

Designing a schoolwide behavior response plan



A strong Tier 1 system requires clear, consistent, and restorative approaches to managing problematic behaviors when they arise. Restorative disciplinary practices emphasize a relational, trauma-informed approach to student behavior and favor inclusive rather than punitive and exclusionary practices. The guidance below describes components of an MTSS-B schoolwide behavior response plan.

Differentiate and define major vs. minor behaviors

First, clearly articulate the difference between minor behaviors that should be managed in the classroom versus major behaviors that require a referral to the administrative office. Develop a behavior matrix that defines and provides concrete examples of common problem behaviors at both minor and major levels of intensity. The **Sample Major vs. Minor Behavior Matrix** offers an example list that can be adapted for your district/school. Your minor vs. major behavior matrix should be taught to all staff, accompanied by professional development in classroom management, problem-solving, and restorative approaches to working with minor student behaviors in relational, trauma-informed ways. Your office discipline referral system can collect and feed data back to problem-solve and support consistent staff approaches to managing minor and major behaviors.

Establish/refine your office discipline referral system

An effective discipline referral system requires systematic and consistent approaches to documenting and tracking minor and major discipline referrals.

Develop a discipline referral form that is used consistently across all school staff. The checklist¹ below includes the types of information that you will want to include on your discipline referral form.

- ✓ Student name
- ✓ Student grade
- ✓ Referring staff member name
- ✓ Date of incident
- ✓ Time of incident
- ✓ Location of incident
- ✓ Problem behavior
- ✓ Perceived motivation
- ✓ Others involved
- ✓ Actions taken
- ✓ Restrain/seclusion (optional)
- ✓ Notes (optional)
- ✓ Other custom fields (optional)

The School-Wide Information System (SWIS) available through PBISApps offers a comprehensive electronic platform for tracking student problem behaviors and discipline referrals and making data-driven decisions about how to best target and respond to challenging behaviors at schoolwide and student levels (<https://www.pbisapps.org/products/swis>). SWIS offers comparisons of discipline referrals to national trends; tracking of minor and major referrals; definitions of problem behaviors; and analysis by gender, grade, type of behavior, and location to support targeted intervention and disproportionality analyses.

See <https://www.pbis.org/resource/referral-form-examples> for examples of SWIS-compatible discipline referral forms you can adapt to your local context.

If adoption of SWIS is prohibitive, it is important to develop a way to track details of your office discipline referrals to provide the data needed to examine the impact of Tier 1 strategies. The **Office Discipline Referral Tracker** in the MTSS-B Toolkit offers alternative.

¹Adapted from PBISApps SWIS Referral Form Compatibility Checklist at <https://www.pbisapps.org/resource/referral-compatibility-checklist>
[literature_157121/Colorado_Restorative_Practices_in_Schools_Guidelines67](https://www.pbis.org/resource/referral-form-examples)



Develop guidance for managing problem behaviors

Managing minor behaviors in the classroom

Teachers need adequate training and tools in order to create a positive classroom environment, reduce disruptions for other students, support student social-emotional growth, and ultimately, increase instructional time and opportunities for engagement in learning. Evidence-based MTSS-B classroom interventions and supports include:

- ✓ Effective design of the classroom's physical environment
- ✓ Predictable classroom routines
- ✓ Positive classroom expectations aligned with schoolwide behavior expectations
- ✓ Active supervision
- ✓ Frequent and diverse opportunities for students to respond to respond/engage
- ✓ Behavior-specific praise
- ✓ Acknowledgment systems such as group contingencies, token economies, behavior contracts
- ✓ Anticipation of problem behaviors and prompts/reminders about positive behaviors
- ✓ Respectful, calm, and private error correction
- ✓ Other behavioral approaches to managing student behavior such as redirection, providing choice, planned ignoring and differential reinforcement²

Use of restorative and problem-solving strategies

Restorative, inclusionary, and problem-solving responses to behavior are key to MTSS-B's focus on social-emotional learning and relational approaches to supporting student wellbeing. Restorative school practices help staff approach and manage student behavior in ways that work to create an inclusive school climate and community and support a highly relational approach to increase mutual understanding, repair harm, and strengthen individual relationships and whole school communities.³ Equally important is problem-solving with students and introducing changes in the environment to help support positive student behaviors. See **Restorative Approaches to Addressing Student Behaviors** in the MTSS-B Toolkit for more information about restorative and problem-solving school practices.

Articulate your schoolwide behavior response plan

Support all school staff in understanding your schoolwide behavior response plan by providing a flowchart or decision tree to help guide the process. See the **Sample Behavior Response Flowchart** in the MTSS-B Toolkit for an example that can be adapted for your own schools.

Additional resources

- The national Center on PBIS offers a host of evidence-based classroom behavior management strategies and examples, available at <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-and-responding-to-behavior-evidence-based-classroom-strategies-for-teachers>
- Detailed support for developing high-quality classroom behavior management practices, including a self-assessment/observation tool, the Classroom Practices Observation Tool, is available from Midwest PBIS at <https://www.midwestpbis2.org/training-content/tier-1-and-classroom/classroom-practices>
- Missouri's School-wide Positive Behavior Support offers a host of resources for classroom management: <https://pbissmissouri.org/tier-1-effective-classroom-practices/>

² Adapted from *Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-based Classroom Strategies for Teachers* at <https://www.pbis.org/resource/supporting-and-responding-to-behavior-evidence-based-classroom-strategies-for-teachers>.

³ *Colorado Restorative Practices in Schools Guidelines: Principles, Practices, Implementation and Training*, retrieved from https://rjcolorado.org/literature_157121/Colorado_Restorative_Practices_in_Schools_Guidelines67