

CREATING A COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Working as a team is more effective when group members take the time to discuss how they will collaborate. Teams will function better, if everyone has input on and agrees to a collaboration agreement.

There are several effective ways to create group guidelines or agreements:

1. If time is an issue, it may be necessary to create a list of group guidelines and ask if they are agreeable to the team.
2. List some common guidelines and then ask for additional group guidelines from team members. When somebody proposes a guideline, ask the other team members if they agree to it.
3. If you have the time, the best way is to allow the team members to generate the entire list. Ask them to think about what they, as individuals, need to ensure a safe environment for collaboration.

Generating Guidelines for a Collaboration Agreement:

1. Identify things that contribute to effective teamwork

These might include:

- Equal participation
- Respect
- Trust that others will contribute and complete their tasks
- Accountability
- Good communication
- Addressing conflicts before they become destructive

2. Discuss things that make it hard to work as a group

These might include:

- People not completing their tasks
- Personality styles
- Domineering team members
- Team members that don't contribute

3. List challenges unique to working with an interprofessional group

These might include:

- Different jargon/language
- Perceived hierarchies
- Different knowledge bases
- Team members at different stages in their profession
- Stereotyping

Things to Consider:

1. Effective interprofessional health care teams may be characterized by the following:
 - Members provide care to a common group of patients/clients;
 - Members develop common goals for patient/client outcomes and work toward those goals;
 - Appropriate roles and functions are assigned to each member, and each member understands the roles of the other members;
 - The team possesses a mechanism for sharing information; and
 - The team possesses a mechanism to oversee the carrying out of plans and to make adjustments based on the results of those outcomes.

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2. Key principles of effective interprofessional collaboration include the following:

- The focus is on needs of the patient/client rather than on individual contributions of team members;
- Team members depend on others and contribute their own ideas toward solving a common problem;
- Team members respect, understand roles, and recognize contributions of other team members;
- Teams work both within and between organizations; and
- Individuals have realistic expectations of other team members, which can help avoid role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload.

Implementing Your Agreement:

1. It is helpful to post your collaboration agreement somewhere visible
2. Refer back to the agreement when you sense that the team is not functioning as it should
3. Challenge team members on adhering to the agreement early and often
4. Model the group guidelines in your own practice
5. Revisit the agreement occasionally