

Educational Assessment and Identification Procedures to Classify Students as Emotionally Disturbed in the State of Connecticut



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Background

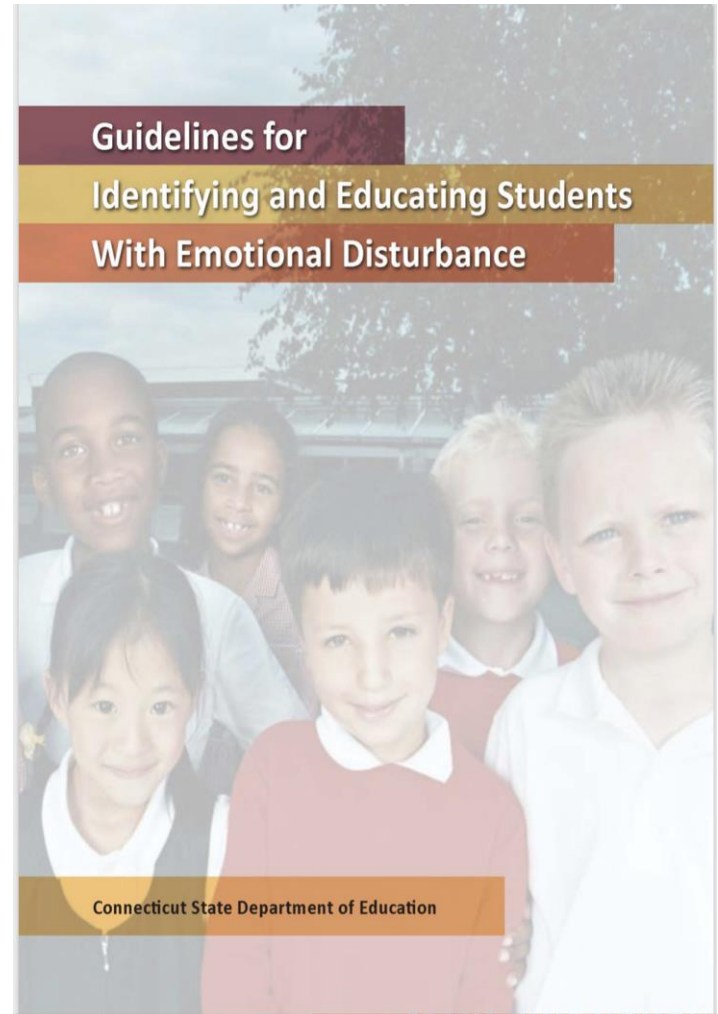
Emotional Disturbance (ED)

“...exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics and affects educational performance negatively: a) an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; c) inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances; d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”

(IDEA, 2004)

Connecticut State Guidelines

- Best Practices in Prevention and Intervention,
- Definition and Interpretation, Assessment and Eligibility
- Key Elements for Effective Individualized Program Services
- Tools to Assist Planning and Placement Teams
- Empirically Supported Prevention and Intervention Strategies



Characteristic has been exhibited to a marked degree (i.e., significantly greater frequency and/or intensity than seen in peer group) Yes No

Characteristic has an adverse effect on educational performance Yes No

Characteristics	Limiting Criteria		
	Long Time	Marked Degree	Adverse Effect on Educational Performance
Check all that apply (student must manifest at least one characteristic)			
a. Inability to learn, which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or other health factors			
b. Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers			
c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances			
d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression			
e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems			

Characteristics

At least one characteristic has been checked. Yes No

State Guidelines

Assessment and Eligibility

- Comprehensive Assessment with multiple sources of information:
 - clinical/structured interviews
 - systematic observations
 - behavior checklists and rating scales
 - self-reports, work samples
 - standardized assessment instruments
- Family and development history
- Educational/classroom performance, information regarding student's cognitive, academic, communication, adaptive and motor functioning
- Behavioral evaluations

Assessment

- Allen and Hanchon (2013)
 - 214 school psychologists
 - 28% of the sample reported consistent use of a comprehensive approach
 - 30% reported they use of four of the five critical data sources
- Scardamalia, Bentley-Edwards and Grasty (2018)
 - 179 school psychologists reviewed a mock special education report & made an eligibility determination
 - 56 indicated that the student met ED criteria
 - While 119 indicated that the student did not
 - Different interpretations of assessment results and application of five criteria for ED

Purpose statement

The research aimed to explore how school psychologists in Connecticut identify and assess ED, and whether these processes are aligned with state guidelines.

Research Questions

1. What are school psychologists doing to identify and assess students with an Emotional Disturbance classification?
2. Are the assessment and identification processes aligned with the guidelines suggested by the state?

