

## Quality Guide: Data Driven Decision Making

The *Quality Guide: Data Driven Decision Making* (DDDM) is part of a collection of resources developed by the Center for School Mental Health for The SHAPE System that provides guidance to help comprehensive school mental health systems (CSMHSs) advance the quality and sustainability of their services and supports. This guide includes background information on DDDM, possible action steps, and resources to help systems incorporate DDDM into a long-term quality program plan.

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### Background:

The *Data-Driven Decision Making (DDDM)* domain within the *School Mental Health Quality Assessment Survey* comprises four indicators to help determine a system’s capacity for making data-informed decisions about its school mental health services. These indicators include:

- (1) Use of data to determine mental health services needed by students
- (2) Use of a system for monitoring individual student progress
- (3) Use of a system for aggregating student mental health service and support data to share with stakeholders and make decisions about mental health service planning and implementation
- (4) Use of a system for disaggregating student mental health service data to examine school mental health system level outcomes based on subpopulation characteristics

Data-driven decision making is the process of using observations and other relevant data/information to make decisions that are fair and objective. DDDM can help inform decisions related to appropriate student supports and be used to monitor progress and outcomes across multiple tiers (mental health promotion to selective and indicated intervention).

“Data” refers to individual facts, statistics, or items of information used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation. In the case of schools and the classroom setting, data can include information collected from multiple sources such as the student, educators, caregivers, primary care, and health and mental health providers.

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Data in schools may include:

- ✓ Grades
- ✓ Attendance/Seat time
- ✓ Office referrals/Suspensions/Expulsions
- ✓ Performance test scores
- ✓ Achievement or benchmark test scores
- ✓ Mental health screenings and assessments
- ✓ Behavioral observations
- ✓ Crisis incidents
- ✓ School climate surveys



A DDDM approach uses student-, classroom- and school-level data to help school professionals better understand and support student progress. For example, saying that a particular student is improving has more meaning if there are data to support this claim. Data can help identify areas of concern and inform potential strategies to support the student in the classroom. When strategies are put in place, data can be used to monitor progress and thus inform decisions about next steps. Importantly, data facilitates information sharing across team members to provide different perspectives on concerns, come to a common understanding of target concern(s), decide which strategies to try, test those strategies, and then use data to adjust the plan if needed.

### **Action Steps:**

#### **1. Evaluate current DDDM processes and purposes in your system.**

- Meet with your team and evaluate whether data-driven decision making is used for:
  - Initial screening of strengths and concerns (school-wide and individual)
  - Informing tier of intervention or planning supports
  - In-depth evaluation of behaviors/symptoms and context
  - Intervention selection and/or progress monitoring
  - System-wide program evaluation or outcomes monitoring
  - Aggregating or disaggregating data across groups of students, classrooms, schools, etc.
  - Communication between team members about student needs, strengths, progress
  - Other purposes
- Evaluate whether these purposes reflect your current needs and identify any gaps.

#### **2. Identify the data you want or need.**

- Identify existing data sources. Which sources are currently used? Which sources are available but might be used more regularly or strategically?
- Identify desired data sources that are not yet available. Can you make plans to obtain them?

#### **3. Put your data to use!**

- Identify team(s) that will use data to inform decisions about student mental health.
- At the individual student, classroom, grade, school, or system level:
  - Identify and/or prioritize the area of concern.
  - Select practical data source/s and collection methods to match the purpose.
  - Collect and examine data to better understand the problem and inform intervention selection.
  - Implement intervention(s) to address that problem.
  - Collect data throughout the intervention to monitor progress towards intended goals.
  - Meet regularly as a team to review data to make decisions about potential changes.
- Evaluate data sharing practices across team members. If barriers are identified, address them with improved processes for HIPAA- and FERPA-compliant data sharing.
- Ensure that you are using (or adopt) a data management system that allows for data sharing and analysis, including the categorization of students based on important subgroup membership and the disaggregation of data output by these groups. Some important subgroups for which you may choose to disaggregate data include: gender, age/grade level, qualification for free and reduced price lunch, race/ethnicity, special education status, GPA or state test proficiency level, English language learner status, sexual orientation, and generation (first, second, etc.) or immigrant status.

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## Resources:

### Online Training Videos and Webinars

- Center for School Mental Health (2015) Module 9: Data-Informed Decision Making. Community-Partnered-School Behavioral Health Implementation Modules. <https://mdbehavioralhealth.com/training>. This module describes the Data Informed Decision Making (DIDM) process, how DIDM can help inform selection, implementation and assessment of strategies to support students, and walks through the process using individual student and classroom level examples.

### Websites and Web-based Materials

- The CSMH compiled a list of assessment measures that are in the public domain (free of charge) and available online for clinicians. The measures can be used in school mental health programs to help assess symptoms of clinical disorders (e.g. depression, anxiety, ADHD) and in some cases are useful for tracking student progress and outcomes over time.
  - <http://csmh.umaryland.edu/media/SOM/Microsites/CSMH/docs/Resources/ClinicianTools/Summary-of-Free-Assessment-Measures---And-Google-Doc-Link-to-Measures-Saved.pdf>
- Teacher Data Collection Tools
  - <http://www.sdqinfo.org/>
  - [https://www.attentionpoint.com/x\\_upload/media/images/irs-description-questions.pdf](https://www.attentionpoint.com/x_upload/media/images/irs-description-questions.pdf)
- PBIS.org is the website for the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. The links below incorporate discussions of DDDM.
  - <https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>
  - <http://www.pbis.org/resource/713/school-wide-positive-behavior-support-implementers%E2%80%99-blueprint-and-self-assessment>
- The National Study of Education Data Systems and Decision Making explores the use of data collection systems in schools nationally: <http://schoolturnaroundsupport.org/resources/implementing-data-informed-decision>
- *Ten Critical Factors to Advancing School Mental Health: What Early Adopters Say* Offers a variety of strategies based on school mental health programs nation-wide. For more information, please click here: <http://csmh.umaryland.edu/media/SOM/Microsites/CSMH/docs/10criticalfactors.pdf>

### Articles and Guides

- Appendix D: Implementation guide: evaluation tools. In S. Barrett, L. Eber & M. Weist (Eds.), *Advancing education effectiveness: interconnecting school mental health and school-wide behavior support* (pp.138-139). For more information, please click here: <https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/Current%20Topics/Final-Monograph.pdf>
- Ervin, R. A., Schaugency, E., Matthews, A., Goodman, S. D. & McGlinchey, M. T. (2007). Primary and secondary prevention of behavior difficulties: Developing a data-informed problem-solving model to guide decision making at a school-wide level. *Psychology in the Schools, 44*, 7–18
- Kelly, M.S. (2011). Data-driven decision making in school mental health: (How) is it possible? *Advances in School Mental Health Promotion, 4*, 2-4



- National Association of School Psychologists. (2011). Data-based decision making. *Principal Leadership*.
- National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (2009). The importance of disaggregated data. *Child & Youth Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/context/FS-ImportanceDisaggregatedData-EN.pdf>
- Mandinach, E. & Gummer, E. (Eds.) (2015). Data-Driven Decision Making [Special Issue]. *Teachers College Record*, 117. Retrieved from: <http://datafordecisions.wested.org/newsevents/teachers-college-record-special-issue-announcement/>

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