BIRCh Project

A Dictionary of Massachusetts Children's Behavioral Health Terms

This resource was developed by the Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children Project (BIRCh), representing a collaboration between the University of Massachusetts Boston and the University of Massachusetts Amherst and funded by Boston Children's Hospital. The mission of the BIRCh Project is to provide professional development and resources for schools and strengthen the coordination of behavioral health supports provided by school and community agencies. More information is available at www.umb.edu/birch, or contact us at Birch.project@umb.edu.

The purpose of the Behavioral Health Terms Dictionary is to clarify and demystify the vocabulary of child-serving systems in Massachusetts. Two documents were created towards this mission. One document contains more professional language for experienced service providers, and one for families or those less familiar with systems described. Please note that each document communicates the same information.

The current document is the Family Version. This resource was last updated in May 2023.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AGENCIES & SERVICES in Massachusetts:

Our communities have access to a variety of agencies to support families and schools with child development. The following sections are meant to help understand these organizations.

LARGE STATEWIDE AGENCIES

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): DESE is the department of education for Massachusetts. DESE oversees the public education of youth from pre-k (ages 3+) through twelfth grade by providing academic and support services to students, families and educators. DESE is involved in general education, special educations, alternative schooling and college preparation. Link to the website for more information: https://www.doe.mass.edu/. (Source)

Department of Mental Health (DMH): DMH is a Massachusetts state agency that provides access to mental health support for individuals of all ages. The goal of DMH is to deliver resources, treatments, and other services to support individuals. (Source)

Department of Child and Families (DCF): DCF is a Massachusetts state agency whose main goal is to protect children from neglect or abuse. DCF works with families to provide support to ensure the safe and healthy development of children. (Source)

Department of Developmental Services (DDS): DDS is a Massachusetts state agency that specializes in services for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. For example, DDS may help to serve individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. DDS helps to connect people with appropriate education, housing, employment opportunities, and more. (Source)

Department of Public Health (DPH): DPH is a Massachusetts state agency whose main responsibility is keeping communities safe. DPH staff may test children for health issues, provide vaccination opportunities, or start Early Intervention (EI) services. (Source)

Department of Youth Services (DYS): DYS is a Massachusetts state agency that aims to provide support for youth involved in the criminal justice system. DYS serves adolescents and young adults aged 12-21 with resources. They provide health services, substance abuse services, victim services, and more.(Source)

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA): DTA is a Massachusetts agency that delivers services to help people in meeting basic needs. DTA programs include food benefits, cash assistance, as well as childcare and/or transportation for participants. For more information about qualifying for DTA services, click here.

For a full list of statewide resources and agencies, please see this webpage: https://www.mass.gov/resources-for-children-families.

COMMUNITY/INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHC): These centers are 25 programs across the state of Massachusetts. Their purpose is to make access to behavioral healthcare simple and fair. CHBCs offer regular or crisis services, including same-day assessments, 24/7 mobile crisis teams, and evidence-based treatment. See more at https://www.masspartnership.com/provider/cbhcrfp.aspx.

Community Service Agency (CSA): CSAs are community-based organizations that help to organize multiple services for children. CSAs can organize many care teams for a child (i.e., juvenile justice, mental health, special education, etc.). CSA services include Intensive Care Coordination, Family Partners, Therapeutic Mentors, and more under the Massachusetts Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI). (Source)

Office of the Child Advocate (OCA): OCA is an agency with the goal of improving Massachusetts state services. The OCA serves as a resource for families who are eligible to receive services from the Commonwealth. OCA reviews complaints, analyzes data, and provides information to the public. For more information about OCA, visit https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-child-advocate.

ROLES

Advocate: An individual who works for a family or child. Advocates ensure that their clients are legally represented in a fair way, so they can access resources, programs, or other services. See the Office of the Child Advocate for more.

Family Partner: An individual whose services are provided through the Community Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) in Massachusetts. Family partners have experience raising a youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs. They serve as a supporter and mentor of the caregiver. Family partners also act as a mediator between hospitals, residential and community centers. (Source)

Intensive Care Coordination (ICC): A government service through the Community Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI). ICC starts the process of care planning for those under age 21 experiencing Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). One qualifies for ICC by enrollment in MassHealth or CommonHealth plans and by meeting medical necessity. ICC is meant to be a short-term service that connects individuals to appropriate care. (Source).

