

## ROLE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AS A RELATED SERVICE PROVIDER

### I. Related Services Definition - IDEA

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, psychological services include:

- Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;
- Interpreting assessment results;
- Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about a student's behavior and conditions relating to learning;
- Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interviews, and behavior evaluations;
- Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for students and parents/guardians; and
- Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

### II. Role of the School Psychologist

The school psychologist provides a variety of related services to students, staff and parents/guardians of the Baltimore County Public Schools. Major categories of services include:

- **Consultation:** Assisting students, staff and parents/guardians to solve problems of students learning and behavior.
- **Assessment:** Collecting and interpreting information about student learning and behavior to enable more effective student support and intervention planning.
- **Intervention:** Providing training, counseling, and other educationally oriented interventions to students, parents/guardians, and school staff, and assisting in crisis intervention.

### III. Consultation

School psychologists consult with school staff, parents/guardians, and community providers and participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) Teams to support special education instruction and related services for students in their home schools to the maximum extent appropriate.

- **Academic and Behavioral Consultation.** School psychologists have expertise in academic and behavioral assessment and intervention. They provide consultation on an ongoing basis in their schools, and assist school staff in developing academic and behavioral supports for students to support instruction. School psychologists assist the IEP team in reviewing students' instructional needs and in developing goals and objectives for IEPs.

For the student identified with a disability who exhibit challenging behaviors not responsive to classroom-level interventions, the school psychologist assists the SST/IEP Team in conducting Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and in developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP). School psychologists facilitate the FBA process, working with team members in planning, data collection and interpretation, and development of interventions and supports for the BIP.

- **Manifestation Determination.** School psychologists guide the SST or IEP team to consider if a disabled student's behavior that resulted in suspension was a manifestation of the student's disability. School psychologists help team members understand the nature of the student's disability and the student's behavioral history. School psychologists and team members review the IEP/504 Plan, placement, current school performance, and other pertinent documents to determine the extent to which the behavior(s) can be reasonably attributed to the student's disability.
- **Home and Hospital.** Students with identified physical or emotional conditions may be unable to attend school on a short-term basis. School psychologists assist the SST or IEP team by describing the student's emotional condition and the impact on the student's ability to attend school. School psychologists assist the team in developing an action plan for the student's re-entry into the school setting.

#### IV. Assessment

Assessment includes review of relevant school records and records provided by parent/guardians and outside professionals, observations, interviews, and criterion and norm referenced testing designed to provide information about the student's cognitive, academic, behavioral, social, emotional and adaptive functioning. The assessment enables more effective data-based consultation for student assistance and problem solving. School psychologists are mindful of concerns regarding cultural and linguistic differences of students referred for assessment, and of issues surrounding disproportional representation of minority students in special education. They follow national, state, and county procedural and ethical guidelines in conducting assessments.

School psychologists are qualified through their training and experience to conduct assessments of the student's cognitive, academic, behavioral, social, emotional and adaptive functioning. These qualifications enable the school psychologist to determine student strengths and needs and to identify conditions and disorders that may result in an educational disability, as determined by the IEP Team.

