School Mental Health Quality Guide

Mental Health Promotion Services & Supports (Tier 1)

SH PE School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System

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School Mental Health Quality Guide: Mental Health Promotion Services & Supports (Tier 1) is part of a collection of resources developed by the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH) at the University of Maryland School of Medicine for The SHAPE System. The Quality Guides provide guidance to help school mental health systems advance the quality of their services and supports. This guide contains background information on mental health promotion services, best practices, possible action steps, examples from the field, and resources.

What is Mental Health Promotion for all? (Tier 1)

School mental health promotion for all (Tier 1) refers to all activities to foster positive social, emotional and behavioral skills and well-being of all students, regardless of whether they are at-risk for mental health problems. Tier 1 supports well-being and educational success for all students and serves as a foundation for Tiers 2 and 3 mental health services and supports. These activities might also include efforts to support positive school climate and staff well-being.

Tier 1 activities may be implemented school-wide, at the grade level, and/or at the classroom level, and services may be delivered by both school- and community-employed professionals working within schools. Examples include school-wide mental health education lessons, school climate improvement efforts, and classroom-based social emotional learning for all students. Investing in mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention results in cost savings by reducing or eliminating the need for more intensive services that are more costly. Furthermore, preventive and promotion efforts decrease stigma about mental health and illness and promote well-being for both students and staff. Tier 1 services are important because mental health is part of overall health, and students must be healthy enough to learn, and teachers healthy enough to teach. While there are many different types of Tier 1 services and supports, we highlight six of the most commonly used:

- School Climate
- Teacher and School Staff Well-being
- Positive Behaviors and Relationships
- Positive Discipline Practices
- Mental Health Literacy
- Social Emotional Learning

What is School Climate?

According to the Safe and Supportive Schools Model, developed by a national panel of researchers and other experts, positive school climate involves the following:
- **Engagement** – including strong relationships between students, teachers, families, and schools and strong connections between schools and the broader community.
- **Safety** – involving schools and school-related activities where students are safe from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use.
- **Environment** – including appropriate facilities, well-managed classrooms, available school-based health supports, and a clear, fair disciplinary policy.

Assess school climate.

Best Practices

Positive school climate is related to student well-being and academic success; research indicates it can improve attendance, achievement, retention and graduation rates.

✓ Develop a clear plan for how data will be collected, stored, analyzed and shared

✓ Assess multiple dimensions of school climate, including student engagement, student-staff/student-student/staff-staff relationships, school safety, and learning environment

✓ Obtain input from a variety of groups, including students, caregivers, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, and administrators

✓ Assess school climate using more than one modality for input (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, school administrative data)

✓ Allow anonymous input on surveys and other data collection methods

✓ Align the data collected with school vision of school climate and improvement strategies

✓ Select evidence-based tools

Resource: School Climate Assessment Tool
Several states and districts have independently developed their own school climate assessments. At the federal level, the ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS) was developed by the U.S. Department of Education (ED). The assessment is free of charge and includes a web-based administration platform with school climate surveys for middle and high school students, parents/guardians, and instructional and non-instructional staff. English and Spanish versions of the surveys are available for students and parents. The platform processes school climate data and provides free, customized reports in real-time. The data can be stored in a district's own data system, and the Department of Education will not have access to the data.

Example from the Field

A large, urban school district implemented a district-wide school climate survey, collected annually in the spring from teachers, students, and parents. Their process involved the following:

• A summary of results was provided to principals within two months.

• To interpret the information and generate data-informed school climate improvement plans, the district hosted listening sessions with students, teachers and parents over the summer at each school. Feedback was solicited to guide school climate improvements for the upcoming school year.

• An informational flyer was posted in schools, sent home to parents, and placed in staff mailboxes to thank respondents for participating, share survey findings, and announce the listening session date/time.

Improve school climate.

Best Practices

✓ Designate or form a core school climate planning team that includes broad representation (e.g., educators, administrators, mental health and health staff, youth, family members, community partners)

✓ Align and integrate school climate efforts with other school improvement efforts, including academic improvement efforts

✓ Use data to inform and to assess the impact of school climate improvement activities

✓ Ensure that data from school climate measures are used to select priority areas of focus and activities to promote school climate improvement

✓ Embed school climate improvement into policy, practice, and systems in the school

Resource: School Climate Improvement Resources: To help schools and districts improve school climate, the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments developed the School Climate Improvement Resource Package (SCIRP). The SCIRP includes a variety of resources to support various groups in school climate improvement efforts.

