

Checklist for Supporting Students with Challenging Behaviors

This list is provided so that educators can use it as one of their tools in helping the educational team support students with challenging behaviors. Each case must be taken on an individual basis. The checklist is meant to help generate ideas and next steps in trying to reduce problem behaviors, increase appropriate behaviors, educate and engage parents, administrators and co-workers. No checklist can cover every possible strategy but are developed to help you look at the situation with a fresh sense of purpose and the hope that the list will generate next steps in helping the student and those supporting the student.

Always remember that this is a child first and that it is the behavior that is considered to be a challenge.

Data Collection

- ___ Fill out incident reports as per school board policies.
- ___ Gather behavior counts including the "A,B,Cs" (Antecedents, Behavior, and Consequences).
- ___ Write up what can be counted, heard and duration
- ___ Consider other data that would be helpful in figuring out next steps (academic progress, attendance, etc.)

School Policies and Procedures

- ___ Know and abide by school policies and procedures.
- ___ Understand the difference between federal and/or state regulations and school policies.

Federal and State Regulations

- ___ Students that are not making progress must have their IEPs revisited. Consider what should be adjusted in the plan.
- ___ Students that show dramatic changes should be re-evaluated if already identified as special education students. Educators should put their request for a re-evaluation in writing and keep a file copy of the request.
- ___ Parents can ask for a re-evaluation once a year and the LEA must respect and complete the re-evaluation in 60 days (except summers).
- ___ Students who have behavioral issues should have a behavior plan developed as part of the IEP process.
- ___ Get parent permission for a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) for a student with challenges that are not typical and require more time and planning on the part of the educational team.
- ___ Some students will require a psychiatric evaluation and the LEA must meet this need. (note that due to the expense the LEA would prefer that this be funded by Medical ACCESS and your county mental health providers)
- ___ No prone restraints by educators or school resource officers (if employees of the LEA) asper PA Chapter 14.
- ___ Review PA Chapter 14 regulations on illegal actions (examples- locked boxes, electric shock, denial of basic needs)

___ Confidentiality is not broken when sharing a behavior plan with those staff person who work with the student including teachers, paraprofessionals, cafeteria workers, recess and hall monitors, and bus drivers. *Special note- some administrators misunderstand confidentiality so be careful not to be insubordinate if they give you restrictions on sharing information.

___ Review PA Chapter 14 for suspension regulations.

___ In-school suspensions are not counted as suspensions if and only if the child's IEP is being implemented while in in-school suspension.

___ Review IDEA and PA Chapter 14 for regulations related to change in educational placement up to 45 school days for guns/weapons, drugs and seriously bodily injury.

Educating Team Members

___ Provide all team members with the behavior plan.

___ Expectation should be communicated that the behavior plan will be executed with fidelity for consistency.

___ Develop an emergency plan to keep classmates safe.

___ Develop emergency plan to support staff members working with the student. (think in terms of how to get hold of help, notifying office, access to nurse, etc.)

De-escalation

___ Ask for training in de-escalation techniques. Become aware of how your own body language and position play a role in either escalating or de-escalating the situation.

___ LEAs that supply training should provide a syllabus for the course in which the program is 80% on de-escalation techniques and 20% on restraint training (PA Department of Education recommendation).

___ PA Chapter 14 regulations does not require that educators have training before engaging in a restraint. (currently over 80% of restraints in the Commonwealth are done by people who have had training)

___ Restraints are only to be used if the safety of that student, other students or staff is in jeopardy.

Taking Control During An Incident With A Student

___ Recommended that the certified teacher remain with the student and the paraprofessional take the remaining students to safety in situations where safety is in question.

___ Request backup assistance from designated team.

___ Fill out incident report at the conclusion of the event.

___ Judges when dealing with cases where parents accuse educators of injuring their child look at multiple components:

- Were you in control of your emotions at the time of the incident? (Consider your voice volume and what other people will be seeing as outside observers.)

- Did you know and abide by the behavior plan if the student had one?
- Was the student seriously injured?
- Did you use the restraint hold as per training?(if you ever received "official" training)
- Was a restraint used for the convenience of staff? (restraints are only to be used when the safety of the student, other students or staff is in question)
- Was the student in danger or a danger to others?

Engaging Parents

___ Hold multiple IEP meetings to try to find strategies that will increase positive behaviors.

___ Ask parents for their insights and strategies. Incorporate those items that the team feels would help with consistency and move the agenda in a positive direction.

___ Report any restraint used in a timely manner to the parents.

___ Discuss outside resources that parents can access to help them at home and potentially can help at school.

Administrative Supports

___ Educate your leadership. Typically they have had limited coursework in special education.

___ Move from whining to providing data and desired outcomes. Meetings should have an agenda, be focused and have outcomes.

___ Provide several different suggestions to move the situation in a positive direction. What resources are you bringing to the table for discussion?