Therapeutic Mentor (TM): An individual whose services are provided through the Community Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI). The goal of a therapeutic mentor is to create positive, personal relationships for youth. TMs work closely with family members to help build a child's life skills. In order to access this service, one must have a referral from an Outpatient provider, In-Home Therapist, or Intensive Care Coordination team. For more information, see https://www.mass.gov/doc/therapeutic-mentoring-practice-guidelines-0/download.

SERVICES

Child Requiring Assistance (CRA): A court case in which guardians or school staff request the court's help to supervise a youth. A CRA can help support children who are runaways, victims of sexual violence, or those who repeatedly fail to follow the rules of a parent or school.

Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI): A Massachusetts program that is legally required to serve children who are under age 21 and have MassHealth insurance. This government program provides community-based services, screening, assessment, and treatment. Those

struggling with emotional or behavioral health challenges may benefit from CBHI resources. Their services include Community Service Agencies, Mobile Crisis Intervention, In-Home Therapy, Therapeutic Mentoring Services, Family Support Training, and Intensive Care Coordination. Learn more about CBHI's history and values by clicking here. (Source)

Early Intervention (EI): State-sponsored EI services are available to infants and toddlers (age 0-3) who have developmental delays. EI services aim to support skill growth and increase success in life activities. Eligibility is determined through a free evaluation conducted by local centers. See here for more information: https://www.mass.gov/orgs/early-intervention-division. (Source)(Source)

Family Resource Center: Community or school-based centers that aim to provide resources, programs, and services for families. They are also called family support centers, with a goal to promote children's mental and behavioral health. (Source)(Source)

In-Home Therapy: A form of therapy in which the therapist physically comes to the client's home to provide services. In-Home providers work with both the child and the family on developing skills and responding to challenges. This can provide needed services to individuals who might otherwise have difficulty accessing treatment (i.e., individuals with disabilities, those without transportation, etc.). (Source) (Source)

Mobile Crisis Intervention (MCI): A team of providers who are available for onsite response 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. MCI comes to the site of a mental health crisis to stabilize an individual. A mental health crisis is any situation where a person's actions put them at risk of hurting themselves or others. (Source)(Source)

By calling the toll-free number (1-877-382-1609) and entering your zip code, you will be connected to your local MCI team.

Transitional Services: Services designed to support patients during the change from one treatment to another. Examples of transitional services can be from hospitalization to residential facility, from a partial hospitalization to an outpatient treatment plan, or others. For specific resources about transition from adolescent to young adult services, please see this page.

Wraparound Services: Wraparound is a way of integrating multiple providers into a team to support a child in many areas. A wraparound team typically consists of case managers, school

counselors, teachers, and family members who work together to support a child's progress in treatments (Suter & Bruns, 2009).

51A Report: A form submitted when someone suspects that a child is experiencing abuse or neglect. Professionals who interact with children are trained and required to report any signs of child maltreatment to the **Department of Children and Families**. Upon receiving a 51A, the DCF staff conduct a follow-up investigation to gather more information.

GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH TERMS:

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE): ACEs are harmful events that happen during childhood. They can potentially have long-lasting effects on an individual's physical and mental health. This may include being a victim of physical abuse, witnessing violence, and more. ACEs may be related to trauma. (Source).

Assistive Technology (AT): A device or software program that helps people with disabilities. AT allows more independence. An example of this may be hearing aids for those who are hard of hearing.

Behavioral Activation: A type of treatment that focuses on slowly decreasing challenging behaviors by replacing them with more helpful behaviors. (Source)

Cultural Humility: Being culturally humble means having a respectful view of others' culture while also being aware of one's own outlook. This idea is meant to raise awareness for how life experience impacts each person's place in society. To learn more about cultural humility click here.