Tip

Before implementing school climate interventions, your district or school should determine what initiatives, programs or interventions are most likely to improve the specific type of school climate needs identified through a school climate assessment.

Frequently implemented school climate interventions:

- Character Education
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- Positive Youth Development
- Restorative Practices
- School Mental Health Services
- School Development Program
- Social and Emotional Learning
- Trauma-Informed Approach

Assess teacher and staff well-being.

Best Practices

The teacher and staff assessment process can help districts and schools identify areas to improve teacher wellness, stress, and burnout to ultimately promote success for all.

✓ Establish a clear process and system for collecting, analyzing, and storing data
✓ Conduct well-being assessment with teachers and all school staff
✓ Assess staff well-being regularly and at least annually
✓ Ensure privacy of information and anonymity when assessing staff well-being using surveys, interviews, focus groups or other means
✓ Assess a range of well-being components (e.g., physical, occupational, emotional, environmental, social, and intellectual)
✓ Select assessment tools that are evidence-based with strong psychometrics

How does staff well-being fit into mental health promotion for all?

✓ Staff well-being is an important area of focus for mental health promotion.
✓ Many teachers experience high levels of stress and burnout. Large class size, often including many students with significant social, emotional, and behavioral needs, may contribute to this stress.
✓ Many teachers report limited resources, poor physical space, high workload, low pay, mounting paperwork, and a high level of responsibility for student success.
✓ Teachers who are stressed demonstrate more negative interactions with students, including greater sarcasm and aggression, and responding negatively to mistakes.
✓ Fortunately, there are several best practices and strategies to assess and promote teacher and staff well-being assessment.

Resources: Staff Well-Being Assessment Tools

• **Resilience at Work Scale** – Developed by Winwood, Colon and McEwen (2013), this is a 20-item scale to capture "resilience promoting" behaviors at work
• **Professional Quality of Life (PROQOL)**: Includes 30 items to assess compassion satisfaction and fatigue
• **Health-Related Quality of Life**: Developed by the CDC, the HRQOL has 4 questions in the Healthy Days Core Module and 10 additional questions about activity limitations and healthy days symptoms
• **School Organizational Health Questionnaire:** 54-item measure of teacher morale and 11 separate dimensions of school organizational climate
• **Teacher Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire:** Includes 8 items and two subscales, 1) school connectedness, and 2) teaching efficacy

Improve teacher and staff well-being.

✓ Align staff well-being improvement efforts with needs identified by your staff well-being assessment
✓ Address organizational and individual factors that contribute to stress and wellness (e.g., staff control and input, supervision and support, safe, supportive social and physical environments, linkage to employee assistance programs, worksite screening programs, education and resources for employees, targeted follow-up to support individual change, stress management, health education and health promoting activities)
✓ Make well-being resources and activities readily available to teachers and staff
✓ Integrate well-being activities into the school culture instead of after-school activities
✓ Make well-being activities available at no-cost or low-cost

While there is not a robust research base on effective school staff well-being programs, there is growing literature on this topic, including some promising programs on school staff wellness:

● **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction** (MBSR). MBSR resulted in reductions in psychological symptoms and burnout, improvements in classroom organization and increase in self-compassion, self-regulation, mindfulness, and sleep quality (Flook et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2015)
● **Community Approach to Learning Mindfully** (CALM). CALM was associated with improvements in mindfulness, emotional functioning, positive affect, distress tolerance, blood pressure, cortisol, and efficacy in classroom management (Harris, et al., 2016)
● **Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education** (CARE). CARE resulted in improvements in well-being, efficacy, burnout, and mindfulness (Jennings et al., 2013)

Set school-wide expectations about positive behaviors.

Best Practices

A commonly implemented Tier 1 practice is setting school-wide expectations about positive behaviors. When done well, this promotes a safe and supportive school environment in which students, parents, and staff understand and demonstrate that mutual respect and positive behaviors are the expectation.

✓ Settings: The physical layout of the school is designed to support optimal functioning of staff and students.

✓ Routines: Predictable school-wide routines are developed and taught.

✓ Expectations: 3-5 positively stated school-wide expectations are posted around school.
  ● Expectations apply to both students and staff
  ● Rules are linked to expectations
  ● Rules are clearly posted, defined, and explicitly taught
✓ Train staff to teach students expectations/rules and how rewards are developed, scheduled, and delivered.
✓ Teach students how expectations/rules/rewards are developed, scheduled, and delivered.
✓ Involve families and community members to develop and implement expectations about positive behaviors.

