



Activity Handout

Activity: Root Cause Analysis

(Requirement for LEAs identified with Significant Disproportionality)

Purpose

Root cause analysis is a process to uncover the deepest underlying causes of a problem, that if dissolved, would eliminate or substantially reduce the problem area. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) identified as Significantly Disproportionate use the root cause analysis process to identify and prioritize the factors contributing to their disproportionality. These factors will be addressed through Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS), as required under IDEA, through their CIM Plan for Improvement.

Root causes of significant disproportionality include an intersection between beliefs and practices. It is particularly important to conduct the root cause analysis using a [Cultural Lens](#) by ensuring Educational Partners are involved in the process, power and social dynamics are addressed, and a variety of perspectives are included in the process and reported in the documentation of the process. As the factors contributing to disproportionality include general education policies, practices and procedures, the LEA data analysis should be holistic, including early-intervention, prereferral, and general education efforts. The instructions and resources below were specifically developed to address the unique challenges inherent in significant disproportionality.

Instructions

- 1. Prepare for Root Cause Analysis.**
 - a. Read the new [Root Cause Analysis Overview](#) authored by the Office of Special Education's [Data Center for Addressing Significant Disproportionality](#) (DCASD).
 - b. Collate the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in Step 1 (including the Policies, Practices, and Procedures Review and the activities completed as part of the Data Drill for Sig Dis LEAs).
- 2. Conduct Root Cause Analysis.** Ensure involvement of Educational Partners and that their unique perspectives are considered, particularly perspectives of those of the race/ethnicity experiencing disproportionate educational outcomes.
 - a. Select a tool, or tools, to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data to further understand the factors contributing to significant disproportionality and to determine what additional data is needed. The materials listed here were designed for performing a root cause analysis with a cultural lens to help identify factors contributing to racial and ethnic disproportionality. We suggest they be used with the guidance of a trained facilitator.
 - i. [Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens \(Fishbone Diagram – Ishikawa Cause and Effect\)](#) These materials were designed to work with the Ishikawa Cause and Effect Diagram, commonly known as the Fishbone diagram for performing a root cause analysis.

- ii. [Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens \(Five Whys\)](#) These materials were designed to work with the Five Whys method for performing a root cause analysis.
 - iii. [Identifying the Root Causes of Disproportionality](#) This workbook, developed by New York University, functions as a tool to help determine the institutional and personal contributions to racial inequity in schools.
 - iv. [Behavioral Support Root Cause Analysis Workbook](#) New York University provided this assessment measure to help educators identify discipline outcomes in relationship to positive behavioral support systems.
 - v. [Success Gaps Priority Setting Tool](#) This tool was developed by the IDEA Data Center for use by LEAs using the Success Gaps Rubric to support the prioritization of root causes of significant disproportionality.
- b. Examine the intersection between beliefs and practices.
 - c. As needed, conduct additional data gathering and analysis (qualitative and quantitative) to help determine the contributing factors that the LEA can address.
 - d. Document the process, the participants involved in the process and the agreed upon contributing factors or root causes of the LEA's disproportionality.
- 3. Prioritize Root Causes.**
- a. Determine the potential factors specific to the LEA's area(s) of significant disproportionality with the most potential for leverage to address the disproportionate student outcomes considering what the LEA has the ability to impact.
 - b. Focus on early intervention to address the issues at their root.
 - c. Develop prioritized root cause statements by describing a gap or needed area of improvement in the LEA that the LEA can address and linking them to the data analyzed.
 - d. Ensure that the intersection of beliefs or mindsets present in the LEA and their practices is evident in the prioritized root causes.

Resources

[Cultural Lens](#)

[Root Cause Analysis Overview](#)

[Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens \(Fishbone Diagram – Ishikawa Cause and Effect\)](#)

[Root Cause Analysis with a Cultural Lens \(Five Whys\)](#)

[Identifying the Root Causes of Disproportionality](#)

[Behavioral Support Root Cause Analysis Workbook](#)

[Success Gaps Priority Setting Tool](#)