OHIO
Mental Health
Network for School Success

Project AWARE Information Brief

MIAMI UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR SCHOOL-BASED
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK (ISF)

An Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF) strategically aligns the goals and processes of two school initiatives: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and School Mental Health (SMH). Together, these initiatives aim to improve educational outcomes by minimizing and addressing behavioral and mental health concerns.

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH (SMH)

WHAT IS IT?
SMH incorporates a continuum of mental health services available to all students in a school. These services may be delivered through the collaboration of both school-based and community-based practitioners, and they aim to enhance student social and emotional skills while preventing and addressing mental health concerns.

WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF SMH?
SMH leads to improvements in early identification of possible conditions, prevention strategies, and service access. Furthermore, it can decrease mental health related stigma and spread service impact.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES OR LIMITATIONS OF SMH WHEN IMPLEMENTED IN ISOLATION?
Schools may have difficulty implementing effective SMH programs due to too few staff with too many additional duties. There can also be a lack of integration among school-based and community providers, as well as an unrefined use of data to drive decision-making.

INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK (ISF)

WHY IS AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK IMPORTANT?
ISF streamlines resources between programs. It also addresses important gaps and limitations of both SMH and PBIS in an effort to improve student and system functioning.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS & SUPPORTS (PBIS)

WHAT IS IT?
PBIS is a school-wide, multi-tiered framework that uses data-based decision making to inform a continuum of proactive approaches to teach prosocial behavior and minimize problem behavior. In *Tier I* (aka Primary Prevention), all students are provided universal supports, including systematic and explicit instruction on school-wide expectations along with reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and correction of inappropriate behaviors. In *Tier II* (aka Secondary Prevention), targeted and supplemental interventions are provided to students who are not responding appropriately to Tier I supports and may be at-risk for more serious behavioral concerns. Finally, *Tier III* (aka Tertiary Prevention) consists of intensive, individualized interventions and supports provided to students who exhibit problem behavior despite Tier I and II supports.
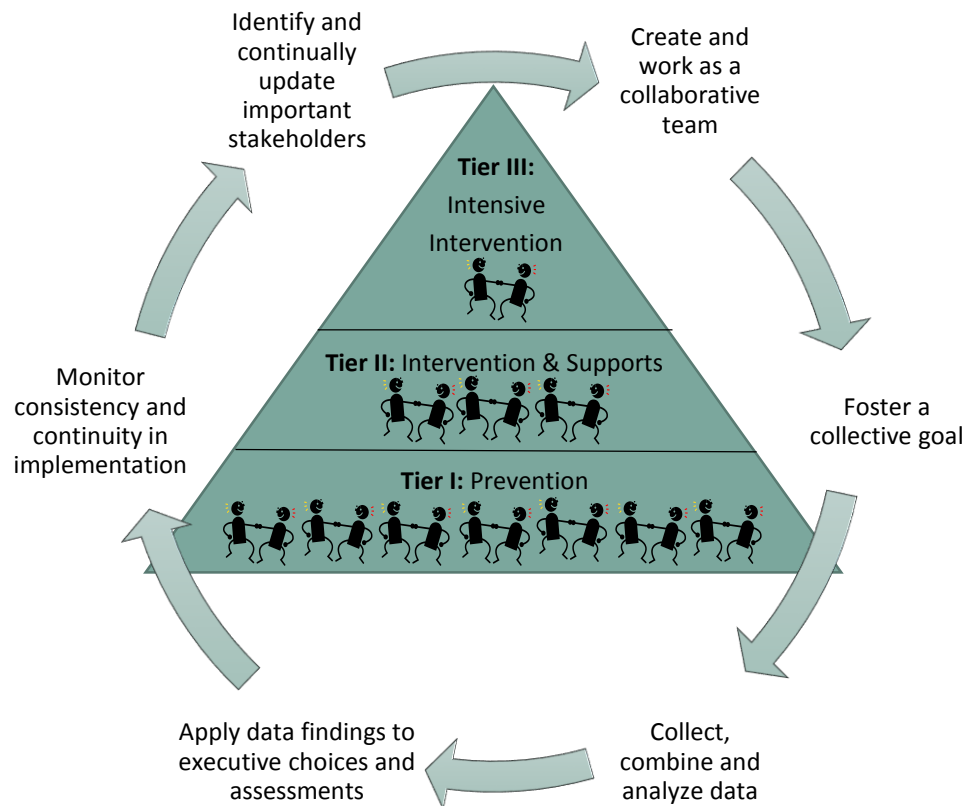
WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF PBIS?
Benefits of PBIS include decreased problem behaviors as well as improved school climate, attendance, academic achievement, and social competence.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES OR LIMITATIONS OF PBIS WHEN IMPLEMENTED IN ISOLATION?
PBIS may not fully address the emotional needs of all students with more complex mental health issues. Furthermore, resources and structures at the upper tiers are less well-developed and validated.

HOW SHOULD THIS FRAMEWORK BE IMPLEMENTED IN SCHOOLS?
Methods used within an ISF should always be:

- Evidence-based
- Aligned with the multi-tiered system at all levels
- Applicable to all areas of the school
- Implemented in a collaborative and interdisciplinary manner
- Focused on the students and their families
- Culturally appropriate
- Data-driven

KEY ASSUMPTIONS OF ISF

1. All aspects of a child (e.g., behavior, mental health, achievement) are interconnected and must be addressed as such. Teams should consider all aspects of the child's functioning, as well as contextual variables, when determining what supports and interventions will be most efficient and effective.
2. Data should be viewed within a tiered model. School mental health has traditionally focused on higher tiers whereas PBIS has typically focused on lower tiers. When creating the interconnected system, school personnel should ensure each tier is considered and addressed completely within a unified framework.
3. When implementing ISF, school teams should collect and use multiple types of data from multiple sources.
4. Because time and resources may be limited, school teams should consider what approaches are practical and reasonable for their own context and develop strategies for institutionalizing the selected practices.

Identify and continually update important stakeholders

Create and work as a collaborative team

Tier III: Intensive Intervention

Tier II: Intervention & Supports

Tier I: Prevention

Monitor consistency and continuity in implementation

Foster a collective goal

Apply data findings to executive choices and assessments

Collect, combine and analyze data

ADVANTAGES OF ISF

ISF allows administrators and educators to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of interconnected school programs, identify problem areas, and make informed decisions to drive practice.

ISF allows schools to create clear, straightforward plans for prevention, intervention, data-collection and analysis that consider the interrelatedness of domains (e.g., academic and behavioral).

ISF has both breadth and depth. Its prevention, intervention, and data-collection can be applied to a wide range of school groupings—from individual students to grade levels to the entire school district.

ISF is tailored to address context-specific needs. Even after implementation, ISF can continue to be modified to address gaps or emerging concerns within the school.

LEARN MORE
Visit:
https://www.pbis.org

http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/publications/Final-Monograph.pdf

http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Other-Resources/School-Safety/Building-Better-Learning-Environments/PBIS-Resources

This brief was created based on information from the following monograph:
Barrett, S., Eber, L., & Weist, M. (Eds). (2013). Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support. Retrieved from http://www.pbis.org/common/pbisresources/publications/Final-Monograph.pdf