Implement school-wide positive reinforcement systems that promote positive behaviors.

Best Practices

✓ A system of rewards is implemented consistently across campus, and a variety of methods are used to reward students

✓ Supervision: School staff provide reminders and actively scan, move, and interact with students

✓ Opportunity: School staff provide high rates and varied opportunities for all students to respond

✓ Acknowledgement: School staff use specific praise and other strategies to communicate when students meet expectations

✓ Prompts and Pre-corrections: School staff provide reminders that clearly describe the expectation

✓ Error Corrections: School staff use brief, contingent, and specific statements when misbehavior occurs

✓ Other Strategies: School staff use other strategies that preempt escalation, minimize inadvertent reward of a problem behavior, create a learning opportunity for emphasizing desired behavior, and maintain optimal instructional time

✓ Discipline: Discipline processes are described in narrative format or depicted graphically, discipline process includes documentation procedures, and problem behaviors are clearly defined

✓ Suggested, graduated array of appropriate responses to problem behaviors are clearly defined

Prevent and address conflict.

Best Practices

Use classroom and school-based strategies to proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrong doing.

Restorative practices promote inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving, which are essential to wellness and success for all.

✓ Use informal and formal processes to proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing.

✓ Use restorative circles and groups to provide opportunities for students to share their feelings, build relationships and solve problems, and when there is wrongdoing, to play an active role in addressing the wrong and making things right.

✓ Teach and model problem solving conflict resolution skills in the classroom.

How do healthy relationships fit into mental health promotion for all (Tier 1) services?

✓ Strategies to proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and address wrongdoing is an important aspect of Tier 1 services. Many schools and districts refer to this set of practices as restorative practices.

✓ Restorative practices prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing by proactively building healthy relationships and a sense of community. Restorative practices can improve relationships between students, students and educators, and even between educators, whose behavior often serves as a role model for students.

✓ Implementation of restorative practices are associated with improvements in the following: School climate, student connectedness, parent and community engagement, and academic achievement.

✓ Restorative practices are also associated with decreases in the following: Discipline disparities, fighting, bullying, and suspensions.

Examples of Restorative Practices

- **Community conferencing** – a practice that provides students and educators with effective ways to prevent and respond to school conflicts. Community conferencing involves the participation of all stakeholders affected by the behavior and allows everyone to contribute to the conflict resolution process.
- **Community service** - allows individuals to restore a harm they committed to the school community by providing a meaningful service that contributes to their individual improvement.
- **Peer juries** - allow students, who have broken a school rule, and trained student jurors to collectively discuss why the rule was broken, who was affected, and how the referred student can repair the harm caused.
- **Restorative circle** - a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community, or reactively, to respond to a wrongdoing, conflicts, and problems. Circles can be used to teach social skills such as listening, respect, and problem solving. They can provide people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in a safe atmosphere and allow educators and students to be heard and offer their own perspectives. Circles can also be used to celebrate student accomplishments, begin and end the day, and discuss difficult issues.
- **Conflict resolution programs** – skill-based programs that provide students with instruction in problem-solving and self-control skills. These programs teach students how to manage potential conflict, defuse situations, assuage hurt feelings, and reduce inclination to retaliate after a conflict.
- **Peer mediation** - trains students to help other students resolve differences.
- **Informal practices** - are small ways educators and other school personnel can influence a positive environment including the use of affective statements, which communicate people's feelings (e.g., I feel happy when you complete your homework because it shows me how well you understand the topic), and affective questions, which cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others (e.g., what were you telling yourself at the time?); proactive engagement with students and families, mentor relationships, community service, and lunch time table talks.

Reduce exclusionary discipline practices.

Best Practices

✓ Establish consistent expectations, rules, and school-wide positive reinforcement systems to promote positive behaviors

✓ Train and support school staff in emotional and behavioral health

✓ Train and support school staff in evidence-informed, culturally responsive crisis de-escalation strategies and techniques

✓ Develop a multi-tiered system of emotional and behavioral health services and supports for students at risk for disruptive behavior related to mental health concerns

✓ Use a process of graduated sanctions that limit out-of-school suspensions to the most severe offenses, or omit out-of-school suspensions completely

✓ Examine number of suspensions/expulsions by demographic group to better understand any differences in policies or practices

✓ Use restorative justice practices that focus on repairing the harm caused by an incident and allowing the people most affected by the incident to participate in its resolution

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Increase mental health literacy for all students.

