

Abstract

Title – Improving Collaboration between Military Families and Special Education Faculty in Colorado Springs

Program of Study – Special Education

Presentation Type – Remote Oral Presentation

Subtype – Applied

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The purpose of this applied study was to solve the problem of a lack of collaboration between special education faculty and military families at Weikel Elementary School in Colorado and to formulate a solution to address the problem. Military families face many challenges throughout their military careers (Aronson et al., 2016). Families of children with disabilities face increased stress when they are required to relocate to different military installations. Other challenges include not receiving appropriate military and school district services and resources to support children with disabilities. Frequent relocation can delay and change special education services for students with a disability (Aronson et al., 2016; Woods et al., 2018). It was important to solve this problem because military families frequently relocate and need quality collaboration with special education faculty in each duty station. The first approach regarding data collection was conducting semi-structured interviews with district and school administrators. The second method of data collection was a focus group with special education service providers to potentially improve collaboration strategies. The third approach regarding data collection were surveys for military families who have children with disabilities. Results from this applied study showed that participants in interviews, focus group, and surveys echoed the importance of parental advocacy for their child's special education needs. Interview and focus group transcripts showed that communication is a key factor to improving

collaboration between military families and special education faculty. After data analysis of interviews, focus group, and surveys, the most effective solution recommended to solve the central research question was establishing a special education advocacy cohort for military families. The implication of implementing a special education advocacy group is that students with special needs, educators, and parents may benefit from special educators working closely with families to improve student outcomes and success.

