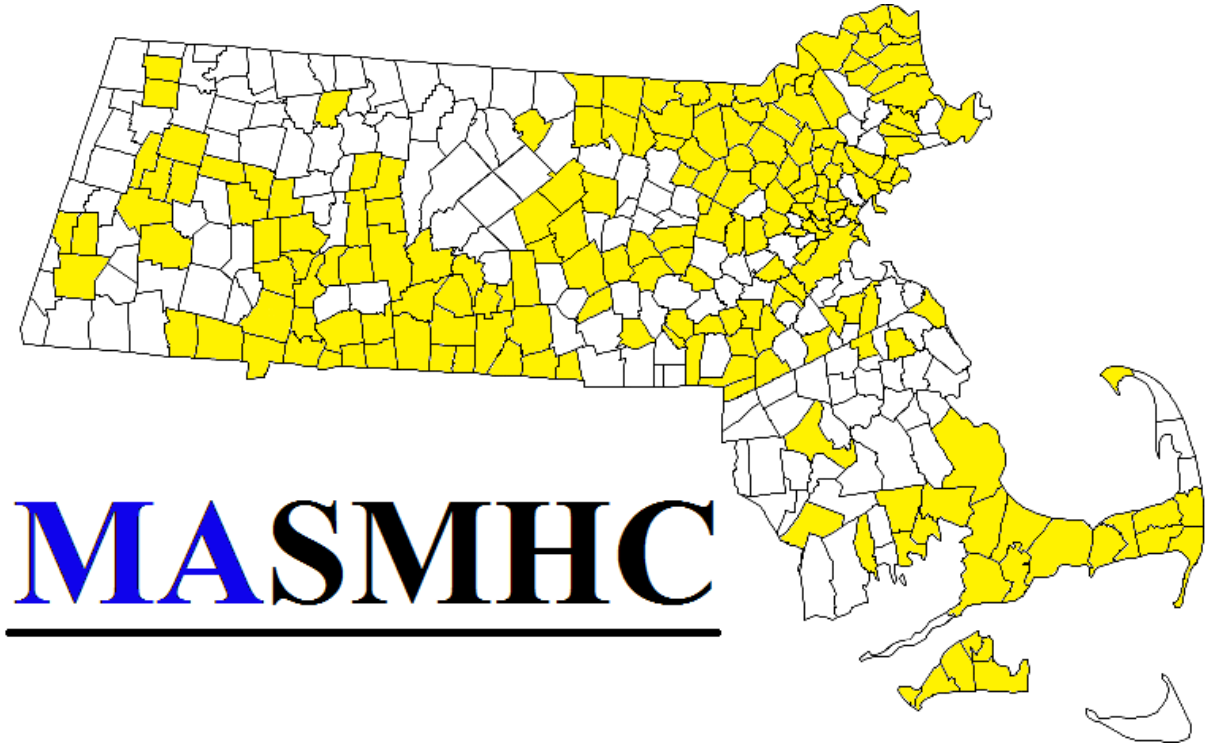
# MAssachusetts School Mental Health Consortium:
# Universal Mental Health Screening Resource Guide



MASMHC

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# Sample Parent/Guardian Notification Letter Template

DATE

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The _____ team wants to share that we are preparing to begin our mental health screening in grades _____. Our first round of screening is tentatively scheduled to continue from _____. You can learn more about __District Name__'s School-Wide Mental Health Screening here. Screening provides the counseling team information that allows us to best provide comprehensive and timely support for your son and daughter if they require assistance. After completing the screening, school counseling staff may reach out to you to discuss next steps and recommendations if applicable.

**Anticipated Screening Schedule**

- INSERT DATES HERE

Earlier this school year, you received an email with an opt-out form. If you have already completed the opt-out form, there is no need to take any additional steps. If you would like to complete the opt-out at this time, please complete this form.***

***PLEASE MAKE A COPY OF THE OPT OUT FORM FOR YOUR DISTRICT BY CLICKING HERE

If you have questions or concerns and would like to discuss this letter further please contact your student's counselor. Counselors are assigned by last name and the caseload breakdown, which can be found here.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE | INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE | INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE |
| INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE | INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE | INSERT STAFF CONTACT INFO HERE |

Sincerely,

# Sample Opt Out Notification for Parent/Guardians Regarding Universal Mental Health Screening

Good Evening,

In an effort to promote the health and well being of students in Methuen Public Schools, students will be periodically provided with questionnaires, surveys, and screeners that address issues related to mental health. The information gained will support the school's ability to provide comprehensive and timely support for your son or daughter if they require any assistance. Students can opt out of filling out any questionnaire, survey, or screener that they are not interested in taking and you can opt out your son or daughter at any time by contacting the Counseling Office of your son's/daughter's school or filling out the opt-out form on the MPS counseling department webpage. This page also includes a list of all of the surveys, questionnaires, and screening tools that are used for you to review.

