

- School Discipline
- School Climate
- Georgia Apex and Behavioral Health
- Signing Up for Medicaid and PeachCare

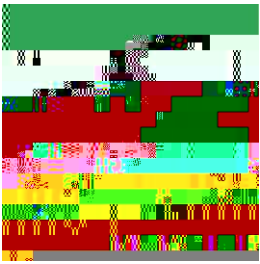
## Need Resources for Parents & Caregivers?

The following handouts are guides from our collection, [Help Guides for Children with Behavior and Learning Challenges](#). They're meant to be easy-to-understand information sheets for caregivers and advocates.

- Mental Health Challenges
- Student Support Teams
- Behavior Intervention Plans and Functional Behavior Assessments
- School-Court Partnerships
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- More!

Find the complete set of guides on our website:

<http://bit.ly/GAHelpGuides>



## MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Struggling to learn or acting out may be a sign of a mental health challenge. All children can have mental health challenges.

If you think that your child has a mental health challenge, your school and community can help you.

### What mental health challenges could affect my child?

There are many different types of mental health challenges that affect school children. Some of these challenges are listed below.

- x Anxiety may cause a child to be nervous or irritable.
- x Depression may cause a child to be sad and lack interest in being active or spending time with friends and family.
- x Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder may make it difficult for a child to pay attention or sit still. This challenge is also known as ADHD or ADD.
- x Posttraumatic Stress Disorder may make a child sad, anxious, irritable, or frightened. If your child has experienced stress from things like death or violence, your child may develop this challenge. This challenge is also known as PTSD.

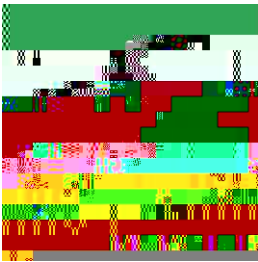
### What should I do if I think my child is struggling with mental health?

Ask the school for help. You can ask the school to evaluate your child. You may also ask the school for a special education assessment.

Ask your friends, family, and community to suggest mental health professionals who can help.

Call the Georgia Crisis Access Line at (800) 715-4225 or a local mental health provider for help.





## TRAUMA

Sad, violent, scary events can have long-lasting effects. Accidents, abuse, neglect, bullying, and other disturbing events can cause trauma. Children suffering from trauma can have trouble learning and following school rules. These children also develop serious mental health challenges if they do not receive help.

### What can the school do?

If you think that your child suffers from trauma, you should tell a school teacher or counselor you trust.

The school can provide special care for students with trauma. This special care is called **Trauma-Informed Care**. School teachers need to have special training to give trauma-informed care. Trained teachers help children feel safe physically, mentally, and emotionally at school.

• Informal Care Schools can get free training from the Georgia Department of Education. You can ask the school to schedule training through its local **Regional Education Service Agency**.

### Where can I find support for trauma outside of the school?

Ask your friends, family, and community to suggest mental health professionals who can help.

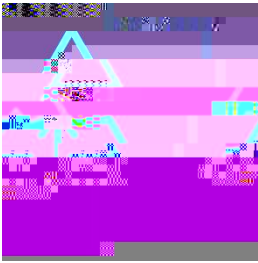
Call the Georgia Crisis Access Line at **(800) 715-2255** or call a local mental health provider for assistance.

## EXPULSION, OUT -OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSION, OR OSS

A school may want to remove a child from school for breaking certain rules, disrupting class, or causing danger. A school will call this punishment expulsion, out-of-school suspension, or OSS.

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## BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS AND FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS

Schools create plans to help students with serious behavior challenges. These plans are called **Behavior Intervention Plans**.

### How do I get my child a Behavior Intervention Plan?

Ask the school for a **Functional Behavior Assessment**. This assessment looks at why a child acts out and breaks school rules. Tell the school that you want the assessment done by a **Board Certified Behavior Analyst**. State the reason why you are making the request. Ask in person and write the school a letter or email. Put the date on the letter or email. Keep a copy of your letter or email.

The school should create a behavior intervention plan after the assessment. The plan will list the way that the school can support changes to a child's behavior. It is important that all of a child's teachers understand and follow the behavior intervention plan.

### Do I have to wait until my child is suspended to ask for a Behavior Intervention Plan?

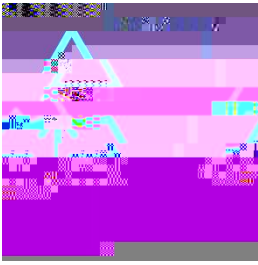
No. If your child is getting in trouble often, tell the school you want a functional behavioral assessment and a behavior intervention plan.

### Does my child have to be in special education to get a behavior intervention plan?

No. Your child does not have to be in special education to get a behavior intervention plan.







## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORTS IN SCHOOLS

All children can have strong emotions that they have difficulty coping with. These feelings might be caused by the school environment, learning or mental health challenges, or something going on at home.

These feelings may cause children to act out and have trouble following school rules.

Some schools offer **Behavioral Health Services** help these children and their families. All public schools provide services to children in Special Education with IEPs.

### What kind of services are available in school?

- x Students may speak with a counselor alone or in a group.
- x Counselors can talk to parents and caregivers and give them additional tools and skills to support themselves and the child.
- x Counselors may use art or playrooms to help the student.

### Do these services cost money?

Some services may be free and others may cost money.

You can ask the school for a free evaluation, when necessary, to help understand what is going on with your child

Talking with counselors may cost a fee. Government help like Medicaid or PeachCare may pay the counselor. See our section [on CIP \(CEZ\) or more information.](#)





**SPECIAL EDUCATION AND IEPs FOR CHILDREN WITH  
DISABILITIES**

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## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND IEPs FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

What if the school says that my child does not need Special Education Services or an IEP?

- x Ask the school for a Section 504 plan and a student support team. Learn more in our guides for [Section 504 Plans for Children with Disabilities](#) and [Student Support Teams](#)
- x Talk to an education lawyer for advice. Parents and caregivers living in [low income](#) can find free legal help at Atlanta Legal Aid Society (504-5811) or Georgia Legal Services Program (800-498-9469).



## ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAN HELP: CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IN GEORGIA

**Georgia Crisis and Access Line**

## IMPROVING STUDENT BEHAVIOR WITH PBIS

Many schools use the PBIS program to help students learn to follow school rules and have a better school experience. PBIS stands for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

### How does PBIS Work?

PBIS schools teach children how they should act and reward them when they act correctly. Schools that use PBIS often feel safer and the children do better with their classwork. PBIS schools have fewer problems with bullying, discipline, and substance abuse.

PBIS schools follow a plan with three levels.

- x Level 1: Teachers explain expectations for behavior to every child and then reward the student they see acting correctly.
- x Level 2: Schools organize special group activities for students who need more help acting correctly. These activities could include group conversations with other students or workshops.
- x Level 3: Schools organize special activities for students who need individual attention. The activities could include conversations with the school counselor or tests for special education.

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- x If you are not at a PBIS school, talk with the principal and