Culturally Responsive Care: Recognizes the importance of culture by valuing an individual's identities. When a provider engages in culturally responsive care, they pay attention to the life experience of their patient. This is meant to best serve clients from all backgrounds. (Source)

Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM): A handbook tool used by healthcare professionals. The DSM helps to diagnose

DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS
FIFTH EDITION
DSM-5®

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION
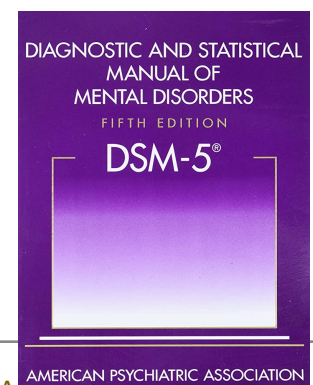
psychiatric illness based on the criteria, symptoms, and descriptions provided. For example, the DSM provides information about symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental illnesses. See right for an image of the DSM. (Source)

Dual Diagnosis: When an individual is diagnosed with both a mental illness and a substance use/abuse disorder at the same time. For example, someone who has general anxiety disorder and alcohol use disorder would have dual diagnosis. (Source)

Externalizing Behavior: A variety of behaviors that are directed outwards at other people or the environment. Externalizing behavior is also called acting-out behavior. Examples may include hitting or yelling in the classroom.

Internalizing Behavior: When someone engages in internalizing behaviors, they direct behaviors inwards as opposed to their surroundings. Some examples of internalizing behaviors include isolating oneself, being extremely shy, or persistent sadness.

Medical Necessity: A level that must be met to determine when medical services can be provided. This may include assessment or treatment of a mental disorder. In other words, an individual's symptoms must be severe enough for treatment to be covered by insurance.

Mindfulness: An act of being fully present in the moment. This is achieved through awareness and observation of one's thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgment. Mindfulness is used in therapy to strengthen mental health.

Neurobiology of Trauma: The physical impact on brain chemistry after a traumatic experience. After an extremely distressing event(s), a person's behavior may change because their brain was influenced by the intensity of the situation. (Source)

Neuropsychological Examination: Thorough tests that examine an individual's abilities related to brain function. Neuropsychological exams may be conducted in order to diagnose a disability, determine if special education is needed, and more. (Source**)**

Non-Suicidal Self Injury (NSSI)/Self Harm: Intentional harm to the body without trying to die. Examples of NSSI are cutting or burning skin. Individuals may self-harm to cope with unpleasant feelings, give one a sense of control, or punish oneself. If you know a person is engaging in self-harm, it is best to tell a professional as soon as possible. (Source)(Source)

Safety Plan: A plan of coping strategies, resources, and supports to use during an emergency. This reduces the risk of future harm to oneself or from others. (Source)

Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED): A diagnosis made by a mental health professional indicating that a child is struggling with an emotional condition. Serious Emotional Disturbance is significant, noticeable, and interferes with daily life. (Source)

Suicide Assessment (Plan, Intent, Means, Access): A thorough test completed by a trained mental health professional to evaluate an individual's risk of suicide. Discussing any plan, intent, means, and access can help determine the severity. Mental health professionals are trained to complete suicide assessments. (Source)

Trauma: An emotional response to a distressing event has effects on an individual's health. There are four main types of trauma: acute, chronic, complex, and vicarious.

> **Acute**: A single distressing event that may result in worry, panic, restlessness, aggression, or other symptoms. (i.e., natural disaster, one-time assault).
> **Chronic**: Long-lasting and/or repeated distressing events that may result in extreme anger, unpredictable worry, flashbacks, or other symptoms. (i.e., long-term chronic illness, childhood abuse, domestic violence).
> **Complex**: Exposure to varied and multiple distressing events over a long period of time. These invasive events tend to occur within the context of a personal relationship (i.e., childhood abuse).
> **Vicarious**: Trauma that is experienced through proximity of witnessing traumatic event(s) or through engaging closely with those affected by trauma. A provider can experience vicarious trauma from hearing about traumatic events. A child may experience vicarious trauma by watching a family member be hurt. Vicarious trauma is sometimes called secondary trauma. For more information and resources about vicarious trauma, please click here. (Source)

Treatment Plan: A personalized and detailed document used when seeing a provider. A treatment plan includes the treatment goals and strategies based on a client's needs.

