

School

- Consider IEP eligibility under **Other Health Impaired or Emotional Disturbance** to support his symptoms of **complex trauma and ADHD**
- *** may also need academic support to address **XXX**. He may qualify for IEP eligibility under SLD as a result.
- Request Occupational Therapy evaluation to determine impact of sensory challenges related to **trauma** on his ability to access curriculum.
- *** may benefit from having TWO complimentary behavior support plans. See Appendix B.

Appendix B: Creating a behavior support plans for ***

Plan A: The “usual” plan

This plan targets behaviors that require support under normal conditions (i.e. not triggered by traumatic and emotional response). It focuses on supporting ***'s ADHD:

- Any behavior modification system used should be geared towards students with ADHD; students with ADHD require a different set of modifications than most others.
- Students with ADHD **do not** respond to punishments - that is the removal of privileges *already earned or promised* in the moment or at a later time.
 - It is not recommended that punishments be utilized as it is only likely to have the opposite effect of disengaging the student, rupturing the student-teacher relationship, and/or encouraging more inappropriate behaviors to emerge.
 - This results from ADHD students' unique brain chemistry that responds to positive reinforcements but cannot effectively “take in” punishments in order to change behavior to “earn a reward back.” ADHD brains simply forget and these modifications end up being counter-productive and damaging.
 - Note that this is different than a student accepting consequences (i.e. not receiving a reward that is unearned, not replacing a treat destroyed during a fit, etc)
- Behavior modification systems **MUST** be focused on a heavy and consistent utilization of positive reinforcements:
 - Positive reinforcements should be administered AT LEAST 5-10 times per day (whether behavior goals are met or not)—this is because if there is not a steady stream of reinforcements ADHD brains simply “tune out” and don't pay attention to the reinforcements if they are not consistently present.
 - Yes, this is a lot of reinforcements, but it is critical for success. Students with ADHD do not generalize rewards very quickly and need a high amount of feedback. Ideally, they should be getting positive feedback 20+ times per day.
 - This is often a challenge, in the beginning as students with ADHD often do not succeed enough to earn rewards—choosing some “low hanging fruit” or celebrating “partial successes” are encouraged to get the flow of reinforcements going (be careful of undermining your reinforcements).

- Positive reinforcements should be applied as soon as possible when the desired behavior is observed. Waiting even 2 minutes is too long for a student with ADHD to make the connection between reward and behavior.
- The nature of the reinforcements is more important than the ultimate “reward.” Rewards should be limited in terms of financial or material costs to encourage continued use. The best rewards are those that give the student special privileges or encourage relationship building at home or at school (i.e. getting to choose the read-aloud book, 5/10/15 min one-on-one game time with teacher (could be academically enriching), being the line-leader, increased choices during SSR/activity time/etc).
- **NEVER EVER** take away *earned* privileges/rewards
 - Think of sports teams—even when penalized later earned touchdowns, runs, baskets are never removed once properly earned).
 - This is often very different than practice in most classrooms (i.e. taking away recess as a punishment) and can take some getting used to, but is critical when implementing a behavior plan that will be effective for an ADHD student.
- The way reinforcements are communicated are also VERY important.
 - Making eye contact, using positive affect, and enthusiasm help drive the reward home.
 - Be specific about the behavior you liked
 - Avoid undermining the reinforcement with phrases like “next time,” “if only,” “you did well this time, but,” etc. – these only feel like punishments to students with ADHD.
- Students with ADHD should **ALWAYS** be allowed to go to recess. Research clearly indicates that movement is **NECESSARY** to help students with ADHD to focus.
 - By preventing students with ADHD from being active at recess this will severely limit their ability to access the curriculum and is detrimental to their psychological health.
 - Consider recess a right (the right to learn includes optimizing physiological parameters for disabled students) and not a privilege.
- Students who move *during* class or are hyperactive also appear to do so to assist with their attention. Support this movement with instruction and not punishment.
 - Asking a student with ADHD to stop moving entirely is neither appropriate nor effective. At best, the student will stop moving but be unable to pay attention. At worst, the student will only feel embarrassed or ashamed potentially damaging their self-esteem and motivation.
 - Helping to manage the appropriateness of such behaviors *is STRONGLY recommended*. Such conversations should begin with pointing out how movement is helping with maintaining attention. Be VERY careful not accidentally shame an ADHD student about their movement—they’ve likely received a lifetime of negative feedback about it already.
 - Students with ADHD should be explicitly taught what movements are socially acceptable, non-disruptive to others, and conform with class rules (i.e. using a “wobble”

cushion,” twirling a pen, utilizing a fidget, sketching doodles, etc). Visual reminders can be helpful so they can choose from a variety of options for refocusing their attention.

- Collaborate with the student to build a customized “refocusing toolkit” so they can be more mindful and intentional with their choices.

