

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*

Managing Classroom Behavior Information for Parents and Caregivers

Definition

As a parent, it can be frustrating and confusing when your child acts up at school. Perhaps your son is suspended for disrespectful behavior, or fighting, or refusing to follow the rules. Maybe you've received a call from your daughter's teacher, telling you that she refuses to listen or is disruptive in the classroom. Managing classroom behavior is most effective when there is a collaborative effort between schools and families to address issues as they arise.

Why Do We Care?

When your child acts up at school, he is not learning what he needs to learn, and may be preventing others from learning. Your son's behavior may cause others to label or stigmatize him, and may isolate him from his peers and teachers. Your daughter's behavior problems may be preventing her from working on the skills and abilities she needs to become independent, responsible, and confident. Most professionals agree that approximately 5-15% of children need specific supports to help them learn appropriate school behavior.

What Do We Do About It?

Try the following strategies:

- Review the limits you have placed on your child; make sure the limits make sense in terms of your child's age, and that you are consistent in enforcing them;
- Don't fight every battle; pick the one or two things or situations that are most important to your child's school success, and focus on these behaviors.
- Praise your child often; make sure to reward your child every time he or she is cooperative, flexible, reasonable, or respectful (by noticing, and by giving your child attention or a privilege).
- Encourage physical activity when your child is not in school; try to make sure your child gets outside everyday, and is able to run around, participate in a sport, or get some form of exercise.

Advocate for your child

- Speak with your child's teachers and guidance counselor or other school staff, to understand fully the school's concerns, to coordinate your approaches to working with your child, and to make sure that your child's teacher knows that you are committed to helping your child succeed.
- Ask to have your child evaluated if you believe your child's behavior is related to difficulty with the work required by the teacher or to mental health issues like hyperactivity, depression, anxiety or difficulties with attention.
- Try to understand the possible reasons your child is acting out in school: Is the work too difficult? Does your child have friends at school he can rely on for support? Are there problems at home that might be causing your child to feel stressed or preoccupied at school? If so, consider seeking help from a school counselor or outside professional.

- Ask the teacher for advice on working with your child on homework and other school projects.

Key Resources/Links:

Barkley, R. S. (1997). Improving School Behavior from Home: The Daily School Behavior Report Card. *Defiant Children: A Clinician's Manual for Assessment and Parent Training*. The Guilford Press: NY, NY. To obtain a copy of this book: http://www.guilford.com/cgi-bin/cartscript.cgi?page=pr/barkley4.htm&dir=pp/adhdr&cart_id=612626.1138

Chafouleas, S. M., Riley-Tillman, T. C., and McDougal, J. L. (2004). Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRCs): Useful Tools for Monitoring and Changing Classroom Behavior. *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators*. National Association of School Psychologists.

For a quick review of the table of contents, go to:

<http://www.nasponline.org/bestsellers/HCHS%20front%20matter.pdf>

To purchase the book, go to: <http://www.naspweb.org/store/>

Helpful Websites:

Intervention Central offers free tools and resources to help school staff and parents to promote positive classroom behaviors and foster effective learning for all children and youth.

www.interventioncentral.org

Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health. Fact sheets on specific disorder areas provide excellent tips information about educational implications, instructional strategies and classroom modifications appropriate to each disorder.

http://www.macmh.org/publications/fact_sheets/fact_sheets.php

National Association of School Psychologists *Helping the Student with ADHD in the Classroom: Information for Families and Educators.*

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/special%20needs%20template.pdf>

National Mental Health Association:

Fact sheet on ADHD. <http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/ad/hd/ad/hd-and-kids>,
Fact sheet on promoting children's mental health.

http://www1.nmha.org/children/children_mh_matters/promoting.cfm

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*