LEVELS OF CARE:
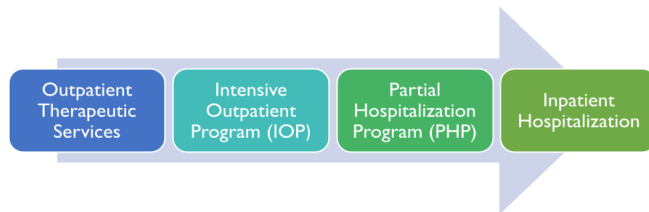
There are many options for children struggling with behavioral health. The following treatment settings are generally organized by lowest level of care to highest level of care. Different levels are designed to best fit a child's needs at the most therapeutic intensity.

Outpatient Care: Outpatient care is when an individual receives services to help manage their mental health. This can take place in an office or clinical setting rather than staying overnight in a hospital. Individuals receiving outpatient care may be a provider regularly for about one hour per week. (Source) (Source)

Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP): This level of care offers more support than standard outpatient care, but patients continue to live at home while attending. Patients receive around 3 hours of care 3-5 days a week. (Source) (Source)

Residential Rehabilitation Services (RRS): Support for individuals struggling with substance use. RRS teaches skills necessary to live a substance free lifestyle. (Source)

Structured Outpatient Addiction Program (SOAP): SOAP is for individuals recovering from addiction and provides ongoing support. Services can include therapy, relapse prevention, transitional planning, and peer support. (Source)(Source)

Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP): Intense care that can help individuals transition out of the hospital. Patients go to the hospital for several hours each day, but return home at night. Some PHPs are offered virtually. (Source)

Youth Stabilization Services (YSS): Treatment for children and youth who need support during a behavioral emergency. YSS is a short-term service that occurs outside of the home.(Source)

Community Based Acute Treatment Program (CBAT): A short-term program located in a treatment center that provides support for patients and families. Children learn coping skills in a safe environment so they can successfully return to home and school. (Source)

Inpatient Hospitalization Program: This is the highest level of treatment. It provides 24-hour care in a treatment facility or hospital. This is for individuals with severe mental health problems. (Source)

Residential Program: Patients move into a home-like treatment facility for around-the-clock care. This level of care is for patients with serious emotional and behavioral problems. Residential programs can be helpful for those who do not respond to outpatient care, or those who have serious educational needs that cannot be met through their school. (Source)(Source)

LICENSE and CERTIFICATIONS TYPES:

All providers, regardless of license type, typically receive years of training, practice, and supervision before becoming certified. When looking for a provider, what matters most is their approach to treatment, their area of expertise, and how comfortable the individual feels with them.

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA): An individual who studies behavior (see ABA). BCBAs are experts in areas including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), developmental disabilities, or other mental health issues. Behavior analysts can work in schools, hospitals, clinics, and other community organizations. (Source)

Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS): A type of degree one can earn after completing a masters program. Having a CAGS degree means an individual has further knowledge in their area of study. A CAGS degree is between a masters and doctoral level credentials. Another term for this is an Educational Specialist (EdS) degree.

Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW): A professional who provides support and therapy for mental health and daily living problems. They diagnose and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. An LCSW has a Master's degree in social work. (Source)

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW): A professional who can provide therapy in a clinic and/or independent settings. They diagnose and treat mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders. A LICSW has a Master's degree in social work. They have extra training hours earned so they can practice independently. (Source)

Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist (LMFT): A professional who provides treatment and support for issues within a marriage, relationship, or family system. LMFTs have graduate training at the Master's or Doctoral level. (Source)

Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC): A professional who provides counseling for those struggling with emotional or behavioral health concerns. LMHCs have graduate training at the Master's level. (Source)

Psychiatrist (MD or DO): A medical doctor who is an expert in mental health and can diagnose and treat mental disorders. Psychiatrists are able to prescribe medication. (Source)

Psychologist (PhD): A licensed professional who earned their PhD, or Doctor of Philosophy degree, with a focus in psychology. This degree takes around 5-7 years to complete. These professionals can conduct research, work in practice, or both. (Source)

> *Licensed psychologists cannot prescribe medication, unless they are licensed as a Nurse Practitioner or Psychiatrist/Medical Doctor.*