👍 Best Practices

- ✓ Develop a clear plan for assessing current mental health literacy of students and school staff as baseline data and to inform your team's plan for further improvement.
- ✓ Work with students, parents, and school staff to determine the most meaningful, feasible ways to promote mental health literacy.
- ✓ Deliver and evaluate professional learning opportunities to 1) understand how to optimize and maintain good mental health 2) understand mental disorders and their treatment 3) reduce stigma about mental health needs and supports and 4) increase skills to link students to intervention and supports when needed.
- ✓ Ensure mental health literacy activities are developed in collaboration with students, parents, and members of the school community.
- ✓ Ensure mental health literacy activities are ongoing throughout the school year and integrated into various activities (i.e., activities go beyond a one-time training or educational materials posted in the building).
- ✓ Reassess mental health literacy on a routine basis to monitor progress and inform team planning for ongoing activities.

What is Mental Health Literacy?

Mental health literacy refers to knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aids in their recognition, management, and prevention. Mental health literacy programs are relevant for students, parents, and staff. Mental health literacy encompasses the following components:

- Understanding how to foster and maintain positive mental health
- Understanding mental health disorders and their treatments
- Decreasing stigma
- Understanding how to seek help effectively

Increasing Mental Health Literacy

- Invite your local National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) to give a presentation to students and teachers. NAMI's Ending the Silence presentation discusses the warning signs of mental health conditions and what steps to take if a loved one is showing symptoms of a mental illness. These talks are tailored for different audiences including, students, school staff, and families.
- Collaborate with your state's mental health association to participate in campaigns for mental health awareness, e.g., children's mental health awareness. The Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide (Kutcher et al., 2012) is a mental health curriculum designed for teachers to implement in the classroom. The guide consists of modules focused on understanding mental health, reducing stigma, and seeking help.
- Collaborate with organizations to help implement specific mental health literacy training and support in your school or district, such as Mental Health First Aid or Youth Mental Health First Aid. The Youth Mental Health First Aid provides training in how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders.
- Use teacher-delivered mental health curriculums.
- The Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide (Kutcher et al., 2012) is a mental health curriculum designed for teachers to implement in the classroom. The guide consists of modules focused on understanding mental health, reducing stigma, and seeking help.

Example from the Field

In Maryland, Children's Mental Health Matters (CMHM) is a statewide education campaign to raise awareness of children's mental health needs. It is coordinated and supported by the Mental Health Association of Maryland, the Maryland Coalition of Families, and Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene-Behavioral Health Administration.

Increase social and emotional learning opportunities.

Best Practices

- ✓ Develop a clear plan for assessing current social emotional learning (SEL) skills among students as baseline data and to inform your team's plan for further improvement.
- ✓ As a team with school staff, community partners, parents, and students, identify current activities or programs that support SEL skill development in the school and assess to what degree they are being implemented with fidelity and achieving desired outcomes.
- ✓ In collaboration with school staff, parents, and students, identify, select and/or adapt SEL skill development practices or programs that meet the needs and strengths of the students.
- ✓ Monitor implementation of SEL skill development activities for fidelity, feasibility, and acceptability to school staff and students.
- ✓ Ensure SEL skill development activities are developed with and communicated by students, parents, and members of the school community.
- ✓ Re-assess SEL skill development on a routine basis to monitor progress and inform feedback to school staff and team planning for ongoing activities.

What is Social Emotional Learning?

- ✓ The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."

- ✓ Improvements in SEL skills have been found to increase academic achievement, prosocial behavior, social emotional skills, and positive self-image, and decreases conduct problems, emotional distress, and substance use.
  - SEL competencies include the following areas:
  - Self-awareness: Know your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
  - Self-management: Effectively manage stress, control impulses, and motivate yourself to set and achieve goals.
  - Social awareness: Understand the perspectives of others and empathize with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
  - Relationship skills: Communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.
  - Responsible decision-making: Make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.

> **Resource:** CASEL Program Guides provide guidance for educators about specific programs to choose and implement.
>
> The CASEL District Resource Center has a team self-assessment for districts to gauge their capacity and readiness for SEL implementation.

Determine whether services and supports are evidence-informed.

Best Practices

✓ Create an intervention selection committee with diverse representation (e.g. school mental health providers, administrators, teachers, students, parents).
✓ Develop an intervention selection process and policy.
✓ Review the evidence of success (e.g., process or outcome data from program evaluation or quality improvement efforts, fidelity data) in schools with similar characteristics.
✓ Use national evidence-based practice registries (see list below).
✓ Review national evidence-based practice registries and relevant research literature to determine:
  - Randomized controlled trials (RCTs) for the practice demonstrate valued outcomes.
  - Valued outcomes that have been demonstrated by others than the practice developers.
  - The settings (e.g., urban/suburban/rural/frontier; school/outpatient/inpatient) that are comparable to the intended setting.
  - The populations that have been studied that are comparable to your population characteristics (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, languages, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status).
  - The outcomes that are consistent with those valued and prioritized by the school.

