

Guidelines for Supporting and Referring Learners Experiencing Barriers to Learning for Special Education



SUSPENSION AND / OR EXPULSION

FREE STATE PROVINCE



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Guidelines for Supporting and Referring Learners Experiencing Barriers to Learning for Special Education



Rationale:

White Paper 6 on building an Inclusive Education System states that learners experiencing barriers to learning and development should be supported in the regular classroom as much as possible. Only learners who cannot benefit in the regular classroom should be referred for special education.

Unfortunately the current situation is one in which learners are referred for psychological testing in large numbers - often for reasons that have little to do with learners' functioning.

The criteria for determining special education eligibility are inadequate in discriminating learning disabled from low achieving learners. Therefore once referred, learners are tested almost automatically, often with technically inadequate tests. Once tested a large majority of learners are placed in Special Education.

Secondly when a learner is tested, test results are often not instructionally relevant and generally not helpful to teachers. Thus when learners are declared ineligible for Special Education Services, regular classroom teachers are often left without any useful suggestions-these learners end up not receiving alternative classroom interventions.

Another problem with the model of referral, testing and placing is that the process typically involves a search for what is wrong with the child - (a search for pathology) - that can be identified and fixed through special education. This does not take into account factors like family, curriculum, economic factors, methods of instruction, past experiences of the learner, etc.

The pre-referral system on the other hand is based on an ecological model of viewing learner problems in the context of classroom, teacher, curriculum and social variables as well as learner variables, and of attempting appropriate interventions that are not focused solely on the learner but on the whole system. It aims at providing interventions at the most important point of the process the point of initial referral.

THE PRE-REFERRAL INTERVENTION SYSTEM.

THE GOALS OF THE PRE-REFERRAL INTERVENTION MODEL ARE:

- To implement systematic intervention strategies in the regular classroom.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies before a learner is formally referred for consideration for special education placement.
- To reduce inappropriate referrals and placements in special education.
- To identify successful interventions so as to help learners remain in the least restrictive environment.
- To help in making the decision-making process more instructionally relevant and data-based on the effectiveness of interventions as a major component of the decision-making process.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRE-REFERRAL INTERVENTION SYSTEM

Overview:

- The pre-referral intervention model is based on an indirect, consultative model of service delivery in which resources are directed at providing intervention assistance at the point of initial referral which is the school.
- It is based on the principle of prevention.
- It assumes the adoption of an ecological perspective of viewing learning barriers in the classroom, thus numerous factors affecting learning are assessed, analyzed and taken into account in intervention planning.
- It is characterized by six stages.

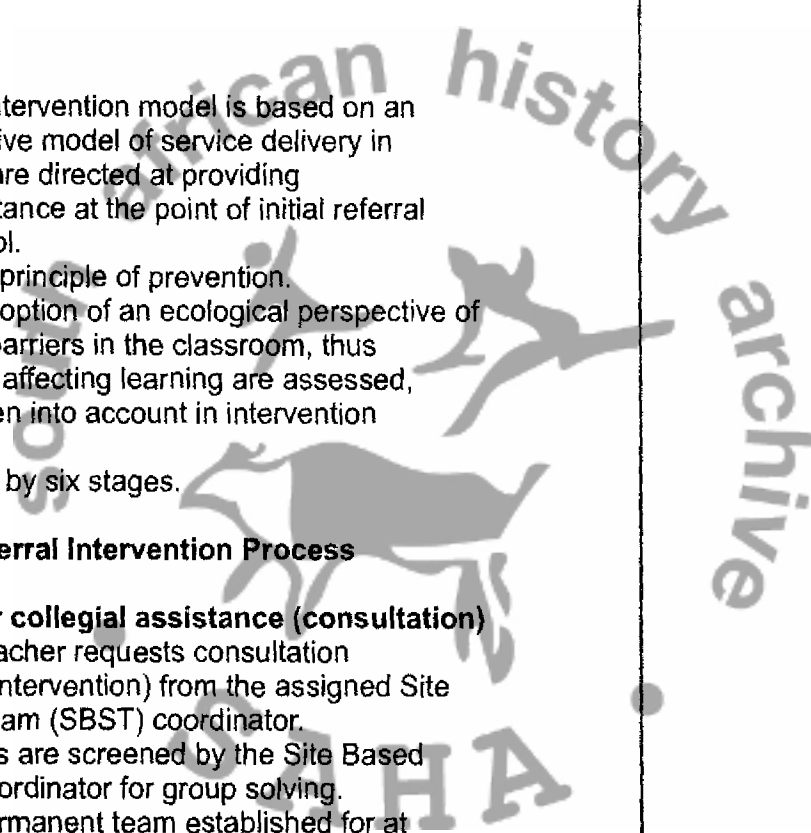
Stages of the Pre-referral Intervention Process