Psychologist (PsyD): A licensed professional who has earned their PsyD, or Doctor of Psychology, that takes around 4-5 years to complete. Rather than focusing on research, these professionals focus on clinical practice. (Source)

School Adjustment Counselor (SAC): A professional who focuses on the mental health needs and well-being of students who are at-risk for school failure or mental health problems. SACs may also be LICSW or LMHC. (Source)

School Counselor (SC): Staff members of schools who support students' learning, professional, and social/emotional goals. They also work with the community and other school staff to increase student success. School counselors hold Master's level degrees. (Source)

School Nurse (SN): A Registered Nurse (R.N.) who is assigned to the school to promote student health. They are a helpful resource for families needing medical support during the school day. (Source)

School Psychologist (SP): Professionals trained in both education and psychology. They work with students with a variety of needs and help them succeed academically and emotionally. School psychologists can conduct assessments, provide counseling, help with special education, and more. (Source)

School Social Worker (SSW): A professional who supports students' mental health and academic concerns. They provide counseling and work with caregivers. School Social Workers have a graduate degree. (Source)

SCHOOL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH-RELATED TERMS:

LAWS

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): A federal law that requires confidentiality of student education records. FERPA gives parents control over their child's information. It prohibits schools from sharing recognizable information without consent from caretakers. For example, school staff cannot publicly post their student's grades. (Source)

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA): Federal law that requires confidentiality of patient health information in healthcare settings (ex., hospitals, doctor's offices). (Source)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): This act is a federal law that states that all students, no matter the severity of disability, have the right to a *free* and *appropriate* public education. It makes many special education services guaranteed, like Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Its implementation is regulated by each state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education agency(DESE).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Special education law states that all children, regardless of disabilities or conditions, have the right to a free and appropriate education in the environment. Students should be educated in a general education classroom whenever possible. Additional supports can make the learning setting best suited to each child's needs. (Source)

Special Education Disability Categories: For a child to qualify for special education services(SPED), they must have a disability that requires specialized instruction in one of more areas described by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and defined by DESE in Massachusetts. This disability must significantly impact the child within the school and affect performance. These categories include:

> **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**: Signs of ASD include difficulty with communication (using words or behaviors), distressing reactions to changes throughout the day, or repetitive movements.

> **Developmental Delay**: A child ages 3-9 years old who struggles to perform in numerous areas (ie., physically, socially, emotionally). A child with developmental delay may struggle to speak, or may have difficulty doing things on their own.

> **Intellectual Impairment**: Children who learn at a slower pace than same-aged peers. They may have trouble learning new lessons or in problem-solving tasks.

> **Sensory Impairment**: This category includes hearing, vision, and deaf-blind impairments. After trying to correct these deficits (e.g., with glasses, hearing aids), ability to see, hear, or both continues to be diminished.

> **Neurological Impairment**: Injury to the brain or spinal cord causes delays or areas of need. This may include trouble with thinking, communicating, organizing, controlling emotions, or other basic life activities.

> **Emotional Impairment**: Signs of emotional impairment include trouble engaging with classmates, moods of deep unhappiness, or periods of intense worry. These symptoms must be experienced for a long time and be significantly interfering with school activities.

> **Communication Impairment**: Difficulty with understanding language or speaking. Some signs of communication impairment may be poor pronunciation or stuttering.

> **Physical Impairment**: Physical ability to participate in school is affected, due to the inability to move independently. Examples include students with limb amputations or cerebral palsy.

> **Health Impairment**: An ongoing or singular health event results in diminished ability to engage in the learning environment. Examples of this may be heart conditions, asthma, epilepsy, or attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Specific Learning Disability: General learning disabilities include disorders directly relating to processes of learning. For example, if a student displays significant trouble with learning math symbols, they may have a specific learning disability in that area.

To find out if a child's behavior is explained by a SPED category, schools make a team-based decision. These decisions are made at IEP meetings, following a full evaluation. For more detailed information about DESE-defined disability categories and resources, please visit here. (Source).

Students who have received a medical diagnosis in a healthcare setting, such as by their pediatrician, DO NOT necessarily meet criteria for a disability at school. To meet criteria, the disability must significantly impact school performance.