___ Figure out how to move this up the priority list for the administrator.

Staff Injuries

___ Ask the OT and PT for catalogs and review arm and shin guards when dealing with behaviors such as scratching, pinching and biting.

___ Report any injuries as per school district procedures which would include an incident report and contact with the school nurse.

___ Take a photo of the injury with your phone, print it and include it with the report. Email the photo to the appropriate person stating who the student was that injured you in cases where the person processing the report rejects the photo. In this way it becomes a student record.

___ Abide by your union contract in cases of serious injury. This typically requires that you see the workman's compensation doctor selected by the employer first.

Minefields

- Do not take videos with your phone of the student's behavior.
- Recommend that you refrain from placing student's name in email unless you are conveying information in a professional manner. The same recommendation applies to their initials.
- Never recommend medication for a student to parents. The advice would be to ask if the parents have consulted with their family physician recently for additional support.
- Placing a more restrictive setting on a draft IEP has the potential of undermining trust with the parents. Leave the placement blank and let all of the information that comes earlier in the document build up to the recommendation the education team would like the parents to consider.
- No person has the power to extend an IEP beyond one year in length. A new IEP must be developed.

Reality Check and Common Misunderstandings

- Comments like "just get the student out of my classroom" do not move any agenda forward. A parent that refuses any change in placement can go through the Due Process hearing procedure and in PA the average timeframe for a case is 102 days.
- An LEA can go to a Due Process Hearing to seek relief but understand they typically hire a special education attorney and the minimum costs will be \$7,000 to the LEA if not higher.
- There is no regulation that says a specific student must have a paraprofessional assigned to them. This would have to be discussed at an IEP meeting and the LEA would have to agree to it.
- There is no regulation on a ratio of special education students for general education classrooms.
- LRE (least restrictive environment) does not mean that all students must be placed in general education for the entire day.
- Parents are allowed to bring anyone they want to an IEP meeting including advocates.
- Advocates do not have to have any formal education in special education law.

Due Process

___ Make sure you have good data.

___ It is considered critical that the paper trail of multiple revisions to the IEP in such areas as behavior plan, accommodations, and goals are reflected in the official documents otherwise the hearing officer will not see all of the hard work the school team has done in trying to provide FAPE (free and appropriate public education).

___ Federal and state regulations require that the hearing officer consider certified teachers as expert witnesses during the due process hearing.

___ The parents face the uphill battle of proving that the program and/or staff were not adequate to meet the student's needs. Sixty percent of due process cases in PA have been won by LEAs.

Union Supports

___ Do not divulge the student's name when sharing an incident or ongoing problem you are having. Confidentiality is critical.

___ Union representation is not allowed at IEP meetings.

___ Unions are allowed to work with members to support them and seek support from the administration.

___ Union representatives can contact field staff and headquarters for strategies and support.

___ Do not use school email when communicating with union representatives. Use personal email and communicate from home or outside of the school district's server.

Communications

___ Make sure that general education teachers and special education teachers are communicating.

___ Avoid leapfrogging as it tends to burn bridges and has the potential of undermining plans.

___ Building principals and special education directors can be a good resource. Limit the number of topics to be addressed and make sure that an action plan is developed before the conclusion of the meeting/phone call.

In-house Resources

___ Social Worker - help connect families to agencies. (Make home visits, follow up with families)

___ Nurse

___ Psychologist

___ Behavior Specialist

___ Special Education Teacher

___ Speech and Language Therapist, Hearing Therapist, Vision Specialist

___ Guidance Counselor

Outside Agencies

___ PA Department of Human Resources- Have parents filled out the application for Medical ACCESS? This will give their special education child evaluations, case managers, therapy, therapeutic staff support, and psychiatric consults at no cost to the school district. Parent's ability to pay is not considered in the application if the child has already been identified as a special education student.

___ Probation - Invite probation officer to any meetings you are having. As long as the parents do not refuse the probation officer can be an asset in helping move parents forward on implementing agreed upon plans.

___ County Office of Mental Health - They provide case managers and intensive case managers for students who have mental health issues.

___ Look at other organizations that can support the child or the family. These can be faith based organizations, community sport leagues, summer camps, etc.

Interagency Support

___ Request an Interagency meeting instead of an IEP meeting for a student who has a program developed on paper but no entity will accept the student. This could include those students who are on instruction in the home for more than 30 school days with no end in sight.

___ Interagency meetings bring together all parties that might have the potential of helping the student. The idea is to pull the great minds and resources together and figure out how each can help the student.

Law Enforcement

___ It is your civil right to contact your local law enforcement. Contact your union representative if the LEA forbids you to contact law enforcement.

___ Understand that this is a serious step to take and should be done after careful deliberation.

___ Determine if you are filing a report or filing a report and pressing charges. Understand that going to police does not guarantee that the student will be removed from your classroom.

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