



## Indicator Explanation



CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Leadership	Prioritize improvement and communicate its urgency	1A.9 The school follows a written referral process to ensure that students and school personnel receive appropriate services to meet their mental and physical needs.

**Explanation:** External providers may be necessary in order to provide those “wrap-around” services that students need in order to be able to learn in the most conducive school environment. The school cannot be expected to do it all. To ensure a seamless and operationalized process for finding, contracting, communicating, and evaluating these organizations and their services, the school or district should create written procedures that can be followed for all external providers. Beyond the procedures for contracting with the external provider, the school must also have a documented procedure for how students are referred to services or can apply for services to ensure equity and that students with the highest needs are being referred for services.

**Questions:** Will the district take on the responsibility of creating the written procedures for contracting with appropriate and reputable external providers? Could the leadership team at the school create a referral process for students needing services? Who else should be on the team who creates the referral process to ensure all students are considered and all needs are considered?

External providers may be necessary for schools to provide services that are outside of the school’s expertise. Qualified providers offer expertise and capacity to schools in which is a shortage of personnel. Districts need to have a process in place to select and monitor external providers. Part of the process is to create specific goals for a relationship with an external provider that outlines roles and responsibilities and includes measurable outcomes. Districts should also monitor the external partner’s progress toward those goals and have consequences if the goals are not reached (Hassel & Hassel, 2005).

A district might consider these ideas when partnering with outside organizations to provide services:

- Ensure the organization offers quality services that will deliver the best results for students
- Ask organizations for evidence of their accomplishments
- Ensure organization has capacity to meet students’ needs
- Be proactive in managing the partnership and hold organization accountable for results (Learning Point Associates, 2010).

For schools, consider the following suggestions for ensuring students receive services:

- Ensure that staff are willing to collaborate with the outside organization and are provided training on the referral process as well as communicating with the organization keeping in mind the FERPA requirements about sharing student information.



- Consider involving parents, community members, school staff, and other stakeholders in planning for services and the referral process to ensure equity and that the appropriate, needed services are offered by reputable organizations.
- Incorporate the community into the curriculum as a resource for learning, including service learning, place-based education, and other strategies.
- Conduct quality evaluations regularly, including data collected from all stakeholders, to determine strengths and weaknesses of services and programs offered to create a continuous cycle of improvement.
- Consider conducting a survey to determine which services are most needed. (Center on Innovations and Improvement, 2011)

## References

- Center on Innovation and Improvement. (2011). *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants*. Information Age.
- Hassel, B. C., & Hassel, E. A. (2005). *Starting fresh in low-performing schools: Selecting the right providers*. National Association of Charter School Authorizers.
- Learning Point Associates. (2010, September). *Partnerships to improve teaching and learning: Guide to working with external providers*.