FRAMEWORKS

Curriculum Frameworks: This is what tells teachers the expectations for academic skills to be met. It helps to design what a child learns throughout the school year. (Source)

Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF): A method to link school mental health and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. ISF is a broad idea whose goals are to improve schools' ability to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral health needs. ISF states that schools should do more than just help students reach learning milestones. (Source)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS): A model that some schools use to determine the level of support that each child needs. It is based on research, and it used to assess students' learning and mental health needs. (See right) (Source)(Source)

> **Tier 1**: Supports that are provided to the entire school, or to the entire classroom.
> **Tier 2**: Supports a select number of students who may benefit from added resources.
> **Tier 3**: Intensive, personalized support for students who learn best in a higher level of care.

Tier 3
Intensive
Intervention

Tier 2
Targeted
Intervention

Tier 1
Core Instruction
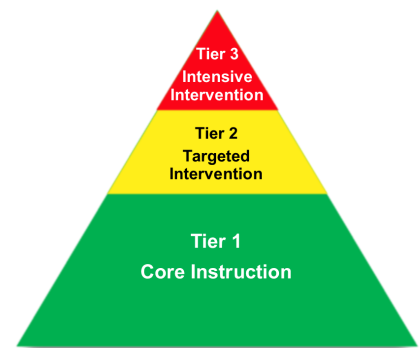
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): A framework that some administrators and school districts adopt. It is designed to improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students. PBIS is closely related to **MTSS** and **ISF**. For more, see https://www.pbis.org.

PROCEDURES

Confidentiality: A professional agreement to keep families' information private and secure. Confidentiality ensures that school staff protects students' personal information unless they have permission from the caretaker to disclose for a legitimate reason. Schools often protect information by shredding papers, using passwords on computers, and locked cabinets.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP): A specially designed plan to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. IEPs are created through collaboration with school psychologists, parents, teachers, and more to promote positive outcomes for students. An IEP typically involves a child being educated in a separate setting than the general classroom. The IEP team meets every year to check in about progress toward goals. The team then updates the IEP and plans for the next year. (Source)

If a parent/caregiver of a student with an IEP would like to call a meeting of the school team sooner than the one year mark, they are legally entitled to do so.

Social-Emotional Learning(SEL): Learning that occurs alongside traditional academic subjects. SEL lessons teach students how to make responsible decisions, control emotions, build relationships, and more. (Source)

Special Education Evaluation and Eligibility: For a child to be eligible for special education services, school teams must determine 1) if the child has a disability, and 2) that they are not making learning progress due to the disability. This is determined by the child's caregivers, teachers, and team of qualified professionals at an IEP meeting, following a detailed assessment. (Source)

Substantially Separate Programs: Substantially separate programs are educational placements, created by special education law. Students spend more than half of their time in a separate classroom setting, as opposed to the traditional classroom. Substantially Separate classrooms are specialized for students requiring more significant support. (Source)

504 Plan: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 is a law that protects students with disabilities against discrimination. It guarantees that every student who needs accommodations must receive them, so that every student has an equal access to education. 504

accommodations are *not* as intensive as an IEP. An example of a 504 accommodation may be that a student who is hard of hearing sits close to the teacher in all of her classes. (Source)

RESOURCES

Medicaid Eligible Services: Healthcare services that are covered by Massachusetts State insurance plan (Medicaid/MassHealth). If your employer does not provide health insurance, you may be able to get coverage through the state program. For more information about applying for Medicaid or to explore more, visit https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/1282.

Resource Room: A separate classroom in a school designed for specialized instruction. This room is often used for children with IEPs, or for students requiring small group learning. Students may only be in a resource room for a portion of the day. (Source)

Student Support Team(SST): A group of school personnel that regularly meet to address students' well-being at the individual or group level. They work to address a students' academic needs, behavioral health, and other areas of ability. A SST helps to connect a family to resources, interventions, or other support. (Source)

ASSESSMENTS

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): A way to gather data about a student's challenging behaviors. An FBA helps student support teams create interventions that increase positive behavior and decrease challenging behavior. (Source)

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS): A test given to students across Massachusetts designed to measure students' academic ability. The MCAS measures how well students, schools, and districts achieve based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Students are required to pass the MCAS to graduate from high school in Massachusetts, unless their Individualized Education Program states otherwise. (Source).

