

Sample Questions for Detecting Underlying Causes of Challenging Behavior

DOMAIN: IMPACTFUL MEDICAL ISSUES	POTENTIAL RESPONDENT(S)
Do we suspect that this student has medical needs that have not been resolved or stabilized? Due to treatment barriers, do we think that reported issues have not yet been resolved?	Parent, school nurse, teacher
Have there been any changes in treatment? Are medication adjustments underway or anticipated? Are there symptoms related to current treatments that educators should attend to?	Pediatrician, dentist, specialist
What are other questions you could ask of the other team members?	Who else could help with this?
DOMAIN: INSUFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL MATCH	POTENTIAL RESPONDENT(S)
Are there specific school-based tasks or activities that trigger challenging behavior? Does the student consistently struggle to perform in certain classes or within particular content areas?	Teacher, paraprofessional
Are specific school-based tasks or activities frustrating? Is the level of difficulty in engaging notable from a student perspective?	Student, peers
What are other questions you could ask of the other team members?	Who else could help with this?
DOMAIN: UNMET COMMUNICATION NEEDS	POTENTIAL RESPONDENT(S)
Does the student have functional communication skills? Is the student able to communicate with clarity about their most critical needs such as modulating attention, breaks from non-preferred tasks, or access to preferred items or activities?	Speech pathologist or related service provider
Does the student protest, request, and respond to communication from staff and peers in ways that are understandable? Do they seem to communicate through behavior?	Teacher, paraprofessional
What are other questions you could ask of the other team members?	Who else could help with this?
DOMAIN: NEED FOR LEARNING READINESS SKILLS	POTENTIAL RESPONDENT(S)
Does the student struggle to regulate their emotions? Are they able to cope with inevitable disappointment or unpredictability?	Counselor, social worker
Does the student have the prerequisite stamina and attention to meet engagement expectations as they currently stand? Has the student not yet “learned to learn” in this particular context?	Teacher, paraprofessional
What are other questions you could ask of the other team members?	Who else could help with this?

This resource was developed by TRIAD consultants and made available at no cost through the Tennessee Department of Education, Tennessee Technical Assistance Network. triad.vumc.org/schools. 2024

