

Overview

This manual describes the *MePrEPA* (*metas, preguntar, escuchar, preguntar para aclarar*/goals, questioning, listening, questioning to clarify) treatment to increase activation and empowerment in Latina/o parents seeking mental health treatment for their children. The development of this approach grew out of both clinical observation and research indicating that Latina/o clients underutilize mental health services and face many barriers to effective treatment. Using MePrEPA, we hope to **empower** Latina/o parents seeking mental health treatment for their children and improve their **experiences in mental health care**. The primary goal of MePrEPA is to provide Latina/o parents with effective communication skills and information to help them best support their children's mental health treatment. The skills are meant to empower clients to be active participants in their child's treatment.

Goals of MePrEPA:

MePrEPA has the following general goals:

- 1) To provide clients with communication and advocacy skills.
- 2) To provide clients with information concerning mental health treatment (who, what, when)
- 3) To empower parents to take an active role in their child's mental health treatment.

Session Frequency, Treatment Phases and Materials:

MePrEPA is comprised of 4 60-minute sessions.

- 1) Understanding my child's mental health needs, challenges, and strategies for success
- 2) Working with health providers part I
- 3) Working with health providers part II
- 4) Working with school systems

Each participant is provided with a *passport*, a binder with a description of each session and blank sheets for recording notes.

Session Format:

- 1) Discuss concerns parents have about children and seeking help for their child
- 2) Ask for group input into individual group member issues regarding concerns

Confidentiality:

To help promote trust between the therapist and group members, issues of confidentiality should be discussed at an early stage. The therapist should emphasize that he or she will listen to what the group members say, and will encourage people to speak freely in the group. One of the rules of the group should be that no group member should discuss the contributions of other group members outside the group. The therapist should emphasize that they will not discuss anything group members say outside of the group either, except in certain circumstances. Exceptional circumstances include the safety or distress of any group member.

Interpersonal challenges and strategies to address them:

If a client expresses suicidality or dangers to others during the group, check in with the client after the group and refer them to a designated psychiatrist to follow up with regular clinic procedures.

If a group member provides unhealthy suggestions (e.g., hitting children, severe consequences), the group leader should ask for reactions from the rest of the group about the pros, cons and consequences of the suggestion. If the group consensus is not an appropriate solution, the clinician should step in and offer a rationale as to why the suggestion may not be useful.

If there are interpersonal difficulties between group members, the clinician should remind group members of the rules. If one member is inappropriate, the clinician should discuss the situation with the clinical supervisor.

Module 1: Understanding my child’s mental health needs, challenges, and strategies for success

Objectives:

- 1) Recognize the challenges associated with having a child with mental health needs
- 2) Develop an understanding of mental illness
- 3) Identify barriers that affect how you communicate your child’s needs
- 4) Present and practice communication skills for family
- 5) Identify and apply activation strategies that are successful in helping a child with mental health needs

Materials:

- 1) Board and markers

Outline:

- 1) Introduction (5 minutes)
 - a. Name, where from, children and name of child in treatment
 - b. Set agenda (write on board)
- 2) What is mental illness in children? (10 minutes)
 - a. Normal behavior gone to the extremes (e.g., attention difficulties, depressive, oppositional behavior)
 - b. Abnormal behavior (e.g., hearing voices, doing drugs)
 - c. Trauma (having lived through traumatic event)
- 3) What have been your experiences getting help for these behaviors? (10 minutes)
 - a. Supports
 - b. Barriers
- 4) Need to have effective communication with child in order to provide best information to therapists, doctors (15 minutes)
 - a. What are some good ways to communicate? (write on board)

- b. Highlight non-verbal communication
 - c. Listening and repeating what your child says to make sure you understand
 - d. Speaking in a controlled tone of voice and using short sentences
 - e. Speaking at a time when you are not angry or upset
 - f. Having a goal for your conversation
- 5) Role play (15 minutes)
 - a. Parent and child – do it wrong; then do it right
 - b. Role play with each other
 - 6) Conclusion (5 minutes)
 - a. RECAP - good communication skills
 - b. Homework – Practice good communication with child; next time we will talk about experiences with providers

Module 2: Working with health providers part I

Objectives:

