

PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

School psychologists provide consultation, assessment, and intervention services to support the instruction of students enrolled in the Baltimore County Public Schools.

I. Consultation

School psychologists offer consultation services on an ongoing basis as requested by school staff and parent(s)/guardian(s). These services include conferences with school staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), and others, participation in team discussions, review of information to assist with screening and decision making, threat assessment, crisis intervention, and schoolwide behavior planning. School psychologists provide consultation for students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to support special education instruction and related services in their home schools to the maximum extent appropriate.

- **Classroom Observation.** Classroom observations are often conducted to facilitate consultation. Observations are sometimes conducted to address more specific concerns about student learning and behavior. Students are referred for classroom observation through the Student Support Team (SST) or IEP Team as appropriate. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) consent is required for observations of individual students that result in a written report.
- **Consultation for Threat Assessment.** When students present behaviors that appear to be threatening to self, others, or property, school psychologists assist administrators in assessing the level of the threat and determining appropriate actions. Refer to the *Critical Response and School Emergency Safety Management Guide* for more information.

Threat assessments for students who are being processed for expulsion or long-term suspension for behaviors that are threatening to self, others, or property are conducted by the consulting School Psychologist as referred by the Superintendent's Designees.

- **Consultation with Outside Professionals.** Consultation with outside professionals can be a valuable tool for helping students with learning or behavioral problems. Written parent(s)/guardian(s) consent is required before information can be shared with outside agencies or professionals. Use the "Consent for Release of Records" form for this purpose.
- **Schoolwide Consultation.** The school psychologist provides consultation for schoolwide program development to enhance school safety and climate and to promote student achievement. Examples would include serving on the School Improvement Team, assisting the SST in addressing schoolwide issues such as attendance or behavior, and serving on the schoolwide behavior planning committee in a school implementing the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) process.

II. Assessment

School psychologists address behavioral and learning needs of regular education students through the SST and assist the SST in determining when there is need for an assessment. Assessments may include observations, interviews, behavior checklists, Functional Behavioral Assessments, and other procedures for the purpose of supporting students in regular education. Referrals for individual norm-referenced assessments should be considered when there is a suspicion of an educational disability or when the student is already identified as disabled and should be processed by the IEP Team.

School psychologists should be present at SST or IEP Teams when referrals for psychological assessment are recommended. In those situations when the school psychologist cannot be present at the team, the team chairperson should consult with the school psychologist regarding the need for assessment and indicate this consultation in the team summary.

School psychologists participate in the re-evaluation planning process and assist the IEP Team in determining if the prior psychological assessment continues to be descriptive of current functioning or whether additional psychological assessment is needed. School psychologists can provide information for the team summary when new assessment data are not needed. School psychologists assist in documenting current functioning and educational needs when students are transitioning from Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) to another agency or to college. For transitioning students, school psychologists can provide summary statements of previous assessments or conduct additional psychological assessments as necessary.

Referral to Psychological Services

1. When the SST or IEP Team determines that referral for psychological services is necessary, the chairperson of the team should prepare the "Referral to Psychological Services" form.
2. Signed parent(s)/guardian(s) consent should be obtained either on the "Parent Permission for Student Support Team Assessment" form (for SST, when an educational disability is not suspected) or on the "Parent Permission for Assessment" form (for an IEP Team).
3. The school psychologist can provide appropriate wording for the portion of the consent form that describes the psychological assessment. General assessment domains and questions should be identified, but specific assessment procedures or tests should not be listed.
4. The school psychologist should provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) with the "Psychological Assessment Parent/Guardian Information Letter."
5. The team chairperson should forward copies of the referral, permission form, team summary, information regarding health status, and other relevant documents to the school psychologist in a timely manner.

