



Stimulating interdisciplinary collaboration among youth social workers: A scoping review

“Interdisciplinary collaboration plays an important role in matching services to the individual needs of children and young people, and contributes to better outcomes for young people and their parents” (p. 294).

1. What is the research about?

This research is about stimulating collaboration among professionals from various youth serving fields. Research has shown that poor collaboration in teams made up of professionals from various disciplines can negatively impact the experiences of those accessing services. A lack of collaboration can impact the overall quality of care and support that youth receive.

The researchers were interested in identifying existing studies to understand what is known about stimulating interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals working with youth.

2. Where did the research take place?

The authors were based in the Netherlands, and they reviewed existing knowledge related to interdisciplinary collaboration among youth workers. The studies that were reviewed took place in the US, the Netherlands, and six other European countries.

3. Who is this research about?

This research is about professionals working with youth, including school teachers, social workers, youth workers, and medical and legal professionals.

4. How was the research done?

The authors searched a number of online databases to identify studies that were related to interdisciplinary collaboration among professionals working together in youth-serving fields.

These studies were reviewed against a set of criteria:

- a) The study was about at least one professional who works with youth (age 0-27);
- b) A significant part of the study was about tools and activities that stimulate collaboration across disciplines;
- c) The study was conducted in one or more Western countries;
- d) The study meets a clearly-written method;
- e) The abstract for the study was written in English or Dutch.

Of the studies that met the criteria, 10 focused on factors that contribute to meaningful collaboration, and seven focused on specific interventions meant to increase and improve team collaboration. The majority of the studies were published after 2001. These studies were then reviewed to identify common themes related to the topic.

5. What are the key findings?

The researchers identified six factors that are important for collaboration between professionals working to support youth:

a) Awareness and understanding of the other discipline(s).

Among professionals who work with youth, having an understanding of each other's expertise, perspectives, and roles is fundamental to meaningful collaboration. Having this understanding fosters feelings of **connectedness** and **shared responsibility**, which has a positive impact on team collaboration. A lack of understanding among disciplines can lead to miscommunication.

b) Communication and interaction.

The collaboration process is positively impacted when professionals are willing to **give and receive feedback**, **reflect** on their own attitudes towards collaboration, and **evaluate** the collaboration process. Having open discussions about the nature and goals of different disciplines can lead to more **empathy**.

c) Team structure.

A team that has a sense of **autonomy**, a strong team **identity**, and engages in **team meetings** is more likely to be able to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration in order to better support youth. Team meetings can be used to engage in activities that stimulate **collaboration**. Team leaders can play a role in this process by encouraging a positive attitude towards collaboration efforts.

d) Willingness to work together.

Understanding the benefits of **collaboration** can have a positive influence on the collaboration process among professionals, and requires professionals to keep an **open attitude** and a willingness to **recognize the strengths of other professionals**.

e) Shared responsibility.

Meaningful collaboration is more likely to happen when professionals feel a sense of shared responsibility. **Sharing a vision** is also likely to have a positive impact on the collaboration process. It is important to recognize that teamwork is not only about helping each other, but **reaching a shared goal**.

f) Mutual trust.

Building trust among professionals is an important component for collaboration. Formal or informal **meetings** between professionals can be a useful way for them to get to know each other better, which can help in **building trusting relationships**.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

The findings from this research can be used to help foster collaboration among youth-serving practitioners and organizations. These findings suggest that collaboration among different disciplines will have a positive impact on the care and support that youth receive. **Collaboration is important for youth, as it has the potential to better connect them to available resources and services to meet their specific needs**, which can ultimately improve youth wellbeing.



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