We are committed to ensuring your son or daughter is supported academically, socially, and emotionally, and we look forward to partnering with each of you toward achieving this goal.

A list of FAQs related to mental health screening is available here.

# Recommended Procedural Reminders for Screening Team Prior to Administration

**Opt-out Procedures**

Please ensure staff facilitating screening read the opt-out message for students immediately before the administration, which is included below:

K-8 version

*"At our school we want to make sure that every student can learn, and we learn best when we feel okay. This is a survey for you to fill out about how you feel. Your guidance counselor will see the results and might talk to you or your family about them. Just like when you are having trouble with your schoolwork we try to help you do a better job, if you are having trouble with your feelings we want to try to help you feel better. If you decide at any time not to take this survey, you can choose to stop and sit quietly while others finish."*

9-12 Version

*"In an effort to promote the health and well being of students at Methuen High School, students will be periodically provided with questionnaires, surveys, and screeners that address issues related to mental health. The information gained will support the school's ability to provide comprehensive and timely support for all students if they require any assistance. Students can opt-out of filling out any questionnaire, survey, or screener that they are not interested in taking and parents/guardians can opt-out their student at any time by contacting the Methuen High School Counseling Office or filling out the opt-out form located on the MPS Counseling webpage."*

**Please identify an individual who will be reviewing the opt-out form prior to the screenings. It is imperative that students who opt-out are not included in the administration. I have received a handful of opt-outs over the past month, so please regularly review the opt-out list, especially on the day of the administration. The full list of students who have been opted-out is linked below:**

**LINK OPT-OUT SPREADSHEET HERE**

**Coordinated Follow-up Resources**

If you intend to enroll a student in group or individual services, you can use the progress monitoring templates linked here. Please remember that progress monitoring requires active consent from the parent/guardian. You will have an established baseline from the screen, and, if enroll the student in services, these measures can be used to monitor the student's progress and the efficacy of your interventions over time.

The procedural guide for coordinated follow-up is available here (INCLUDED AS A SAMPLE).

# Sample Coordinated Follow Up Procedural Guide

## RCADS/Brief Trauma Screen/SDQ Screening Data Review

**INCLUDE MEASURE SPECIFIC DATA IN THIS SECTION, INCLUDING CUT SCORES, BENCHMARKS, AND OTHER PERTINENT INFO TO HIGHLIGHT WHO STAFF SHOULD RESPOND TO DURING FOLLOW UP**

- Students scoring in the clinical range for the RCADS total internalizing scale (80+), the severe range for the brief trauma screen (21+), or the high or very high range for the total difficulties score of the SDQ should receive follow up first.
- Follow up should then be conducted for students who are at risk on the total internalizing scale of the RCADS (65-79), students scoring in the moderate range for the brief trauma screen (11-20), and students who have elevated scores in multiple sub-scales of the RCADS or SDQ.
- Note: color coding on RCADS and SDQ spreadsheets are as follows…
    - RCADS: Orange = At-Risk; Red = Clinical
    - Brief Trauma Screen: Orange = Moderate; Red = Severe
    - SDQ: Yellow = Slightly Raised (Mild); Blue = High (Moderate); Red = Very High (Severe)
- The RCADS forms now include an “other” option that students may select on the gender question. Since the RCADS is scored based on gender and grade, any student who selects “other” will not have their answers automatically scored. In cases such as these, look at individual item responses and address the “other” gender selection when following up with those particular students.

