SWIS™ Documentation Project

Defining a Coherent Office Discipline Referral Process

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Intended Audience

SWIS™ Facilitators may use this process to help them assist schools in getting their systems compatible with SWIS use.

Description

Defining a coherent office discipline referral process that is compatible with SWIS™ is an access requirement and will enhance data use. Defining the process for handling problem behavior events and for documenting the information fulfills two of the ten SWIS™ requirements.

Defining a Coherent Office Discipline Referral Process

Defining a coherent office discipline referral process that is compatible with SWIS™ is an access requirement and will enhance data use. Defining the process for handling problem behavior events and for documenting the information fulfills two of the ten SWIS™ requirements. Sample procedures for dealing with problem behavior events, sample definitions, and sample referral forms are available in this section and at www.swis.org.

1. <u>A simple and predictable process for handling problem behavior events</u> needs to be defined, taught, and agreed upon by all staff. Define the system and fit the problem behaviors to the system. The system should define the procedure to follow for types of problem behavior (e.g., minor/major; level 1/ level 2). We encourage schools to manage minor problem behaviors within the context in which they occur and send major problem events to the office to be handled. Many schools are defining multiple minor events as one major event. Using a flow chart format has been useful for schools. The process begins with observation of the problem behavior event and works through each component of the procedure from observation to problem solving to documentation. **A generic procedure for dealing with problem behaviors, which defines a process for both minor and major problem behavior events, is offered. Schools are encouraged to create a process that is simple, efficient, predictable, and fits school resources.**

2. <u>Definitions for problem behaviors, locations, possible motivation, others involved, and administrative consequences</u> need to be mutually exclusive and operationally defined. For example, SWIS™ has fields for 21 specific problem behaviors; however, each school can tailor the full list of 21 problem behaviors to fit the needs within their school. For example, if arson, bomb threats, and tobacco use are very low incidence, the school may not want to use space on the form for each of those categories. The school may opt, instead, to define those in the *other* category if they occur. The same application is true for all other categories within the SWIS™ program. **The critical feature is that all staff agrees on mutually exclusive and operationally defined labels and definitions, and that the data-entry person does not have to interpret the information provided.**

3. <u>Referral form compatibility</u> is another SWIS™ requirement. With efficiency and accuracy, again as a goal, the referral form must be SWIS™ compatible. Clarity on the referral form takes the guesswork out of the data entry person's job. Data will be more reliable and accurate as judgment calls are minimized. **A Compatibility Checklist is an available tool for ensuring that all necessary categories are being documented on a referral form.** We have found that schools organize the information differently, some on a half page and some on a full page. The specific grade levels represented at a school also guide the content and number of options available on an office discipline referral form. For example, middle/high schools may need to specify problem behaviors such as vandalism, alcohol use, and tobacco use, while elementary schools opt to specify

those problem behaviors in the *other* category (as a result of low frequency). Three examples of referral forms are available for you to use or revise. Note the differences in size of the form, specific options available for each of the categories, and the format of the form. Example A provides all SWIS^{TM} category options, Example B is a form used by a K-8 school and limits the problem behavior categories, but provides a communication link with staff, administration, and families. Example C is a format used by an elementary school, limits the options, and adds a follow up agreement for students to complete after the problem event. Each of the three examples is SWIS^{TM} compatible. Formatting the referral form for easy use while providing accurate information that is compatible with the SWIS^{TM} referral report is critical.

Schools are encouraged to use any of this information. We encourage schools to adjust the process, definitions, and referral form to fit the culture and resources within each school.