- 1) Helping parents learn skills to build a partnership in therapy with providers
- 2) Learn to effectively talk with health providers about your child’s needs
 - a. MePrEPA
- 3) Learn to work with healthcare professionals in the context of their roles and functions to address your child’s needs
 - a. Who’s who, whom to go to
- 4) Identify and apply activation strategies to effectively communicate with healthcare professionals

Materials:

- 1) Board and markers

Outline:

- 1) Set agenda (5 minutes)
- 2) Who are the providers that work with your children (5 minutes)
 - a. Psychologists, social workers, counselors, psychiatrists, pediatricians, speech therapists, occupational therapists
- 3) How do we build a partnership with our providers? (10 minutes)
 - a. Ask group
 - b. Talk about experts
 - c. Who is who: providers
 - d. Parent as expert too
 - e. Need to be partner and have good communication with providers to best help provider
 - f. What is good communication in a health care context?
- 4) Examples of good communication experiences (15 minutes)
 - a. Has anyone had good experience with providers?

- b. How do you best speak and interact with your provider to build a partnership?
 - c. Role play with each other
- 5) What are things that make it difficult have good communication? (10 minutes)
 - a. Don't know what to say, expect, feel embarrassed, don't want to look stupid
- 6) Teach activation skills (10 minutes)
 - a. Remember the acronym: *MePrEPA*
 - i. *Metas*/goals
 - ii. *Preguntar*/questioning
 - iii. *Escuchar*/listening
 - iv. *Preguntar para Aclarar*/questioning to clarify
- 7) Conclusion (5 minutes)
 - a. RECAP - good communication skills
 - b. Homework – think of a clinical scenario where you would like to use *MePrEPA*

Module 3: Working with health providers part II
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Objectives:

- 1) Help parents feel empowered and in control of child's health care
- 2) Identify parent strengths and needs when dealing with a child with mental health needs
- 3) Identify peer mentors to provide information, emotional and other forms of support for parents
- 4) Identify and apply activation strategies to effectively manage and cope with stress associated with having a child with a challenge.

Materials:

- 1) Board and markers

Outline:

- 1) Set agenda (5 minutes)
- 2) Review *MePrEPA* (5 minutes)
- 3) Discuss clinical scenarios and apply *MePrEPA* (25 minutes)
 - a. Everyone reviews own personal barriers
 - b. Challenging situations
 - i. Using it with some who may discriminate against Latinos
 - ii. Using it when you disagree with provider
- 4) Role play (15 minutes)
 - a. Discuss types of treatment
 - b. Discuss types of medication
- 5) Present diagram of activation (below, 5 minutes)
 - a. How to organize self to get help
 - b. What strengths do you have to draw upon?
 - c. People, organizations, information, other parents, websites
- 6) Conclusion (5 minutes)

- a. RECAP – using *MePrEPA*
- b. Homework – think of another scenario where you would like to use *MePrEPA*

Module 4: Working with school systems

Objectives

- 1) Understand how a child’s educational needs are impacted by their mental health needs
- 2) Learn to effectively talk with school personnel to address the child’s needs
- 3) Learn to work with school personnel in the context of their roles and functions to address the child’s needs
- 4) Identify and apply activation strategies to effectively communicate with authority figures in the school system
- 5) Acquire general knowledge of relevant federal and state laws for school aged children with special needs

Materials:

- 1) Board and markers

Outline:

- 1) Set agenda (5 minutes)
- 2) Check in on what we learned last week (5 minutes)
- 3) How do children’s mental health difficulties impact learning? (5 minutes)
- 4) What is good communication in a school context? (15 minutes)
 - a. What have been your experiences dealing with the school?
 - b. With whom do you interact at schools?
 - c. Using *MePrEPA*
- 5) What to do once you have communicated and advocated for child (10 minutes)
 - a. What are your next options?
 - b. Discuss how to work effectively
 - c. Find a person who can help with goals even if the system is not responsive
- 6) Role play (15 minutes)
 - a. Discuss child having problems with bullies
- 7) Conclusion (5 minutes)
 - a. RECAP – using *MePrEPA* at school
 - b. Acknowledgement of group work, closure