Plan B: The “alternative” plan

School staff should implement an “alternative” plan when *** has been triggered or is exhibiting behaviors consistent with a traumatic response

- Staff **MUST** be able to tell when to use this plan both for their own safety, that of other students, and ***’s own safety.
- Identification of when he is *triggered* (i.e. in the midst of a post-traumatic response) is the most important factor when determining **WHEN** to implement an alternative plan.
- Once staff agree that *** is in a triggered state, the “alternative” plan must be implemented and the “usual” plan should be placed on hold until he returns to a non-triggered state.
- ***’s triggered behaviors affect the autonomic nervous system variably, thus seemingly different behaviors are actually all connected to trauma. These include:
 - “Fight” responses - Extreme aggressive behavior, throwing objects, making threats to kill others, or ANY time that an adult feels that **THEY** themselves are in danger.
 - “Flight” responses - Very negative affect associated with trying to move away from an adult, panic, running away or out of a classroom, hiding in a closet or other quiet space.
 - “Freeze” responses – Situations in which *** appears completely disconnected from reality or hypervigilant on the flipside, if he reports feeling “scared,” or if *** faints or goes to sleep in class (after a stressful event).
- School staff must work together amongst themselves and with therapists to *identify* what may have been a potential trigger for ***. These should be recorded, tracked, and his plan adjusted accordingly.
 - Traumatic triggers can be tricky to identify and typically **DO NOT** constitute things like “*** did not want to do his work.”
 - True trauma triggers usually involve some sense of threat that the student is experiencing or loss of safety. For students with complex trauma this could be the loss of trust with a teacher. Often times when punishments are administered students with traumatic injuries respond in unexpected ways because they see this as a rejection of their relationship and thus the safety of the environment.
 - Care to prevent activating triggers may be taken by staff, but this should not be the primary focus of staff, as sometimes triggers are unavoidable. A therapeutic and swift response is much more important when they occur.
- A therapeutic and effective response is characterized by the prioritization of the student’s **SENSE OF SAFETY. This should be determined in conjunction with the student as it varies for all students.**
 - Start with checking your own level of anxiety and fight/flight/freeze response. It is **VERY** common (the norm in fact) for teachers to be triggered by this kind of behavior.

- Identify your feelings and emotional state by telling yourself “I’m triggered right now too, and I need to get in the right space.”
 - Utilize techniques to help calm your nervous system down enough so that you can think clearly (you will still be anxious and this is normal). Breathing relaxation can be quite effective in these instances and also help cue other students and even *** that “we should all take a deep breath right now.”
 - With professional consultation, it can actually be quite informative and even transformative to understand your own reaction. Trauma has a way of connecting an injured student’s experiences very intensely to another person’s.
- Utilize a calm and steady voice, use slow movements, and do not do anything that would indicate a threat (such as threatening to call the police, or putting a student in detention).
- Give *** plenty of space especially if he is backed into a corner. Allow him and yourself an escape route if needed (i.e. don’t put yourself between him and the door or vice versa).
- Repeatedly use phrases like “everything is going to be okay,” “I know you’re upset,” “we’re going to make this right,” “you will be okay,” “I’m here to help you,” repeat these phrases over and over if needed.
- Create a safe and calm situation for all present and if needed take *** to a separate space if he is willing *and* ready to go. You may let him know that you would like to “help him feel safe.”
- Focusing on creating a safe environment is crucial to getting through the toughest part.
- Wait to talk about any incidents, consequences, etc once *everyone* is calm. Even if this means waiting until the next day/week.
- When everyone is calm, engage *** in a respectful manner by honoring his experience first and pointing out how he “must have been very upset.” If he is able to tolerate further discussion talk about how his behavior impacted you and the class.
- Take the time with him to work through any hard feelings and reestablish the relationship.
- Finish the conversation by working *together* to “find a way to make it right.” This may include correcting and changing any behaviors on your part that contributed to the triggering episode (if appropriate),
- Or let *** know that there is a difference between your *intent* and its *impact*.
- Make sure to take care of yourself after any events by consulting with peers or professionals. Especially, if you continue to feel anxious or triggered many hours after the event. Working with students who’ve been traumatized can be very challenging, but it can also be very rewarding and life-giving with the proper supports.
- Incorporate a behavior plan that utilizes sensitive practices:
 - A secure relationship should be established with his teacher so that he feels safe with the person who he sees as an authority figure but also as a mentor and role model.

- Utilize Restorative Practices rather than attempting to change behaviors using solely punishment (see The International Institute for Restorative Practices website for more information: <http://www.iirp.edu/what-is-restorative-practices.php>)
- Provide *** with a safe space within the classroom where he can utilize coping skills when triggered
- Actively teach *** coping skills for dealing with traumatic stress reactions, anxiety, and depression
- At times the identification of target behaviors, behavioral goals, and/or replacement behaviors can be challenging with such students.
 - In these cases, it is **STRONGLY** recommended that Functional Behavior Analysis be carried out by behavior specialist who can help in writing an effective behavior support plan.
 - Plans that are poorly written or not implemented can cause more damage because it creates a false sense of safety in a traumatized student leading to further entrenchment of problems and possible retraumatization.
 - If a teacher does not feel confident in the plan they have created or their ability to execute the plan then a Functional Behavior Analysis is necessary.