Phone Script for introducing Mental Health Counseling to Parents

**GREET:**

Hello (Parent’s name), this is (teacher/school professional name) from (school name).

How are you doing today?

Parent response.

That’s great, sorry to hear that, etc.

**SPECIFY PROBLEM:**

I’m calling regarding (student). (Student) has/is (insert a positive trait of the student), however, I have notice (student) has been (insert problem behavior) and I’m concerned.

Parent response.

**REPEAT PARENT’S CONCERN:**

It sounds like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and (he/she/your) feeling \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. [repetition of their concern]

Parent’s response.

**INTRODUCE THERAPY:**

I want to help but I’m not sure what the best way is. A licensed counselor is better trained to deal with these types of situations. Other students in similar circumstances have found success talking to a counselor and developing an action plan to achieve their behavioral goals. I believe it would be a great opportunity for (student) to explore (his/her) feelings and solve problems with the help of an objective, sensitive, concerned listener, who is professionally trained.

Parent response.

**IF PARENT IS INTERESTED:** We have a Licensed Professional Counselor from Trutherapy counseling agency that sees students in the school Monday-Friday. His/Her name is (counselor’s name). If you are interested and willing to provide a little more information, I can send them a referral. The Referral will be sent to them electronically and they will contact you within 24 hours with further instructions.

**IF PARENT IS RELUCTANT:** I understand. I’d like to talk with you again in a few weeks to see how things are going if that is okay?

**Some factors that teachers and school professionals should consider when communicating mental health related concerns with families:**

* Remove feelings of blame or guilt about a child’s mental health concerns
* Recognize and acknowledge that parental denial and anger may exist
* Communicate empathy and compassion for the parents’ circumstances
* Recognize that stigma continues to be associated with mental health related issues
* Provide parents with resources and share with them that education is the key to understanding mental health related concerns
* Take a problem-solving approach to addressing mental health concerns
* Recognize the value of parents and schools working together as a team

**Things to Avoid:**

* Criticizing and/or judging
* “you always…”
* “you shouldn’t feel worried about that”

**DO:**

* Be specific as possible about behavioral concerns
* Listen to response actively
* Be hopeful about outcomes
* Summarize what you understand the problem to be
* Framing the appointment as a one-time consultation reduces the stigma; “I hope you give this a try at least once”

**SAY:**

* Not a sign of failure from parents
* Early action will help child return to normal/avoid more severe problems
* Seeking help is a sign of strength
* Chance to explore feelings and solve problems with the help of an objective, sensitive, concerned listener, who is professionally trained

**EXAMPLE POSITIVE PHRASES**:

* You’ve been through a lot lately. No wonder you are having trouble focusing. You have a lot on your mind
* You’ve been dealing with this a long time; maybe it’s time to try something different. You could make an appointment to consult with someone.
* You sound very depressed about your relationship problems. I have found that other students who have felts this way have been helped by talking to a professional. How would you feel about that?
* I’m concerned that (you are/your child is) having these upsetting thoughts and feelings. It might be useful to talk to a specialist who can help your family more.