



Activity Handout

Activity: Student Case Study

(Requirement for LEAs identified with Significant Disproportionality)

Purpose

The Student Case Study provides information on students' progression from pre-referral to eligibility for special education. This is different from a compliance case study as the intent is to identify patterns that may indicate systemic issues that have impacted the students' journeys through the educational system in a disparate manner. While the case study process can provide some quantitative data, the value of the process lies in the qualitative data that is gleaned. Qualitative data is incredibly important in identifying possible contributing factors and yielding information on systemic issues. Quantitative data can often identify the problem and qualitative data can tell us why. In addition, this information assists the LEA in determining where appropriate comprehensive coordinated early intervening services may be most effective in addressing factors that contribute to areas of significant disproportionality.

Instructions

The student case study activity can be conducted with a variety of approaches and team participants. The key steps are described below. Additional overview information is available in an archived SPP-TAP webinar titled [File Review Process for Sig Dis Case Studies](#).

- 1. Select files for review.** Select a minimum of 10 (or 10%) student files that represent students in the identified area of significant disproportionality to review. The number of files to review may vary and should be deemed a reasonable number to determine trends for the student group within the district. To understand possible contributing factors of the disproportionality, it is important to also review student files from students with the same identified disability, but different race/ethnicity. This will allow the team to compare trends between different races/ethnicities. As student files may be minimal in their content, the review team may desire to collect additional sources of information (e.g., attendance data, discipline/counselors' folders, family responses to school contacts, etc.) If possible, identify some comparable files of students who were found to be ineligible for special education to include in the file review.
- 2. Identify File Reviewers.** The review team will represent a multidisciplinary group of participants from the LEA who typically contribute to student evaluation processes and are responsible for determining services needed.
- 3. Develop Guiding Questions.** Based on the LEA areas of disproportionality, develop a set of guiding questions to assist the review team in paying careful attention to specific aspects as they review the files. The sample [Case Study Questions](#) have been designed to obtain

responses that may confirm or dismiss already suspected root causes of the LEA's significant disproportionality in the identified area(s). Obtain input from the review team to determine the questions as this will shape the focus of the process while encouraging individuals to note their general impressions of any observed patterns.

- 4. Instruct Review Team.** While instructing the review team about the process:
 - a. identify the indicator and racial/ethnic group that will be the focus of the file review.
 - b. explain that they will assemble information about the students in order to obtain a complete picture of the student's journey to being identified as eligible for special education.
 - c. state that each file should be reviewed by a minimum of two team members.
 - d. provide guiding questions for the reviews.
- 5. Conduct File Reviews.** A student case study may take up to a half a day of uninterrupted time for the file reviews and the needed discussion among the review team.
- 6. Debrief File Reviews.** Facilitate a follow-up discussion of the outcomes of the file review process with a focus on identifying any predictable patterns or possible root causes for the racial/ethnic disparities in student experiences and outcomes that emerge. Sample debrief questions can be found on the [Case Study Questions](#) document.

Resources

[Case Study Questions](#)

[File Review Process for Sig Dis Case Studies](#) (recording)



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