12 Steps of Complexity Competency for Child/Family Staff

1. **Welcome individuals and families with complex issues into an empathic relationship.**
2. **Identify individual and family vision for a happy, hopeful, meaningful life.**
3. **Screen for all co-occurring issues, both in individual children and their family members (including MH, SA, health, trauma, ID/DD, brain injury, domestic violence, abuse/neglect, parenting, school/work, legal, housing, and other challenges).**
4. **Assess for the presence of immediate safety risk in any domain, and know how to get the individual or other family members to safety.**
5. **Integrate the ability to gather basic assessment information relevant to each co-occurring issue, for each family member, into the child/family assessment, including integrating assessment information obtained from family members and collateral providers.** Understand the distinctions between high- and low-severity MH and substance use issues.
6. **Identify and communicate individual and family strengths (periods of success, what they are already doing right) for each issue, routinely as part of all forums (team meetings, supervision, presentations, Child/Family Team meetings, etc.), with or without the child/family present.**
7. **Be aware of, and understand, the nature of *each* issue, and the associated recommendations for that issue, at least as well as the individual and/or family members understand them.**
8. **Identify stage of change for each issue, for the individual child and for family members.**
9. **Provide stage-matched interventions as indicated, to assist the individual and family members to move through stages of change for each issue in order to be successful in achieving their goals.** For issues in earlier stages of change, help each individual determine the right amount of attention to that issue (e.g., What is the right amount of substance use for me? What is the right amount of medication for me?) in order to achieve their vision of a happy life.
10. **For issues in more active stages of change, provide specific and positively rewarded skills training on how to make progress for each issue.** This includes specific skills training for any issue, such as on reducing substance use (in the face of MH challenges) and/or managing MH symptoms or painful feelings (without using substances) and/or how to parent more effectively, etc. Modify any skills training to accommodate the person's cognitive or emotional learning impairment or disability and provide rounds of applause for each small step of progress.
11. **Collaborate effectively with other types of service providers (including other MH or SA services, schools, child welfare, juvenile justice, disability supports) to help the individual and family receive an integrated message of how to make progress.**
12. **Promote engagement in peer support and, when appropriate, recovery self-help meetings, for individuals and family members struggling with one or more issues.**

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