting facilitators and team members can use to address these issues and promote meaningful youth participation in planning meetings.

**Note: A team-based planning meeting can be any meeting where a team of professionals and family members meet with a youth to make plans for their future. This can include Wraparound team meetings, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, etc.*

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When a youth says...

No one asks me what I think about things and decisions about my life are made without my input.

Try this: **Meet with the young person prior to the team meeting to review the agenda.** This provides an opportunity for the youth to prepare for the discussion and practice giving and receiving feedback.

When a youth says...

We don't talk about the things I want to talk about. The plan is supposed to be about me, but none of it is really about the things I think are most important.

Try this: **Adjust the team meeting agenda to incorporate at least two topics the young person wants to discuss with the team.** This provides an opportunity to create space for youth voice and increases a young person's engagement in their team meetings.

When a youth says...

People talk about me like I am not there or they focus on my problems and what I did wrong.

Try this: **Develop ground rules that allow members to raise concerns in a manner that fosters an open dialogue with the person they are speaking to.** Some examples are: Speak directly to the person you are speaking to or about; Focus on strengths and solutions; Assign a person to remind the team about the ground rules and interrupt behavior when the rules are not being followed. These strategies will foster opportunities for youth to engage in the discussion, share their thoughts, and ask questions without feeling judged.

When a youth says...

People "therapize." (This is when someone asks a youth a series of questions or makes inferences – typically about the youth's emotions and/or motivations – with the clear intention of getting the youth to respond in a specific way.)

Try this: **Incorporate a ground rule that team members agree not to probe youth about their feelings** in the context of a team meeting, to offer advice as requested, and address questions and comments directly.

When a youth says...

There are surprises, like things we didn't plan to talk about, or people I didn't know would be there.

Try this: **Before the meeting let the young person know who will be attending the meeting and what topics will be discussed.** This allows the youth to prepare for the meeting and think about how they might respond.

When a youth says...

Meetings go on a long time, but we don't seem to get anywhere.

Try this: **Include a ground rule that reminds team members to stick to the agenda and to stay on track.** It might be helpful to add time limits to each agenda item so everything is discussed in a timely fashion. In addition, use the "parking lot" to ensure that the agenda stays within the meeting's time limits. The "parking lot" is a list of items that come up during a meeting that weren't on the original agenda. Depending upon the time remaining, these unplanned items can be discussed at the end or saved for the next meeting.

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