Sources of intervention evidence to consider:

✓ **Research literature**: Published studies describe how the program has been tested and the outcomes that it has influenced.
✓ **Evidence-Based Practice developers:** Developers can describe available implementation supports, how to monitor fidelity of implementation, the feasibility of adaptation, and solutions to implementation challenges. Schools implementing the Evidence-Based Practices: Other schools and communities can describe their experience with implementation and, if relevant, adaptations to the EBP you will need to make for your population of focus. This is an often-overlooked source of evidence that is very valuable.
✓ **Schools implementing the Evidence-Based Practices:** Other schools and communities can describe their experience with implementation and, if relevant, adaptations to the EBP you will need to make for your population of focus. This is an often-overlooked source of evidence that is very valuable.
✓ **Evidence-Based Practices Registries**: Registries provide information about the EBP's evidence base, features, training requirements, and cost.
  - Institute of Education Sciences: What Works Clearinghouse
  - Blueprints for Healthy Youth Developments
  - Model Programs Guide
  - Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology

These sources of evidence are described in more detail in the Evidence-Based Practice modules.

Ensure tier 1 support and services fit school needs.

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👍 ## Best Practices

Ensure Tier 1 services and supports fit the unique strengths, needs, and cultural/linguistic considerations of students and families in your school

- ✓ Create an EBP selection committee with diverse representation (school mental health providers, school administrators, teachers, students, parents).
- ✓ Review school student body including gender, age, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, languages, sexual orientation, socio-economic status.
- ✓ Review school needs assessment data, including student mental health needs and strengths.
- ✓ Review costs associated with EBP implementation.
- ✓ Evaluate short and long-term training requirements and qualifications needed to implement practice with fidelity.
- ✓ Pilot test the new practice with school population.
- ✓ Adapt the practice to fit unique considerations of school population.

Resource: The Evidence-Based Programs in School Settings webinar series and guide, developed by the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention in partnership with the National Center for School Mental Health, provides detailed, practical information about EBP selection in schools to support the following: assess intended population, intervention target, and tier of support (based on severity level), determine readiness to implement an EBP intervention preparation and implementation, menu of options to measure impact.

Ensure adequate resource capacity.

Best Practices

Ensure adequate resource capacity to implement mental health promotion (Tier 1) services and supports
- ✓ Evaluate staffing capacity, including staff training requirements and qualifications and staff time, needed to implement services and supports
- ✓ Evaluate implementation supports (ongoing training, coaching, supplies) needed to implement services and supports with fidelity
- ✓ Evaluate costs associated with training and implementation
- ✓ Determine whether staffing, implementation supports, and costs of services and supports are achievable within current school mental health system

Resource: Implementing Evidence-Based Practices in School Settings Checklist is a brief checklist intended to support planning and teaming processes.
1. Develop a plan to track implementation of core components of EBP
2. Monitor adaptations to EBP to check fidelity
3. Ensure that quantitative and qualitative data are obtained to monitor fidelity
4. Develop a plan to address low-fidelity adherence

Support implementation of mental health promotion services.

Best Practices

The research is clear that training and professional development is necessary to support implementation. However, trainings should be interactive with ongoing implementation support because one-time, didactic trainings rarely result in meaningful practice change.
- ✓ Provide interactive trainings with opportunity for skills practice, role plays, and action planning.
- ✓ Provide ongoing support for implementation with regular coaching, consultation, or supervision that includes skills practice, role plays, and corrective feedback, as well as fidelity monitoring and feedback processes.

Tips

- One-time training may improve knowledge or attitudes, but not practice
- Ongoing coaching and consultation predict skill learning and application- the "gold standard" is interactive workshops
- Train-the-trainer models require substantial oversight
- Expect 80% success after 3 years of implementation with appropriate planning and ongoing support

Monitor fidelity of mental health promotion services and supports across tiers.

Best Practices

Fidelity monitoring goes hand in hand with ongoing implementation support. In fact, fidelity monitoring can be built into coaching and consultation models by adding a fidelity tool or measure to inform specific topics to discuss or skills to model.