**Please note: Based on information from the screenings and one’s knowledge of a student’s history and current level of support, staff may wish to follow up with more students than are**

**included in the procedures outlined above. Seeking additional information about the student and making decisions based on data and observations from multiple sources will ensure that any questions related to whether or not a student should receive follow up are made from an informed standpoint. When in doubt about whether or not additional information should be sought or if a student should be considered for follow up, it is best practice to review the case and rule out the need for additional services.**

## What does the coordinated follow up look like?

- Following the review of the screening data, a prioritized list of students should be created by each staff member responsible for follow up.
- Staff should then meet with each student identified individually to discuss the results of the screening and ask additional questions that will aid in determining whether or not the student is eligible for services. The limits of confidentiality should be shared with the student to ensure they are aware of what the staff member is obliged to do if the student reports that they are a danger to self or others or if they report abuse/neglect.
- Screening data is an indication of potential need, however the follow up interview will serve to validate the concern and inform next steps. Some questions that can guide this interview are included below:
    - What are the specific challenges that the student faces in school? At home? In their personal life?
    - Have there been any difficult events in the past that have contributed to how they have been thinking/feeling?
    - What does the student perceive as their strengths?
    - Who can the student seek out if they need help? What does their support network look like at home? In school?
    - How long has this been a problem for the student?

- Is this a persistent problem? Temporary/passing concern?
- In what ways does this impact the student's daily life?
- Are there situations in which this has a particularly significant impact on the student?
- How has the student managed this concern in the past?
- What does the student's support network look like?
- Does the student want help with this concern?
- Does the student have any understanding about why they feel this way?

**Please note: The above list of questions are included as examples. Additional questions relevant to gathering information to determine the need for services should be posed as well.**

- Students who are eligible for services will need parent/guardian consent to enroll in services. Informing the student of this requirement will result in some students actively pursuing services and consenting to sharing the info with their parents/guardians, however some students may not be ready to share their concerns with their family. In this case, offering the student with support to broach this topic with their family (e.g. facilitating the discussion between student and family or role playing how to share this info with their family) will be important to ensure that students can share this information when they are ready. The developmental needs of students will determine how much information is readily shared with families following screening and the degree to which students are provided autonomy in sharing the information post screening. Use your professional judgment, seek consultation, and remember the limits of confidentiality.

- Review additional data to inform your decision regarding eligibility for services, such as:
  - Attendance
  - Behavioral data
  - IEP / 504 status
  - Current social emotional supports in place (if any) inside or outside of school

- Observations from teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, etc.

## What are the procedures for securing consent for administering services and engaging in progress monitoring?

- Group counseling and individual counseling services that have regularly scheduled sessions and occur for a specified length of time require active consent from parents/guardians. Active consent should be secured in writing.
- Progress monitoring using any of the approved screening tools, including sub-scales, should be discussed as part of the services offered to students through the provision of individual or group counseling services, and active consent should be secured prior to engaging in this practice.

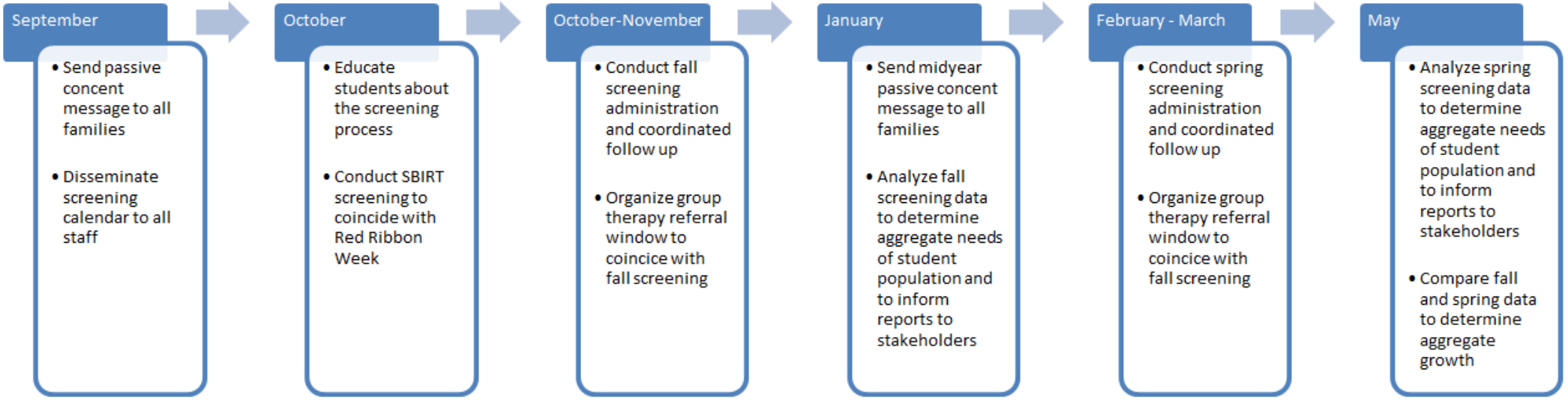
## What types of services are available to students who require assistance?

