

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BUILDING-BASED I&RS TEAMS

Focus on Short- and Long-term Goals

Effective team members do not minimize the legitimacy of alternate points of view or the possibility that an identified academic, behavior or health problem may have its origins in something other than what is apparent or that does not obviously or precisely fit into one's scheme of things. For example, alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse often is indicated in school by a variety of student behavior, academic or health problems, rather than as overt substance abuse.

As described in the "Life Skills Deficiency Model," in the section of this manual titled "Scope of Services for Building-based I&RS Teams," the observable behavior that comes to the team's attention may not specifically indicate substance abuse, but the underlying life skills deficiency may well be the loss of control over the use of psychoactive chemical substances or some other at-risk behavior, health concern or academic barrier. Therefore, effective teams attempt to effect short- and long-term change by addressing both observable behaviors *and* related life skills deficiencies.

Enabling Behavior

Educators have long sought to use their skills and knowledge to *enable* students to achieve their full potential. *Enabling*, however, has a negative connotation when it consists of those ideas, attitudes and behaviors that allow student problems to continue or worsen. Enabling is particularly harmful when the actions or inaction of adults softens, minimizes or prevents students from experiencing the consequences of their behavior.

Inappropriate and problem student behavior is enabled when adults:

- ❑ Confuse *caring* with *natural and logical consequences*.
- ❑ *Deny* the existence of a problem or a legitimate explanation for a problem.
- ❑ *Rationalize* away problem behavior.
- ❑ Keep *secrets*.
- ❑ *Cover up* inappropriate behavior.
- ❑ Believe they *cannot be "conned."*
- ❑ Believe it is their responsibility and within their power to "*save*" or "*fix*" children.
- ❑ Mistake children's success for their *own* success.
- ❑ *Do not act* on inappropriate behavior.

Enabling Behavior, continued

Since it is not uncommon for caring adults to unwittingly enable negative student behaviors on occasion, it is important for team members to be vigilant in avoiding these behaviors in their own actions and to help colleagues, parents and community members recognize and avert them, as well.

General Characteristics of Effective Teams	Based upon existing research and field-based evaluation studies, the following profile has emerged that describes the characteristics of an effective preventive intervention team:
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administrative support for the I&RS team, its processes and functions, which includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ allocating appropriate resources to support effective training of committee members in I&RS functions, skills and processes; ▪ supporting committee operations; ▪ providing resources for implementation of I&RS action plans; ▪ evaluating program effectiveness; and ▪ making appropriate school-wide improvements and implementing supportive programs.
 ➤ Quality, ongoing professional development for all <i>members of the I&RS team</i>, as well as <i>staff who request assistance</i> for problems. The professional development should extend beyond the typical workshop training, as needed, to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ school-based and classroom-based opportunities for teachers and other members of the I&RS team to share expertise and resources; ▪ observations of one another; ▪ modeling effective instructional practices in the classroom; ▪ providing opportunities for teachers to practice new approaches and strategies in the classroom; ▪ making available opportunities for peers to assist classroom colleagues through collaborative consultation and coaching; ▪ visitations to other schools or applicable sites; ▪ reviewing, discussing and applying relevant educational research literature; and ▪ utilizing the supervisory process to promote goal setting and personal and professional growth.
 ➤ Multidisciplinary membership on the I&RS team. Membership should provide for diverse viewpoints and direct access to a broad range of expertise, resources and services that have the capacity to respond to the full range of student needs. |
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General Characteristics of Effective Teams, continued

- Clearly defined I&RS procedures for effective and efficient team operations. Per N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(a) “District boards of education shall establish and implement a coordinated system in each school building for the planning and delivery of intervention and referral services...” The system should be established at the building level based on the specific needs of the school, but *approved by the board of education*. The development of a written procedures manual for use by team members is strongly suggested.
- The existence of a written mission statement and/or statement of philosophy. The statement(s) should emphasize a positive focus on students and educational problems; the collaborative and collegial nature of the team’s decision-making and problem-solving processes; and the supportive nature of team members’ interpersonal relationships.
- Adherence to structured and collaborative planning, decision-making and problem-solving processes in which all committee members have been well trained.
- Effective application of communication, conflict management and consensual agreement skills on the part of all team members.
- A commitment to solving educational problems in the environment in which problems are occurring, rather than immediately or primarily looking for solutions outside of the classroom.
- Specific provisions for the development of a written plan of action (i.e., the I&RS action plan) for all interventions developed by the team. The plan should include specific strategies for monitoring and evaluating the integrity of all interventions by the individual(s) designated as responsible for implementation.
- A system for compiling assessment data, portfolios, observation data and other information required for effective team decision making at all stages of the process.
- Selection and appropriate use of alternative curricular and instructional materials, equipment and technology.
- Development and use of appropriate school resources, services and programs.

General Characteristics of Effective Teams, continued

- Identification and use of appropriate resources, services and programs outside of the school.
- Matching appropriate expertise to the identified educational issues of academics, behavior and school health.
- An ecological orientation to assessing needs and developing interventions to meet those needs. This entails investigating curricular, instructional, as well as student-related variables in all instances where I&RS team assistance is requested.
- A commitment by all I&RS team members to demonstrating equity and reciprocity in team meetings and operations. This means that team members understand the collaborative, co-equal status of each team member, and that each team member is expected to function as both “educator” and “learner” in sharing expertise and resources, and in benefiting from the same from others. This does not preclude, but instead emphasizes, the unique expertise and valued contributions of each team member.