✓ Identify fidelity monitoring tools specific to the practice you are implementing or develop a tool specific to the practice and the implementation context in school

✓ Ensure your fidelity monitoring tool or system measures the following:
  - Adherence to intervention content (what is being implemented)
  - Quality of program delivery (manner in which facilitator delivers/implements program)
  - Logistics (conducive implementation environment, number/length of sessions implemented)

✓ Determine frequency of fidelity measurement based on what is feasible and will yield actionable information

✓ Establish a benchmark for acceptable levels of feasibility (e.g., not acceptable, adequate, excellent)

✓ Monitor and track changes or adaptations to the practice

✓ Provide feedback to anyone implementing and use the results to continuously improve, adapt, and sustain implementation

What is fidelity monitoring?

✓ Fidelity monitoring can be used to assess how a program or initiative is implemented in daily practice. When monitoring fidelity, it is important to know the intended skills and competencies targeted by a program.

✓ When monitoring fidelity, pay attention to what degree the content of the program or practice is being implemented as intended. However, assessing the implementer's skill in effectively delivering the content, the context or environmental factors that implementation occurs in (e.g., the school or classroom setting), and any adaptations or changes to the content are also important aspects of the fidelity monitoring process.

✓ The most valuable part of fidelity monitoring is describing the process for the outcomes you observe. Even if the program is going well, without fidelity data, you might not know why. Moreover, if the program is not going well, fidelity data can indicate areas of implementation that need more support.

Resource: Fidelity Monitoring Checklist
The Planning Checklist for Monitoring Fidelity of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) is a basic fidelity monitoring checklist that can be used to plan for the monitoring of fidelity for a specific practice or program.

The intention of this checklist is to provide a quick reference for considerations during the planning process, including the following:
1. Identifying fidelity monitoring tools
2. Determining frequency of fidelity measurement
3. Establishing benchmark for acceptable levels of fidelity
4. Monitoring adaptations

action steps

Fidelity Monitoring

- Plan ahead for fidelity monitoring methods and tools before implementation
- Decide how to strike a balance between fidelity and adaptation
    - Fidelity – degree to which a program or practice is implemented as intended
    - Adaptation – how much, and in what ways, a program or practice is changed to meet local circumstances
- Share fidelity data back with implementers and other key members of the team to make continuous improvements

Tip

The intervention selection process is a great time to think about how you will monitor fidelity. Some evidence-based programs have a fidelity monitoring tool, and in other cases you might have to develop a new tool.

Fidelity Monitoring Tool Considerations

- Use formal fidelity monitoring tools included within intervention materials.
- Schedule routine "implementation check-ins" for team to review training materials and discuss whether the intervention procedures were followed accurately.
- Create a check-list of key intervention steps that can be used to monitor fidelity through live observation or records review.
- Schedule times for a team member to observe implementation of the intervention and complete the fidelity tool or checklist.

Adaptation

- Adaptation is a natural part of implementation.
- Document adaptations and determine whether adaptations are appropriate as a team.
- Seek input from implementers and program developers or trainers.
- Your team will need to decide how to balance fidelity benchmarks and adaptations for each program or practice you are implementing.
- Implementer feedback and EBP developer input can be very helpful in this process. For example, if a teacher tells you she can only deliver the program in 30-minute sessions but the manual is written for 45-minute sessions, that is a necessary adaptation for the school context about which you may need to work with the developer and even obtain input from other schools/districts implementing the program to decide how to change.
- Create feedback loops with the data, using data constructively to learn from and support implementers over time. Provide feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Fidelity data can also be used to indicate how well the program or practice is fitting in the school context with your students. Some programs or practices will inevitably be a better fit than others, and fidelity data can be used to make decisions about whether to continue implementation and focus energy on sustainability.

Example from the Field

One large urban school district decided to implement Restorative Practices district-wide. Initially, the district started with select schools to closely monitor fidelity and implementation to inform sustainable scale-up. Every adult in the school attended a 1-day, interactive training, including instructional and non-instructional staff and community partners. A fidelity monitoring tool was developed and a team of two Restorative Practices trainers employed by the district conducted two-day trainings for each school, followed by ongoing consultation and coaching and fidelity monitoring every fall and spring. The fidelity metric included a principal interview, staff interview, student interview, restorative circle observation and overall school observation. Scores fall in the ranges of "not implemented," "developing," or "effective." Fidelity data were used in feedback and planning meetings with principals to plan targeted coaching.

For more resources, visit the SHAPE Resource Library at www.theSHAPEsystem.com

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School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System