

PREREFERRAL

The Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) for general education students is intended as a primary way in which general education teachers or specialists can assist a student who is at risk for school problems within the general education environment. I&RS programs are not intended to replace traditional methods or resources for helping students to function effectively in school. Rather, they exist primarily to focus on particular student problems using available resources within the general education environment.

The primary purposes of the I&RS team are to identify students in need and then plan and provide appropriate intervention for those students within the general education community; to identify the responsibilities of building staff who participate in the planning and provision of intervention and referral services; to actively involve parents/guardians in the development and implementation of the I&RS plans; to review and assess the effectiveness of the services provided in achieving the outcomes identified in the intervention and referral plan; to provide professional development to general education staff members who either refer students to the I&RS or who assist in providing the intervention and referral services; and, finally, to coordinate the services of community-based social and health agencies.

An I&RS team is one of the many resources used by schools to intervene with student problems, prior to Child Study Team (CST) evaluation.

A. THE INTERVENTION AND REFERRAL SERVICES TEAM PROCESS (I&RS)

The Intervention and Referral Services Team process is a collaborative school effort between district personnel and parents to intervene when a student has been identified as making minimal academic and/or emotional progress in the regular education setting. The team or committee collects and evaluates relevant data in order to determine or identify specific barriers to student performance. Once these barriers have been identified, individualized interventions are determined and implemented through an action plan in order to alleviate the concerns. In some instances this may include the use of the Response to Intervention Model. Although several variations of the model have been proposed, in general RTI is based upon three components: the use of multiple tiers of increasingly intense interventions; a problem-solving approach to identify and evaluate instructional strategies; and an integrated data collection and assessment system to monitor student progress and guide decisions at every level. Student monitoring continues throughout this process by the identified individuals in the action plan. This process is ongoing, in that, it continues to identify and evaluate problems, solutions and progress within the student's academic setting.

I&RS PHASES

1. Request for Assistance
2. Information Collection
3. Parent/Guardian Notification and Participation
4. Problem Solve
5. Develop I&RS Action Plan
6. Support, Monitor and Continue the Process
7. Problem resolved or referral to CST

If the I&RS process exhausts all of the available school based regular education interventions with minimal success, often, the student is referred to the CST for a comprehensive evaluation in order to gather additional information as well as to determine if the student is eligible for special education and related services. The recommendation for a CST evaluation could come directly from the I&RS team or from the parent at any time during the process.

B. WHAT INTERVENTION IS AND IS NOT

The term intervention is used when teachers and other school personnel study and creatively problem solve educational issues that place a student at risk for school failure. Using a team approach that also significantly involves parents, each school carefully considers the needs of students who are identified “at risk” for learning, behavior, and health problems. After careful consideration, strategies are put in place to work with the student and effectively address the issues at hand.

By its nature, intervention is a process. It is often the case that plans are revisited and modified. In most cases, however, a successful intervention plan which is created and shaped over a period of time proves to be a powerful method tool for the at-risk student. If successful, it is preferable to special education referral which requires a student to have an identified disability and undergo an evaluation.

In some cases, intervention is not successful and a referral for special education is deemed necessary. Even in these cases, the prior period of intervention is valuable. Prior intervention will illustrate that a referral is appropriate (as required by law) and it will help inform the IEP team about strategies that have or have not produced success when it comes time to develop the written IEP. It is important that parents not see intervention as merely a waiting process or a “red tape” step for special education.