

DIVERSION (Grades 6-12)

Practices that allow educators to address disciplinary matters as opportunities for learning instead of punishment are far more successful in changing a student's behavior than a reliance on increasing punitive measures. The diversion process is an alternative pathway that a student and parent can choose when a student has been referred to a superintendent's hearing.

If a parent opts for diversion, they plea "no contest" to the discipline charges and provide written consent for their child to be assessed using the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) and/or the Youth Adolescent Screening Instrument (YASI).

Students who have, or are suspected of having, a disability must have a manifestation determination meeting held prior to the start of the diversion process. If manifestation is determined, the student is referred back to the committee on special education (CSE) but can still access diversion services.

Once a student has been tested on the MAYSI and/or YASI by a school clinician (social worker or mental health counselor), the parent and student participate in an emergency response team meeting (ERT) along with the school administrator, school counselor and a parent liaison. The director of pupil personnel services (or designee) charts the ERT. The team examines the testing results and attempts to identify root causes for behavior, and matching evidence-based interventions. A case plan is developed along with decisions made regarding whether further suspension is warranted and the abeyance (early return to school) conditions.

Diversion is a diagnostic and prescriptive process, using evidence-based treatments designed to identify and address underlying causes for behavior and to reduce recidivism. Evidence-based interventions include:

- Strengthening Families
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Trauma Focused Cognitive Therapy
- Anger Replacement Training (ART)
- Family Functional Therapy (FFT)
- Restorative Practices/Circles
- T4C Thinking for Change
- Substance Abuse Evaluation & Treatment

ABEYANCE

Abeyance conditions are sometimes assigned to students who receive a long-term suspension but do not opt for the diversion pathway. Completion of abeyance conditions potentially allow for a student to return to school from suspension sooner, however the conditions assigned are not evidence-based. They are the administrator and PPS team's best guess at what might help the student so that they don't have another incident. These include:

- Peer Mediation
- Fire Prevention
- Mentoring
- Functional Behavioral Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plan
- Check and Connect System with Trusted Adult
- Teen Intervene
- Interactive Journaling

DIVERSION

Youth referred to a Superintendent’s Hearing are given the opportunity to enter an **alternative pathway** that provides the opportunity to access mental and behavioral health services and potentially reduce the amount of time that they are removed from school. If after discussion of this process (including a parent and/or guardian) this option is refused, the student may choose to opt-in later in the process.

A social worker will present the youth and his or her guardians with the opportunity to consent to the alternative pathway within **48 hours** of the initial offense.

Students who opt in to the alternative pathway will receive a full MAYSI screen (a screening for mental health tool to identify possible needs).

If a youth is identified as having mental health needs by the MAYSI, he or she will be referred to a clinician for a clinical assessment.

If the youth does not display mental health needs on the MAYSI, he or she will receive the YASI (risk, needs and protective factors assessment) to inform case planning.

Students who are referred to a clinical assessment based on the MAYSI will receive diagnostic information and case/treatment plan recommendations from the clinician.

Students who receive the YASI will receive case planning services from a school social worker. Either the clinician or the school social worker will match/refer the student to appropriate community-based service.

The Emergency Response Team (ERT) will create an agreement with the student that links compliance with recommended services to reduced time out-of-school. An extended ERT will continue monitoring progress and determine when the youth is ready to return to school.

