



Maximizing School Psychological Services to Improve Outcomes

How can administrators and school psychologists collaborate to design a comprehensive, preventive model of school psychological services in an era of staff shortages (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2024)? School psychological services can be leveraged to deliver a wide range of prevention and intervention services within the school system, ultimately impacting and meeting the needs of more students.

Three high-leverage entry points for consideration to expand service delivery, aligned with several domains of the National Association of School Psychologists' Practice Model (2020) are listed. A district or building review of available data can help determine a school psychologist's most impactful entry point.

1. Increase the school psychologist's involvement with school improvement initiatives.

Team-based continuous school improvement initiatives involve the collaboration between school psychologists and other school personnel (e.g., administrators, teachers, interventionists, school counselors, school social workers) in problem-solving processes. Examples of increasing the school psychologist's involvement with school improvement initiatives may include:

- Analyzing data as a member of the Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports (I-MTSS) Tier 1 team to inform integrated academic and behavioral systems and practices to enhance student outcomes.

- Assisting with intervention matching and intensification as a member of the I-MTSS advanced tiers team (i.e., Tier 2/ Tier 3 based on screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic data and to evaluate students' responsiveness to intervention).

2. Expand consultative services to address a variety of needs of one student, a group of students, or an entire school system.

Consultative services are an indirect service, involving collaboration with educators and families to ultimately improve outcomes for students. Several examples of a school psychologist's work in consultation include:

- Supporting educators in implementing and monitoring evidence-based interventions for academic and behavioral concerns through instructional and behavioral consultation for individual students or groups of students.
- Collaborating with administrators, educators, and families to meaningfully and effectively include students with disabilities in their least restrictive environment.
- Collaborating with families and educators through a conjoint behavioral consultation model (CBC) to effectively understand and operationalize behavior across the school, home, and community settings.
- Providing system-level consultation to collaborate with multiple vested partners involved in prevention and intervention efforts.

3. Design, implement, and evaluate school-based support for mental health.

School-based support for mental health services promotes resilience and positive behavior, supports socialization and adaptive skills, and enhances mental and behavioral health for all students. Several considerations for expanding the school psychologist's services include:

- Developing, deploying, and evaluating crisis prevention and intervention efforts as a member of the school's crisis preparedness team, alongside first responders, school administrators, educational professionals, families, and outside agencies, including the short- and long-term mental health responses to a crisis event.
- Providing school-based mental health services, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), to support students experiencing anxiety, depression, or other mental health barriers that interfere with learning.
- Coordinating school-wide activities to foster a safe, supportive, positive school climate for all students.

Every journey begins with the first step; what might be the first step for your local education agency?

References

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