

# INTERCONNECTED SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK

*Adapted from Barrett, S., Eber, L., & Weist, M. (n.d.).<sup>1</sup>*

Interconnected Systems Framework (ISF), developed using the foundational works of Implementation Science and Communities of Practice, provides a promising structure and process for interconnecting Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and school mental health (SMH). “Specifically, the ISF involves collaborating community mental health providers working closely with school employees within a multi-tiered teaming structure.”<sup>1</sup> The goal of integrating PBIS and SMH is to improve outcomes for all children and youth, but especially those who may be faced with mental health challenges.

Within the ISF, a team that is comprised of district leadership, community leadership, and families, works together on equal grounds to develop, facilitate, coordinate, and monitor all interventions through one structure. Together, the ISF team addresses each level of systems planning (Tier 1/Universal, Tier 2/Secondary, and Tier 3/Tertiary) by (a) reviewing school and community data; (b) assessing needs and resources; (c) identifying evidence-based interventions; and (d) implementing established plans and monitoring them for progress.<sup>2</sup>

Below is a brief overview of how an integrated system may look within a multi-tiered system of support.<sup>3</sup>

## **Tier I: Universal/Prevention for All**

### ***Coordinated Systems, Data, Practices for Promoting Healthy Social and Emotional Development for ALL Students***

- School improvement team gives priority to social and emotional health
- Mental health skill development for students, staff/, families and communities
- Social-emotional learning curricula for all
- Safe and caring learning environments
- Partnerships: School, home, and community
- Decision-making framework guides use of best practices that consider the unique strengths and challenges of each school community

## **MH/PBIS: An Expanded Tier 1**

- Universal screening for social, emotional, and behavioral at-risk indicators
- Universal screening for families who may request assistance for their children
- Teaching social skills with evidence-based curricula to all students
- Teaching appropriate emotional regulation and expression to all students
- Teaching behavioral expectations to all students
- Mental health professionals are part of the Tier 1 systems team, providing input and progress monitoring data
- Opportunity to review community data and expand Tier 1 intervention options based on data

## **Tier 2: Early Intervention for Some**

### ***Coordinated Systems for Early Detection, Identification, and Response to Mental Health Concerns***

- Systems planning team coordinates referral process, decision rules, and progress monitors:
  - ✓ Array of services available
  - ✓ Communication system: Staff, families and community
  - ✓ Early identification of students at risk for mental health concerns due to specific risk factors
  - ✓ Skill-building at the individual and group level as well as support groups
- Staff and family training to support skill development across settings

## **MH/PBIS: An Expanded Tier 2**

- Mental health/community professionals part of secondary systems and problem-solving teams
- Working smarter matrix completed to ensure key resources are both efficient and effective (i.e., initiatives are aligned and combined, such as bully prevention, discipline, character education, Rtl, behavior, etc.)
- Groups co-facilitated by school staff and community partner (e.g., guidance counselor and community provider clinician)
- Opportunity to expand the continuum of interventions based on data (i.e., trauma-informed interventions)
- Outreach to families for support/interventions

### **Tier 3: Intensive Interventions for Few:**

#### ***Coordinated Systems, Data, Practices for Promoting Healthy Social and Emotional Development for Individual Students and Family Support***

- Systems planning team coordinates decision rules/referrals and progress monitors
- Individual teams developed to support each student
- Individual plans include an array of interventions/services
- Plans can range from one to multiple life domains
- System in place for each team to monitor student progress

### **MH/PBIS: An Expanded Tier 3**

- Mental health professional(s) part of tertiary systems team
- FBA/BIP and/or person-centered wraparound plans completed together with school staff and mental health provider for one concise plan, rather than each completing paperwork to be filed
- Quicker access to community-based supports for students and families

To learn more about the ISF, refer to **Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**. This monograph<sup>4</sup> consists of the following: (a) a definition of the ISF as an implementation framework that creates and guides a connection for education and mental health systems; (b) a description of implementation efforts across current ISF pilots, including state, district, and school-level sites; (c) a discussion around the benefits of utilizing the ISF framework; and (d) an overview of implementation, research, and policy agendas to further improve and scale up the framework. Tools in the monograph include “a readiness survey, dialogue guides, implementation guides, a knowledge development guide and a consumer survey to guide in the selection of evidence-based practices.”

### **References**

- <sup>1</sup> Barrett, S., Eber, L., & Weist, M. (n.d.). *Advancing education effectiveness: Interconnecting school mental health and school-wide positive behavior support*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland, Center for School Mental Health.

- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> Eber, L. (2013). *Removing silos: Integrating mental health and school services with an interconnected systems framework* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from [https://www.osep-meeting.org/\(S\(l4bjnl45mx3oa5qebdh2aheh\)\)/2013conf%5Cpresentations%5CMonday%5CLargeGroup215\\_345pm%5CRemoving%20Silos%5COSEP-SchoolMentalHealth.pptx](https://www.osep-meeting.org/(S(l4bjnl45mx3oa5qebdh2aheh))/2013conf%5Cpresentations%5CMonday%5CLargeGroup215_345pm%5CRemoving%20Silos%5COSEP-SchoolMentalHealth.pptx)
- <sup>4</sup> Barrett et al., p. 12.

### Resources

- **Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support**  
<https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>