

MTSS-B Professional Development and Coaching Guidance



Getting started with MTSS-B requires up-front professional development, though training alone is insufficient for high-fidelity MTSS-B implementation. In addition to ongoing professional development, shoulder-to-shoulder external/expert coaching and development of internal coaching capacity are vital.

Professional development

District-Community Leadership Teams (DCLT) should develop professional development plans to support MTSS-B implementation. These plans should be differentiated across schools based on data, identified needs, and implementation phase. Ideally, the plan should cover 3-5 years and be explicitly linked to existing district-level vision statements and improvement plans and goals. Professional development should address MTSS-B key messages, school behavioral health delivery systems, social emotional learning, youth mental health, and the impact of trauma on learning. The DCLT should first strategize about how to deliver professional development to all school staff to support a district-wide shared understanding of MTSS-B. The DCLT should then identify the knowledge and skill gaps that need to be addressed to support high fidelity practice implementation across schools. For example, a district-wide social-emotional learning curriculum requires professional development designed to “level-set” across buildings, as well as trainings adapted to the unique practices being implemented at each school.

We encourage districts to determine, early in the MTSS-B planning process, how much dedicated professional development time can be devoted to MTSS-B. Planning ahead is essential, as is offering annual professional development for new staff and refreshers for veteran staff. Below, we list specific topics to incorporate into MTSS-B professional development efforts.

MTSS-B professional development topics

- MTSS-B Overview: Values, core features, and strategies & routines
- Youth Mental Health First Aid (or similar mental health awareness/response program)
- Suicide prevention/postvention (e.g., NAMI Connect)
- Cultural and linguistic competence
- Implementation science; selection of evidence-based practices
- Trauma-responsive school practices/ACEs
- Youth development/resiliency (40 Developmental Assets; One Trusted Adult)
- Social-emotional learning (curriculum selection/training; CASEL competencies)
- Universal social-emotional screening use, tools, and procedures
- Schoolwide behavior expectations and acknowledgment systems
- Check-In/Check-Out Tier 2 supports

Coaching

Coaching – shaping and reinforcing gold standard practice at the point of performance – is key to high fidelity practice. Coaching bridges the gap between training and implementation; skills that are introduced through professional development and training are best learned on the job with the assistance of an expert coach. MTSS-B coaches support district- and school-level teams in implementation of core elements of MTSS-B and can liaise between the DCLT and school-based teams.



NH MTSS-B advocates at least two hours of coaching per month to DCLT, Tier 1, and Advanced (Tier 2/3) teams from an external and/or internal coach with expertise in NH MTSS-B. The coach should socialize each team to the MTSS-B framework, process, and role of the coach; facilitate district team meetings; guide MTSS-B planning and implementation; support completion of MTSS-B tools; and provide interactive problem-solving and support. An MTSS-B coach serves multiple functions, including:

- Develop and share expertise in the MTSS-B framework; implementation science; evidence-based practice selection; and data-based decision making
- Oversee development and facilitation of the DCLT to guide district-wide MTSS-B prioritization, goal-setting, and action-planning
- Guide development of school-based teams, including ensuring regular meetings, meaningful and efficient agendas, articulated roles, access to data, etc.
- Assist in selection and implementation of evidence-based practices (EBPs) across tiers
- Help develop a plan for monitoring and evaluation of MTSS-B
- Facilitate communication between district/school teams and students, families, and community members
- Ensure services provided are family-driven, youth-guided, trauma-responsive, culturally competent, and developmentally appropriate
- Cultivate “champions” of the MTSS-B framework in the district and community

Starting with external MTSS-B coaching

Coaching from an external expert in MTSS-B is recommended for districts beginning or rekindling their MTSS-B journey to set a solid foundation, avert early implementation pitfalls, and develop internal coaching capacity. The NHDOE’s Office of Social and Emotional Wellness (OSEW) offers MTSS-B coaching and technical assistance for NH school districts interested in implementing MTSS-B, as do several other agencies throughout the state.

Developing internal MTSS-B coaching capacity

As implementation matures, coaching duties should gradually transition from external to internal experts. The district should identify and nurture a core group of internal coaches that receive institutional support to lead MTSS-B implementation efforts, with MTSS-B internal coaching skills and responsibilities embedded in job descriptions. A dedicated, full-time district-wide MTSS-B internal coach position is ideal, but internal coaching responsibilities can also be distributed among multiple staff – for example, an internal coach in each school, as well as one who functions as part of the district-level team.

Behavioral health coaching

Expert coaching is also critical for school staff that are implementing behavioral, mental, and social-emotional supports and services. Staff who are delivering Tier 1 supports will need ongoing training and coaching from experts in the program/support model, as well as access to expert behavioral health consultation to support implementation of classroom-level behavioral health and social emotional programming and procedures (e.g., SEL curricula and positive schoolwide behavior expectations). Behavioral health staff implementing Tier 2/3 school and community-based behavioral health interventions will also need ongoing training and coaching from experts in the practice model. Behavioral health consultation and coaching can be provided by school- and/or community-based behavioral health staff.

Resources

Eber, L., Barrett, S., Perales, K., Jeffrey-Pearsall, J., Pohlman, K., Putnam, R., Splett, J., & Weist, M.D. (2019). *Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide PBIS, Volume 2: An Implementation Guide*. Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education). Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press.

Fixsen, D.L., Naoom, S.F., Blase, K.A., Friedman, R.M., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).