Methods

- List of contact information for special education directors or directors of pupil services (117 school systems)
- Survey distributed to public school psychologists (5 min)
- Inclusion: school psychologist in CT, must work in public school

Survey Questions

1. In conducting an assessment to evaluate a child's eligibility for an Emotional Disturbance classification, I have used: *

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- Clinical/structured interviews
- Systematic observations
- Behavior checklists/rating scales
- Self-reports from students
- Work samples
- Standardized assessment instruments
- Developmental history
- Other: _____

2. In determining eligibility for a student with a suspected classification of an Emotional Disturbance, the Planning and Placement Team completed the Team Worksheet and attached it to the assessment records

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

3. In determining eligibility for a student with a suspected classification of an Emotional Disturbance, the Planning and Placement Team considered and documented alternative strategies (e.g. universal, targeted and intensive interventions).

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

4. In determining eligibility for a student with a suspected classification of an Emotional Disturbance, the Planning and Placement Team, we used assessment procedures to analyze factors that underlie the student's behavior or emotional response by identifying the target behavior, the function or purpose of the behavior and the factors maintaining the behavior.

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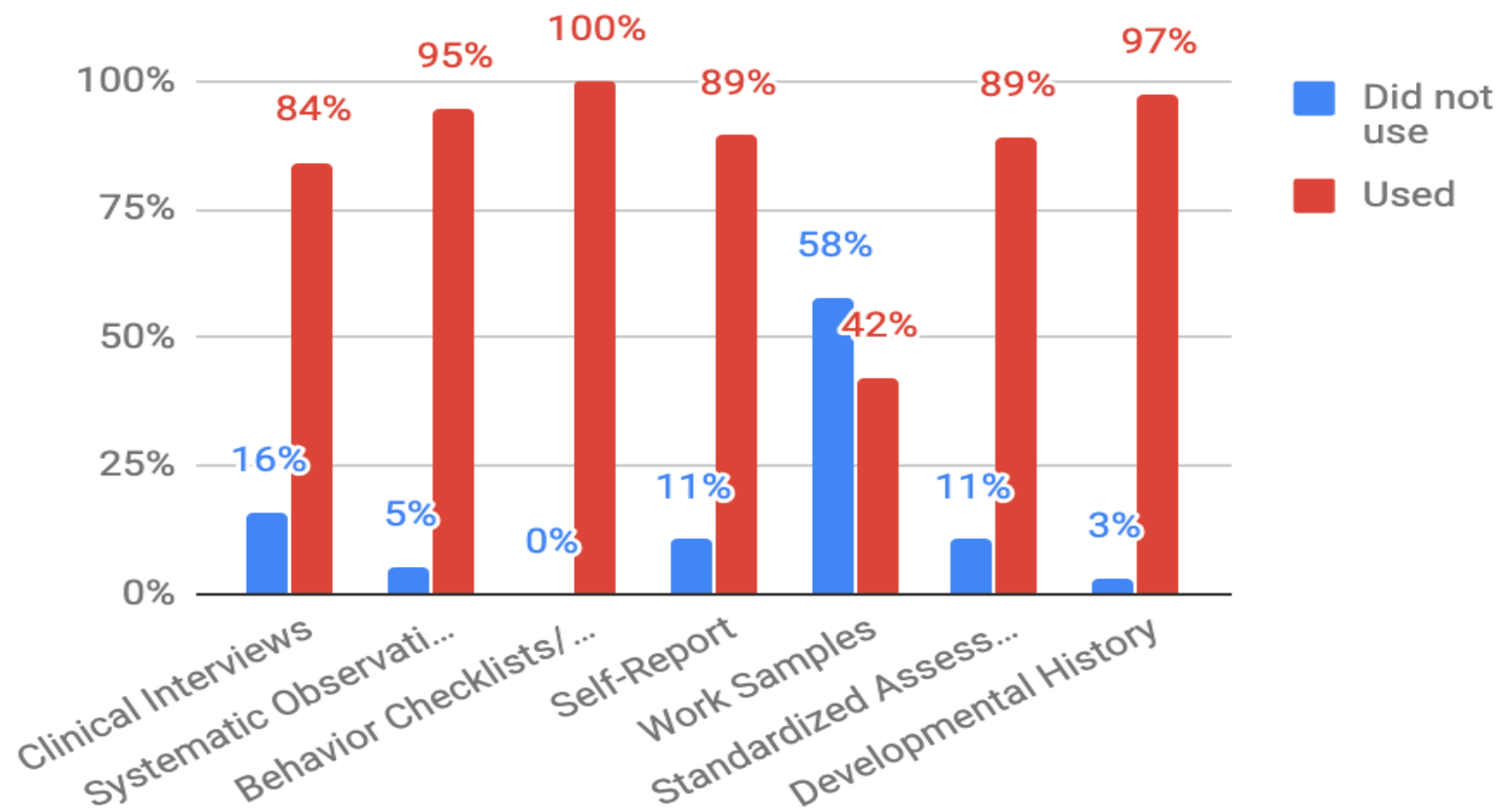
- Yes
- No

