Building Bridges Guide to Support Co-Parenting



Caregiver Collaboration

Conflict, disagreements, or lack of communication between parents/caregivers and the support team can make it difficult to navigate access to supports for an Autistic child. It is important to recognize that disagreements and conflict are common. Caregiver collaboration is when all parties involved in a child's care are working together to the best of their ability and maintaining open communication with one another. Caregiver collaboration can vary extensively from one family to the next. The approach that works for one child, youth or family may be very different from what works for another.

Why It Matters

Divorce, shared custody, separation, family loss, or change in family structure may affect all aspects of the Autistic child's life such as:

- access to services
- mental health
- routine
- education
- future goals



What to Remember

When it comes to collaboration consider the following:

- different expectations of caregivers
- different household structures
- each caregiver's time limitations
- different resources available to each caregiver, such as access to family, respite, finances, or vehicle
- health restrictions of caregivers

What Caregiver Collaboration Can Look Like

Effective collaboration centres on prioritizing the child's well-being. By keeping discussions focused on the child; caregivers can foster clarity, reduce conflicts, and encourage collaboration. Here are some important areas to consider when supporting the Autistic person:

Support Needs

- child's needs and relevant supports will constantly be evolving
- frequency and timing of appointments
- costs of services
- access to funding
- changes in goals and the child's progress
- child's skills and abilities

Communication

- discuss appointment responsibilities and schedule regular check-ins
- decide who is included in communication about the child
- choose an appropriate mode of communication (e.g., text, email, shared calendar, or mediation apps) with your team

Roles

- roles of each caregiver may look different (e.g., pick-ups/drop-offs, overnights)
- shared access and amount of time with each caregiver can change over time
- define and plan roles related to funding (e.g., access, decisionmaking, and distribution)

For more information, contact Kerry's Place Autism Services:



intake@kerrysplace.org

kerrysplace.org



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Detailed Plan

provides a predictable environment

- clearly define roles and responsibilities
- consistently follow the plan
- give each other chance to share ideas without jumping to conclusions

Communication

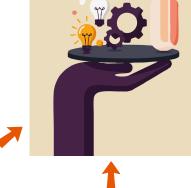
- keep it concise and to the point consider child first
- share information whenever reaching out to community resources
- decide type and frequency
- keep the lines of communication open

Self-Care

acknowledge your own needs

- dedicate time for yourself and joyful activities
- practice mindfulness
- connect with others socially
- seek professional support

Tips for Collaboration



Set Boundaries

- be clear about what each caregiver is comfortable with
- consider the safety and well-being of the child first
- identify what "fair" looks like for each caregiver and how this looks different to each person

Team Building

create a circle of care

- determine who should be involved
- relatives and friends
- service providers, school support, social worker, support groups
- family mediator

Transition

plan for transitions in advance

- consider transitional items (e.g., comfort blanket, toy)
- support tools (e.g., visual supports, sensory items)
- school materials

Consider co-parenting as a collaboration that focuses on ensuring your child's well-being and needs are met. It is important to recognize and prioritize your child/youth's best interests and their experience when they are with you.

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