

Enhancing Services Through Effective Utilization of Therapeutic Homework

What is This?

Therapeutic Homework is defined as assignments or exercises completed between therapy sessions by the client and/or their caregiver to practice skills learned in previous therapy sessions. For clients, homework may involve practicing relaxation skills (e.g., deep breathing) or applying these skills to real-life situations (e.g., using deep breathing while taking a test). For caregivers, it might include doing child-led play at home to strengthen the parent-child relationship.

Why is This Important?

Recent research has found that parents rated mental health treatment as more effective when clinicians utilized therapeutic homework in sessions with their children in County of San Diego Children, Youth & Families Behavioral Health Services (CYFBHS) (Haine-Schlagel et al., 2015). Given that homework is a fundamental skill-building component of the majority of evidence-based treatments (Garland et al., 2008) and is associated with better outcomes in San Diego county *and* worldwide (Kazantzis, Deane, & Ronan, 2006), increasing use of homework could improve client outcomes.

Currently in CYFBHS, homework to practice what youth or their families learn is assigned in very few treatment sessions (13% of sessions with children who have disruptive behavior disorders; Garland et al., 2010). National studies have reported much higher rates of homework utilization in sessions (e.g., 57% of sessions; Kazantzis & Deane, 1999).

What This Means for You.

Considering the potential positive impact of homework on client outcomes, **CYFBHS will be focusing on the use of therapeutic homework with clients.** A question about homework utilization has been added to the Medical Records Review (for data monitoring purposes only). Clinical trainings about the effective use of therapeutic homework and problem-solving client noncompliance may also be offered. In partnership with CASRC, CYFBHS will also dedicate this year's Performance Improvement Project to enhancing the quality of therapy services by focusing on therapeutic homework.