Stage 1: Request for collegial assistance (consultation)

- The classroom teacher requests consultation (problem solving intervention) from the assigned Site Based Support Team (SBST) coordinator.
- The initial referrals are screened by the Site Based Support Team, coordinator for group solving.
- The SBST is a permanent team established for at least the school year.
- It is composed principally of regular classroom teachers, but the support teacher and/or special education teacher also become(s) a member.

Stage 2: Collegial Assistance

- An individual learner's needs are brought forward by his/her classroom teacher who for that case becomes a member of the team.



An assessment is made of the discrepancy between the learner's current performance level and the teacher's expected performance level for the learner. Relevant classroom variables are analyzed as they affect this discrepancy between actual and desired performance.

- The team proposes teaching strategies, suggests resources, presents alternatives, i.e., consults professionally and collegially.
- An intervention is designed collaboratively by the referring teacher and the team. Follow up and review are always built in.

Stage 3: External Consultation

- The Learning Support Facilitator is consulted about unresponsive cases.
- The LSF (Learning Support Facilitator) evaluates the problem and the initial intervention strategies and decides whether to give additional suggestions for further classroom intervention or on the basis of the nature of the problem consults with other members of the DBST (District Based Support Team).
- The LSF or assigned member of the DBST e.g. learning facilitator, or Social Worker takes appropriate action.
- The classroom teacher is supported and learning progress monitored.
- If successful the process ends here, if not the next stage follows.

Stage 4: Conference/Meeting

- A meeting is held with the SBST to confer, share information and make a decision.
- Meeting occurs with the referring educators, LSF and other DBST members concerned with the case.
- Previous data on collegial assistance, consultations and effectiveness of interventions are shared.
- Feedback is solicited from team members.
- Decision is made to either: continue with interventions as implemented, modify interventions refer the learner for psycho-educational assessment and consideration for special education eligibility.
- The parent should be part of all decisions.



Stage 5: Formal Referral

- At this stage if appropriate a formal referral is made for psycho-educational assessment of the learner.
- Evaluator uses data collected from stages 1 to 4. The information that has been collected on the success of different interventions will assist in decision making and guide the selection of assessment strategies.
- Assessment techniques are selected on the basis of answering specific questions i.e. (a) What decision is being made? (b) What data must be collected to make the decision?

Stage 6: Formal Program Meeting

- Relevant members of the DBST meet and the results of the psycho-educational assessment are discussed.
- Data from stages 1 to 5 are shared, and alternative plans including appropriateness of alternative placement are discussed.
- If appropriate the team develops goals for IEP (Individual Educational Programme).
- DBST determines whether special education is necessary or whether intervention in the regular classroom will suffice.
- The learner is mandated/not mandated as requiring special education.
- The LSF takes the report to the school. The school informs the parent of the decision taken.
- The team leader (DBST) becomes responsible for placing the learner.

IMPORTANT FEATURES OF THE CONSULTATION MODEL

- The principle assumption is that of shared power and collaborative decision-making. The consultant is viewed as a resource to the consultee with power being equal between the two.
- The final decision regarding selection of intervention must lie with the teacher in order for the teacher to take ownership of interventions.
- Indirect services to the learner (client) as opposed to direct services. Indirect service (consultation) should not be viewed as incompatible with direct service but rather on a continuum with it.

