Florida's MTSS | A Multi-Tiered System of Supports

This Fact Sheet is a collaborative effort between the Problem Solving & Response to Intervention Project and Florida's Positive Behavior Support projects with the Florida Department of Education and the University of South Florida.

Fact Sheet

Small Group Planning and Problem Solving

The eight-step Small Group Planning & Problem Solving process is a ***facilitated***, structured team-based approach that can be used by small groups of individuals (six to eight) who are engaged in complex systems change efforts. Appropriate applications for its use are those organizational planning and/or problem solving situations in which multiple factors must be considered and accounted for in order to collaboratively develop the most effective action plans specific to the unique contextual conditions of participants and stakeholders.

There are a variety of features of this process that may be different from traditional planning/problem-solving processes. One is an emphasis on intentional consideration of the potential barriers or obstacles that may impede progress toward an overarching goal so that action plans are created to reduce or eliminate those barriers. The use of facilitated brainstorming is an integral component as well. At points in the process, team members are encouraged to engage in free, *out of the box* thinking, without judgment, in order to stimulate creative thinking among participants. An additional unique component of this process is the inclusion of specific strategies for supporting those tasked with implementing the action plans, which contributes to the fidelity of plan implementation. Finally, explicit evaluations of **both** the reduction or elimination of barrier(s) **and** progress toward the goal are **non-negotiable** elements of this process.

Small Group Planning and Problem Solving Process Steps	Function
Step 1: Establish priority; define **desired outcome** and how it will be measured	The function of this step is to identify the problem or goal in concrete, descriptive, behavioral, measurable terms.
Step 2: **Brainstorm** resources/positive factors *and* potential barriers Step 3: **Identify one barrier** in behaviorally descriptive terms	These steps are designed to identify the reasons why the goal has not yet been achieved. Hypotheses targeting barriers to success are considered and those most likely to be impeding goal achievement are specified for further plan development.
Step 4: **Brainstorm** strategies to reduce or eliminate identified barrier Step 5: **Develop multiple action plans** to reduce or eliminate identified barrier: who, what, by when Step 6: **Specify follow-up/support plan** for each action plan (verification and evaluation)	Based upon verified hypotheses and/or identified barriers, comprehensive intervention plans are created with detailed direction as to what, and when specific activities will occur, including the identification of personnel to implement the plan(s) and the support structures for them.
Step 7: **Develop plan for evaluating reduction or elimination of barrier** identified in Step 3. ***IF NECESSARY, REPEAT PROCESS (STEPS 3 – 7) FOR ADDITIONAL BARRIERS IDENTIFIED IN STEP 2*** *until the goal in Step 1 is achieved* Step 8: **Develop plan for evaluating progress toward achievement of desired outcome** identified in Step 1.	Plans for gathering the data necessary to determine the effectiveness of the action plan in reducing/eliminating the barrier identified in Step 3 are made and rules for the determination of acceptable criteria for success are created. Data are then collected and evaluated to inform subsequent action planning. Plans for gathering the data necessary to determine the effectiveness of the action plan in achieving the goal identified in Step 1 are made and rules for the determination of acceptable criteria for success are created. Data are then collected and evaluated to inform subsequent action planning.

Small Group Planning and Problem Solving Process Steps	Critical Questions
Step 1: Establish priority; define **desired outcome** and how it will be measured	• Was the problem sufficiently clarified and understood by all? Why or why not? • Did the group reach consensus regarding the problem and goal identified? • Was a method of measuring the outcome identified (if data doesn't exist was a plan developed to obtain these data?)? • Was the problem and goal described in concrete, descriptive, behavioral terms?
Step 2: **Brainstorm** resources/positive factors *and* potential barriers Step 3: **Identify one barrier** in behaviorally descriptive terms	• Were brainstorming procedures explained (free-flow technique, round-robin technique, pass-option, etc.)? • Was sufficient effort invested into identifying resources/barriers? If not, what could have been done differently? • Was guidance provided for barrier selection (i.e., select an important barrier but not necessarily the biggest one, choose something with a likelihood of success, other barriers can be selected at a later time, often reduction of one barrier reduces others)? • Was one barrier identified and defined? • Was a link established between the reduction in the barrier and the overall goal established in Step?
Step 4: **Brainstorm** strategies to reduce or eliminate identified barrier Step 5: **Develop multiple action plans** to reduce or eliminate identified barrier: who, what, by when Step 6: **Specify a follow-up/support plan** for each action plan	• Were alternative strategies for overcoming the barrier(s) identified? • Was guidance provided for selecting a strategy (not limited to ideas on the resource list, selection of something manageable with high likelihood reducing other barriers, etc.)? • Was one or more specific strategies selected? • Were specific plans for implementing strategies developed in detail? (who, what, when) • Were timelines realistic? • Was a support person identified for each task? • Were responsibilities for implementation clear to all participants? • Was a plan for following up with persons responsible for action plans established for each strategy?
Step 7: **Develop plan for evaluating reduction or elimination of barrier** identified in Step 3. Step 8: **Develop plan for evaluating progress toward achievement of desired outcome** identified in Step 1.	• Was a plan for evaluating ***the reduction or elimination of the barrier(s) identified in Step 3*** developed (*who* collects and analyzes *what* by *when*)? • Were identified data/criteria for implementation and outcomes reviewed? • Were decisions made based upon data/criteria reviewed? *(follow-up meetings only)* • Was a plan for evaluating progress toward the ***desired outcome identified in Step 1*** developed (*who* collects and analyzes *what* by *when*)? • Were decisions made based upon data/criteria reviewed? *(follow-up meetings only)*

References/Resources

Curtis, M.J., Castillo, J.M., & Cohen, R.M. (2008). Best practices in system-level change. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 887-902). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Other resources for this Fact Sheet can be found online at http://floridarti.usf.edu/resources/topic/sgpps/index.html.