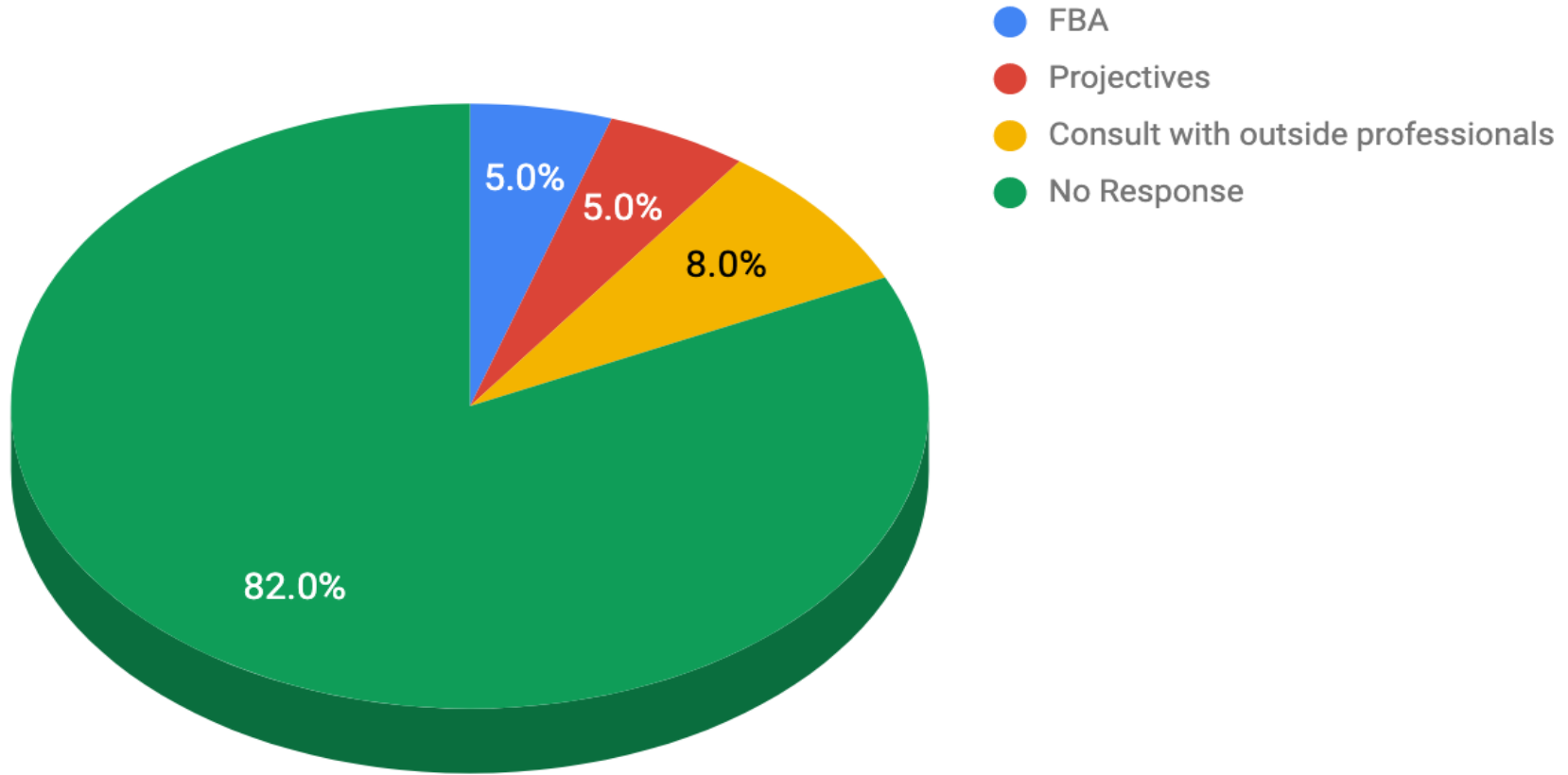
5. In conducting an assessment to evaluate a child's eligibility for an Emotional Disturbance classification, parent input and information were included.