N.B. The above guidelines do not apply to cases of rape, serious trauma, attempted suicide, neglect etc. These cases call for immediate intervention by a Psychologist/Counselor, a Social Worker etc.

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MEC: EDUCATION**

Suspension and/ or Expulsion

Before a learner is suspended or expelled the following procedures should be followed:

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
Preventative educational programme for emotional and behavioural difficulties.	SCHOOL	Ongoing
Learners experiencing mild behavioural and emotional barriers to learning will be identified and receive interventions to address their specific needs. These interventions will be indicated on an Individual Development Plan (IDP).	SBST	Learner will be enrolled in the programme within 7 days of identification
Learners experiencing severe behavioural and emotional barriers to learning will be identified and enrolled in programmes to address their specific needs. Part of the programmes will be a developmental assessment. The programmes will be indicated on an Individual Developmental Plan (IDP).	SBST and DBST	Learner will be enrolled in the programme within 7 days of identification
Before a learner is suspended the DBST must be notified. All prior interventions must be indicated in the IDP.	Principal	Before suspension
Inputs (Care plan, IDP and other documentation) to the SGB on recommendations to alternative actions.	DBST, SBST or / and parents	Within 7 days before the hearing (runs concurrently with next step)

Learners in ordinary and special schools who experience behavioural and emotional after every effort has been made to correct the behaviour of the learner. No le: and other stak :

ACTION**RESPONSIBILITY****TIME FRAME**

- | ACTION | RESPONSIBILITY | TIME FRAME |
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| 1. The act of misconduct is committed | | |
| 2. Precautionary Suspension | Principal | |
| 3. To hold a hearing for a learner. | SGB | Written notice to be given to learner at least 5 school days before date of hearing |
| 4. Communicate final outcome of hearing with reasons to the learner / representative. | SGB | Within 2 days of the hearing (runs concurrently with next step) |
| 5. Submit a full report about the decision of the SGB to the DBST and District Director. | Principal | Within 2 days after the hearing |
| 6. Inputs (IDP and Care Plan) to the District Director: | DBST | Within 3 days of receiving the report from the principal (runs concurrently with next step) |
| 7. Submission of report of the principal with comments by the District Director to the HOD. | District Director | Within 7 days of receipt of the report from the principal |
| 8. Submission of written comments by the SGB, learner/ representative, DBST and parents when the District Director introduces new information. | SGB, learner / DBST and parents as the case may be | Within 7 days from the date of the request by the HOD |
| 9. Decisions whether to expel the learner or not. HOD to refer the matter to Legal Services of the Department. | HOD | Within 14 days from date of receipt of all relevant information |
| 10. To advice the HOD on the expulsion. | Director:
Legal Services | Within 7 days of receipt of the documents from the HOD (These seven days are included in the 14 days period for finalization by HOD) |

barriers to learning should be supported. Every effort should be made to assist these learner should be suspended or expelled without intervention from a collective team. Consequent should form partnerships to address the development and implementation of behavior

ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIME FRAME
11. To inform the learner / representative, parent and SGB of decision of HOD.	HOD	Within 2 days from decision of HOD (these 2 days are included in the 14 days period for finalization by HOD)
12. To inform the learner, DBST and parent of the arrangements for placement of learner at another school if learner is of compulsory school going age. This function will be performed by the District Director on behalf of the HOD.	Director: District	Within 1 day of decision of HOD
13. The District Director must ensure that a learner of compulsory school-going age is placed at another school immediately upon receipt of the decision of HOD.	The District Director	Within 5 days of receipt of decision of HOD
14. Appeal against the decision of the HOD.	Learner / representative, and / or parents	Within 14 days from date of decision of HOD to expel the learner
15. To advise the MEC on the appeal.	Director: Legal Services	Within 2 days of receipt of the appeal from the office of the MEC
16. Decision on appeal to be communicated to the learner representative, parent and SGB.	MEC	Within 2 days of receipt of advice from Directors: / Legal Service and Labour Relations

to adjust in mainstream education and suspension should only be considered by, District Based Support Teams (DBST), Site Based Support (SBST), parents and support programmes.