

Connecting for Kids (C4K)

Promoting intra-system and cross-sector engagement to support youth physical health, behavioral health, and academic wellbeing

Supporting Struggling Students: A Guide for Health Care Professionals *Bridging Healthcare and Education*

Understanding the School System

Every student learns differently. Not all academic or behavioral challenges indicate a disability. Schools offer layered supports that do not require a diagnosis or formal plan.

MTSS: A Layered Approach

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is the framework used in schools to address the academic, behavioral, physical and social-emotional needs of all students. Examples:

Tier 1: Universal	Tier 2: Targeted	Tier 3: Intensive
Core instruction for all	Small group or short-term interventions / targeted skills	Individualized instruction and wraparound services
SEL embedded in classroom	Check-in/check-out systems	High-frequency progress monitoring
Depression Screening: For all 12yrs and above	Mildly Positive: Counseling Referral	Worsening or Significant: Medications may be indicated

Reminder - AIS (Academic Intervention Services) is one example of academic supports that exist within the MTSS framework.

Considerations Prior to a Special Education Referral

- Interventions are provided for all students and can be layered to address level of support needed.
- Interventions are communicated to families and monitored for effectiveness.
- Chronic attendance concerns should be addressed, and students should demonstrate regular school attendance before moving forward with a special education referral.
- The school must consider the effectiveness of interventions before referral to Committee on Special Education.
- Special Education is only for students who qualify after a formal evaluation is completed.
- A medical diagnosis does not guarantee eligibility for special education or a 504 plan.
- If a school representative is requesting a specific diagnosis, there should be discussion around the purpose of that request.

Steps a Medical Professional Can Take To Support Families

1. Start with Questions:

- Has the family shared concerns with the school?
- Has the school communicated to the family that there are academic or behavioral concerns?
- What interventions has the school tried? How is the child progressing with intervention?
- What does student data show (grades, attendance, behavior, response to intervention)?

2. Encourage Collaboration:

- Recommend families meet with the teacher, counselor, and/or school team discuss concerns.
- Parents can request a meeting with the Principal and team to continue discussion around concerns, if needed.

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Steps a Medical Professional Can Take To Support Families (cont.)

- Encourage continued monitoring of concerns
- Healthcare Professional can contact school representative to seek information and discuss concerns.

3. Contact the School:

- Healthcare Professional can contact school representatives to seek information and discuss concerns.

4. Support the Referral Process (when necessary)

Inform families –

- Guardian may submit a written referral to the Committee on Special Education requesting evaluation.
- Evaluation and determination of eligibility follow a process, the school will inform family of the process.
- Relevant medical documentation can support a request for evaluation, it does not drive eligibility.
- All services {intervention, Special Education, 504} are provided in the least restrictive environment

Key Messages for Families

- ✓ You don't need a diagnosis to get help.
- ✓ Schools must provide supports based on student need.
- ✓ The goal is growth in the least restrictive environment.
- ✓ Stay connected with the school.
- ✓ Document progress
- ✓ Medical documentation can support educational decisions, but it doesn't determine them.