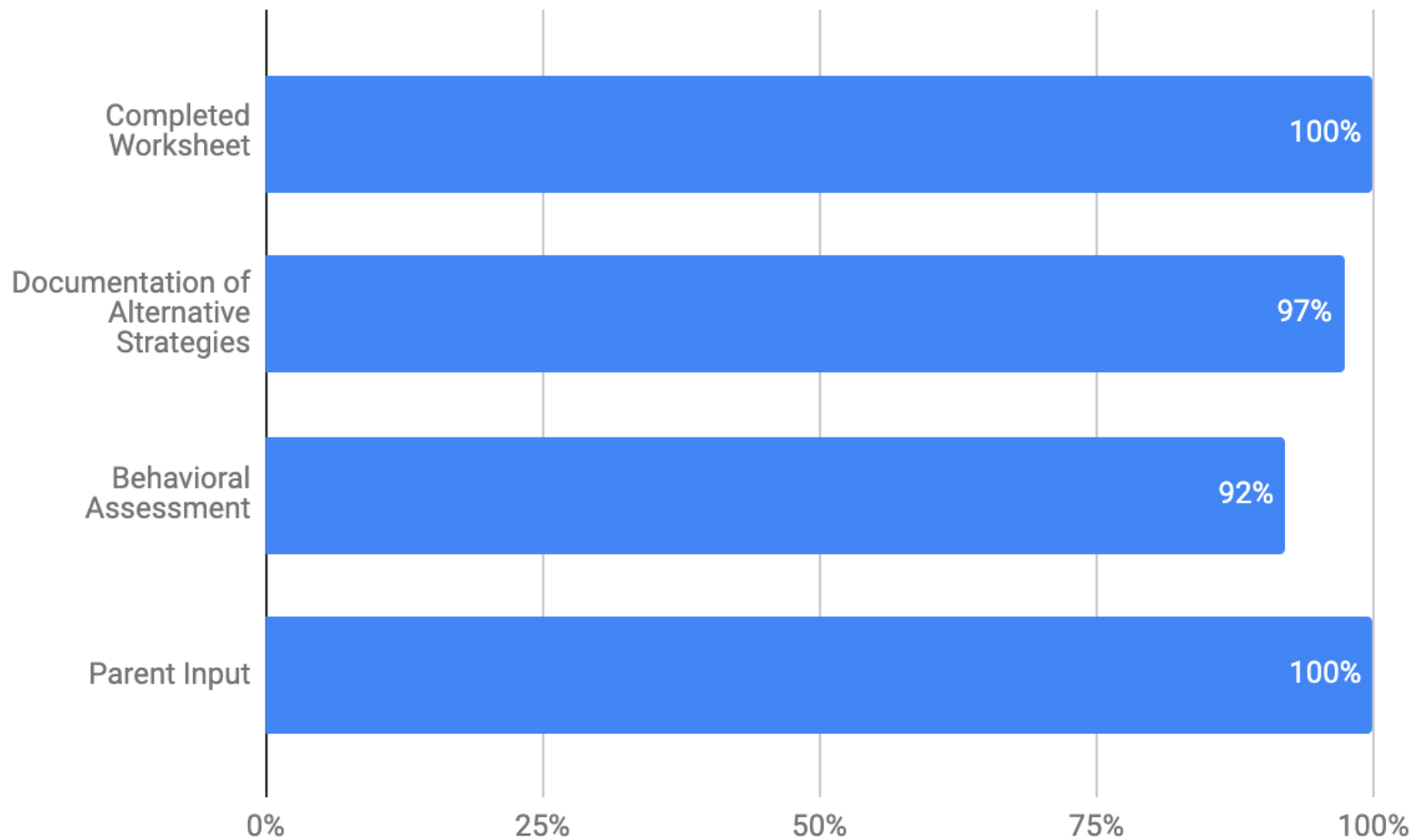
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- Yes
- No

Results







Discussion

- Most districts report following most ED assessment procedures
- Reliability of survey information results may not be accurate
- But can we include an analysis of work samples more in our assessment of emotional disturbance?
- Comprehensive evaluations, important to consider all areas

Future Research

- Devise survey questions differently to obtain more accurate results
- Observations of schools
- Interviews

References

Allen, R. A., & Hanchon, T. A. (2013). What can we learn from school-based emotional disturbance assessment practices? Implications for practice and preparation in school psychology. *Psychology in the Schools, 50*(3), 290-299.

Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education (2012). Guidelines for Identifying and Educating Students with Emotional Disturbance.

Hanchon, T. A., & Allen, R. A. (2017). The identification of students with emotional disturbance: Moving the field toward responsible assessment practices. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*(2), 176-189.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004)

Scardamalia, K., Bentley-Edwards, K. L., & Grasty, K. (2019). Consistently inconsistent: An examination of the variability in the identification of emotional disturbance. *Psychology in the Schools, 56*(4), 569-581.