

The importance of therapeutic processes in school-based psychosocial treatment of homework problems in adolescents with ADHD.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE:

To evaluate the importance of therapeutic processes in two brief school-based psychosocial treatments targeting homework problems in adolescents with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as delivered by school mental health professionals.

METHOD:

A sample of 222 middle school students (72% male; $M_{age} = 12.00$ years, $SD = 1.02$) diagnosed with ADHD was randomized to receive either a contingency-management or a skills-based treatment for homework problems. Both treatments included 16 individual sessions (20-min each) and 2 parent/family meetings. Adolescents and school mental health professionals reported on the working alliance in the middle of the treatment; professionals rated adolescent involvement at each of the 16 sessions, parent involvement during both parent meetings, and parent commitment to carry out the established homework plan. Attendance at parent meetings was also recorded.

RESULTS:

Therapeutic processes predicted objective, parent-reported, and teacher-reported academic outcomes. Parent engagement was particularly important for the contingency-based treatment, whereas working alliance and adolescent involvement were most important for the skills-based treatment.

CONCLUSIONS:

Therapeutic processes such as developing a strong working alliance and engaging parents and students are key elements of treatment delivery and receipt in school-based mental health programming and should be explicitly trained and monitored.