Access to Psychological Assessment Reports

1. The school psychologist is responsible for sharing the assessment findings with the SST or IEP Team and including the parent(s)/guardian(s).
2. The school psychologist is responsible for providing a copy of the report to the SST or IEP Team including the parent(s)/guardian(s), and the Office of Psychological Services.
3. Psychological assessment reports are highly confidential in nature and caution is needed in their maintenance and transmittal. Additional copies of the report may be distributed as necessary to authorized persons, but a record of this distribution must be maintained with the original report. Assessment reports cannot be shared with unauthorized persons without signed parent(s)/guardian(s) consent (“Consent for Release of Records” form). The “Third Party Letter” form accompanies the report when sent to a party outside the school system by the school psychologist and/or by the Office of Psychological Services.

Special Assessment Considerations

- **Sensory Impairments.** Students with sensory impairments who require psychological assessment are assessed by the home school psychologist, with consultation from a school psychologist with expertise in visual or hearing impairments. In some circumstances, the assessment is conducted directly by the consulting school psychologist.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students.** Students with cultural or linguistic differences who require psychological assessment are assessed by the home school psychologist, with consultation from school psychologists who work with the Bilingual Resource Team of the Office of World Languages. At times, these assessments are conducted with an interpreter in the student’s dominant language.
- **Autism Waiver Assessments.** Students referred for Autism Waiver assessment must have an IEP or IFSP. However, the Autism Waiver Program is not based on IDEA and does not follow special education procedures. The Office of Third Party Billing generates referrals for Autism Waiver assessments.
- **Central IEP.** Referrals for psychological assessment for CIEP are processed through the home school IEP Team. The school psychologist conducts an assessment that includes face-to-face contact with the student, review of previous assessments, information about current cognitive functioning, and information about other domains of functioning as appropriate.
- **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.** When a psychological assessment report is received from another school system, the school psychologist should review it and assist the team in understanding its findings. When assessment reports that address psychological functioning are received from outside agencies or practitioners, the school psychologist should review the report, assist the team in understanding it, and write “reviewed by” and sign and date the top of the front page of the report. The school psychologist then assists the SST or IEP team in determining if the report contains information that is sufficient or useful in documenting aspects of the student’s functioning and educational needs and in answering the team’s questions. When the school team needs additional information beyond that provided in an outside assessment report, team members seek parent(s)/guardian(s) consent and conduct additional assessments as appropriate.

III. Intervention

The school psychologist can meet once or twice with students for consultation on the basis of self-referral or crisis intervention. Additional contact would be considered therapeutic counseling intervention and should be managed through the SST or IEP Team.

- **Therapeutic Counseling Intervention.** School psychologists provide therapeutic counseling interventions to support student instruction and learning. For students in general education, referral for short-term consultation and/or counseling intervention should come through the SST. The school psychologist should be present at the SST meeting and should be in agreement that the service is needed. The school psychologist should obtain parent(s)/guardian(s) consent using the “Parent/Guardian Permission for Consultation/Counseling Intervention” form.

Students receive counseling as a related service on an IEP to support special education instruction and facilitate the attainment of instructional goals and objectives. Counseling is provided as a related service on an IEP on a consultative and/or direct service basis depending on the educational needs of the student during the course of the school year. Separate parent(s)/guardian(s) consent is not needed for a student receiving counseling as a related service on an IEP. The parent(s)/guardian(s) signature agreeing to the IEP constitutes sufficient consent.

- **Crisis Intervention.** School psychologists assist school personnel in responding to crisis situations as needed. Some school psychologists serve as members of Traumatic Loss Teams that provide crisis support services on a system-wide basis.
- **Staff and Parent/Guardian Training.** Administrators are encouraged to consult with school psychologists to plan trainings and staff development activities that address schoolwide needs in accordance with the School Improvement Plan.

Related forms and letters

Referral to Psychological Services

Psychological Assessment Parent/Guardian Information Letter

Parent/Guardian Cover Letter

Third Party Letter

Parent/Guardian Permission for Consultation/Counseling Intervention

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