

Support Systems for Intense Behaviors: Conducting a school-wide needs assessment

Webinar Q&A

Question: How long does it typically take to complete a thorough needs assessment?

Answer: The length of time needed to complete a thorough needs assessment depends on how deep a district is into the implementation process.

If a district has never done a needs assessment, it will require more time to conduct a thorough analysis of what's in place and analyze the steps that will need to be put in place to reach the district's goal. The process for conducting a needs assessment will require more time if schools do not already have progress monitoring systems in place to track what they've already done. It may take a team approximately 30 hours to complete this entire process.

If teams are in the beginning phase of conducting a needs assessment, it is helpful to put together a team that can set aside time and plan for the process. Teams may choose to utilize time in the summer for working on a needs assessment. Because this process involves pulling information from so many different areas to find out what's already in place, summer can be an ideal time for conducting a needs assessment.

If a district has been working consistently with school wide positive behavior supports and working with state coordinators, needs assessments may be built into systems as an ongoing progress monitoring and action planning process.

Question: Do you find it's preferable for the person conducting the assessment to be a part of the staff or an external person?

Answer: While both internal as well as external people can conduct needs assessments, it is often beneficial to the accuracy of the process for an external person to lead this process. Using an external person to conduct a needs assessment can remove any internal bias. Because external people have little or no prior knowledge of a district, they tend to ask more probing questions to get a better picture of the district's implementation. In various cases, researchers have found that teacher's self-assessed implementation versus externally assessed implementation yielded a significant discrepancy in terms of what teams thought was in place and what external evaluators saw was in place. In this way, using an external person to conduct the needs assessment may contribute to the accuracy of the process.

Question: Is there a good place to find research based interventions to add to our list?

Answer:

- The University of Missouri Evidence Based Intervention Network provides guidance in the selection and implementation of various evidence-based interventions. <http://ebi.missouri.edu/>
- The What Works Clearinghouse provides summaries and evidence on the effectiveness of various interventions. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks.aspx>
- The National Center on Intensive Intervention Tools Charts evaluate the scientific rigor of commercially available tools and interventions that can be used as part of a data-based individualization program for educating students with disabilities who require intensive intervention due to persistent learning and behavior problems. Tools charts for behavioral interventions and behavioral progress monitoring are coming in the summer of 2013. <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/resources/tools-charts>

Question: Please clarify what you mean by benchmarks.

Answer: In this presentation, “benchmarks” are just another word for the key feature, criterion, or measure. When a district has hit a benchmark it means they’ve hit a key feature or key criteria in implementation. Benchmarking or setting benchmarks allows one to measure progress against a desired outcome. For districts working with a school wide positive behavior supports system, this process involves benchmarks of quality which list strategic features that need to be in place at each tier level to maximize implementation. In regard to needs assessments of behavioral support systems, benchmarks are just strategic features that maximize implementation at each tier.