## Educational Disabilities

- **Specific Learning Disability.** The school psychologist conducts cognitive assessment to identify learning strengths and needs and cognitive processing deficits, and can conduct assessments in other areas of the student's functioning as needed. Upon reevaluation, the school psychologist assists the IEP team in determining if the prior cognitive assessment continues to be descriptive of current functioning, and if new cognitive assessment or other assessment is needed.
- **Mental Retardation.** The school psychologist conducts cognitive assessment and adaptive behavior assessment and determines if the student meets diagnostic criteria. Upon re-evaluation the school psychologist assists the IEP team in determining if the prior cognitive and adaptive behavior assessment continues to be descriptive of current functioning, and if new cognitive or adaptive behavior assessment is needed.
- **Emotional Disturbance.** The school psychologist conducts cognitive, behavioral, and social/emotional assessments as appropriate, and identifies emotional conditions that impact adversely on the student's educational performance and require special education services. For initial ED assessments cognitive, behavioral, and social/emotional assessments are required. Upon re-evaluation the school psychologist assists the IEP team in determining if the prior cognitive, behavioral, and/or social/emotional assessments continue to be descriptive of current functioning, and if new assessments are needed.
- **Autism.** The school psychologist conducts cognitive, behavioral, adaptive, and social/emotional assessment as appropriate to determine that a student exhibits a disorder on the Autism Spectrum (e.g., Autism, Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder). Upon re-evaluation the school psychologist assists the IEP team in determining if the prior cognitive, behavioral, adaptive, and social/emotional assessment continues to be descriptive of current functioning, and if a new psychological assessment is needed.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).** The school psychologist conducts cognitive assessment to identify learning strengths and needs and cognitive processing deficits, as well as assessment of behavioral, social/emotional, and adaptive functioning as needed for a student with TBI. BCPS guidelines require a medical diagnosis of a traumatic injury to the brain as part of the evaluation to determine special education eligibility as a student with "Traumatic Brain Injury."
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).** The school psychologist assists the SST in gathering information for students who exhibit symptoms consistent with ADHD and who need academic and/or behavioral supports. The school psychologist conducts cognitive, behavioral, adaptive, and social/emotional assessment as needed to confirm symptoms of ADHD for development of "504" Plans and IEPs. BCPS guidelines previously required a medical diagnosis of ADHD as part of the evaluation to determine special education eligibility of a student with "Other Health Impairment." As of the 2004-05 school year, licensed physicians, licensed nurse practitioners (acting in this role), licensed psychologists, and certified school

psychologists are all regarded as examiners qualified to diagnose ADHD as part of the evaluation to determine special education eligibility of a student with “Other Health Impairment.”

### Special Assessment Considerations

- **Sensory Impairments.** School psychologists conduct psychological assessments of students with sensory impairments with consultation as needed.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students.** School psychologists conduct psychological assessments of students with cultural and linguistic differences, with consultation as needed.
- **Autism Waiver Assessment.** The Autism Waiver is a Maryland program designed to provide additional resources to families and caregivers of children with severe autism. The program provides for a waiver of the normal Medicaid eligibility rules for children who qualify. The eligibility determination process calls for a school psychologist to complete an assessment of the degree of functional impairment and level of maladaptive behaviors, to determine the “level of care” that the student needs.
- **Central IEP.** When the school’s IEP Team determines that a student should be referred to the CIEP Team, the school psychologist provides documentation of current cognitive, behavioral, and social/emotional functioning, and assists the IEP Team in completion of the re-evaluation process. School psychologists assist with re-evaluation of BCPS students in non-public placements.
- **Neuropsychological Assessment.** The home school psychologist reviews the need for neuropsychological consultation and/or assessment for students with documented medical conditions or significant neurological issues. In general, neuropsychological consultation and/or assessment are conducted following psychological assessment by the home school psychologist or review of a psychological assessment conducted by an independent licensed psychologist. Neuropsychological consultation and/or assessment are recommended by the home school IEP Team and completed by contract through the Office of Psychological Services.
- **Outside Assessment Reports.** The school psychologist reviews psychological assessment reports and other reports received from outside sources that address psychological functioning. The school psychologist assists the SST or IEP Team in determining if the report contains information that is sufficient or useful in documenting the student’s functioning and educational needs.

### V. Intervention

School psychologists provide training, therapeutic counseling, crisis intervention, and staff development to support student instruction and learning. Training and staff development are provided by school psychologists on such topics as behavioral assessment and intervention, team process, assisting students with symptoms of ADHD,

working with students with Autism. Students receive training and short-term counseling from school psychologists for the purpose of developing social and academic skills. School psychologists and other school staff members provide ongoing consultation, crisis-oriented consultation, individual counseling and/or group counseling as a related IEP service that supports special education instruction and facilitates the attainment of instructional goals and objectives.

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