Response to Intervention (RTI): A way of measuring how much a student is affected by an accommodation or change. By collecting data about any changes, school staff analyze if the

intervention works. The program adjusts based on needs and whether the intervention is helping. (Source)

School Climate: The quality of school life based on students', families', and staff's experiences. Experiences may be informed by goals, values, interpersonal relationships, and learning practices. A positive school climate is where all individuals feel engaged, respected, and valued. (Source)

[Universal] Screening: A method to assess all students' academic and behavioral skills. Short questionnaires are completed throughout the school year to complete screenings. Universal screening identifies students at-risk for poor learning outcomes. The goal of screening is to detect which students may need added support, or areas of strength. (Source)

COMMON TYPES OF THERAPY:

There are many types of therapy, and this list does not include them all. Below are some common types of therapy that are found in school and community settings. Please ask your provider what type of therapy they specialize in. This will help to gather more specific information about their experience.

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT): A form of therapy whose goal is to help individuals live a meaningful life. It also aims to help patients accept the hardship that life brings. This is accomplished through mindfulness exercises and by using one's values to inform life decisions.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): A form of therapy used for individuals with autism or other psychological diagnoses. ABA therapists aim to increase helpful behaviors and decrease negative behaviors. They do so by examining the environment in which target behaviors arise. ABA shows improvements in focus, attention, learning, communication, social skills, and more. An example of a skill that might be taught during ABA is to request help or to request use of an item. (Source).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): A form of therapy that involves identifying unhelpful thoughts and behaviors. Providers of CBT

CBT is also used as a broad category for types of therapy that focus on thoughts and behaviors, like Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).

believe that these repeating patterns contribute to struggles. CBT treatment includes recognizing and challenging negative thoughts, while strategically changing behavior. (Source)

Evidence-Based Treatment (EBT): Treatment that is supported by scientific data. For a type of therapy to be an EBT, credible, data-driven studies have proven its effectiveness. (Source)

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT): A form of therapy designed for those who struggle to manage intense emotions. For example, those who are at risk for self-harm behaviors may be recommended to DBT. Its goals are to create ways to cope with stress, practice controlling emotions, and improve social connections. (Source)

Family Therapy: It is a form of therapy that brings together multiple family members. its goal is to reduce conflict and improve family functioning. Family therapy can address marriage problems, the effect of mental illness on the family, conflict within the family, and more. It is typically short-term. (Source)

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT): It is a form of therapy used for reducing difficult behaviors in children through coaching caretakers. Therapists conduct PCIT by observing the parent and child, and by doing live coaching to practice skills. PCIT aims to decrease tantruming and increase child self-confidence, among other goals. See http://www.pcit.org/ for more information and resources.

Telebehavioral Health: Services provided by behavioral health providers that do not occur physically in-person. They use live audio-video connections (like a Zoom meeting), or the review of recorded resources for services. Telebehavioral health is accessible with desktop computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other devices. Research suggests telebehavioral health has similar effectiveness to in-person therapy. (Source)

Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT): A specific form of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy that aims to help clients overcome trauma. TF-CBT is generally a short-term, structured treatment that involves caretakers. It has been shown to improve trauma symptoms, responses, and recovery. For more information about trauma and for Massachusetts-specific resources, please visit https://childwellbeingandtrauma.org/. (Source)

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR NAVIGATING MENTAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION

This list of references is meant to provide a deeper understanding of the services described throughout this document. Please explore the below resources for more detailed information about the terms covered.

A Guide to Understanding Mental Health Levels of Care

Boston Area Behavioral Health Resources Guide

CBHI Brochures & Companion Guide

CBH Knowledge Center

Education Writers Association Topics Page

Family Resource Centers

Good Therapy: Types of Therapy

MassHealth School Personnel Resource Guide

Massachusetts Services Defined

MA School Professional Support Personnel Roles

Mental Health America: Types of Mental Health Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness: Types of Mental Health Professionals

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Glossary

Special Education Parents Advisory Councils (SEPAC)

Common Abbreviations PDF