Examples of the services offered to address students' presenting mental health concerns include but are not limited to:

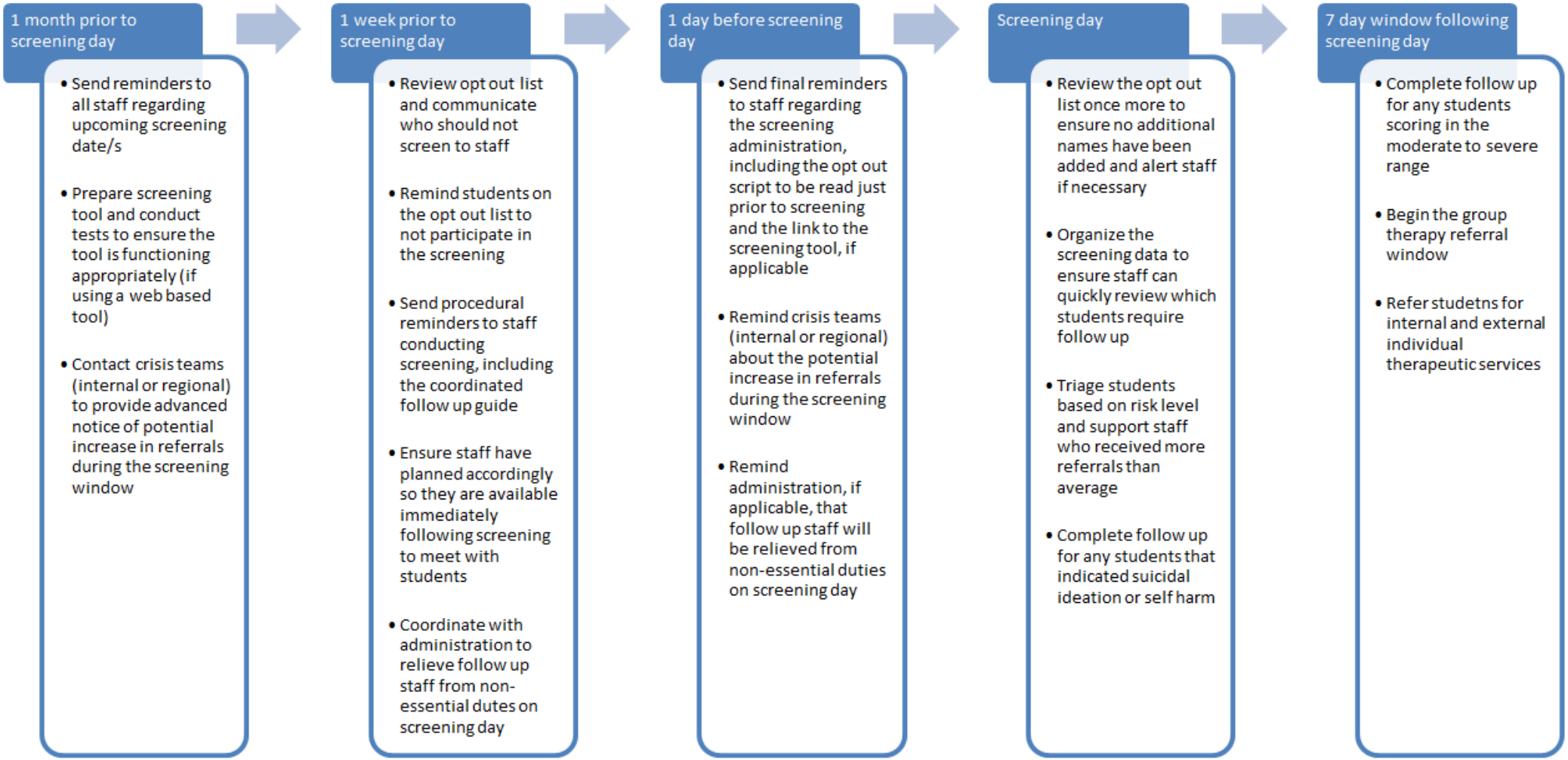
- Individual therapy
- Group therapy
- Psychoeducational groups
- Social skills groups
- School-based individual therapy through a partner agency
- Informal monitoring of students who do not require an increase in services but who present with some underlying concerns

# Sample Implementation Calendars

## Sample Screening Overview Calendar



# Sample Screening Administration Procedural Calendar



# Selected Resources

- MASMHC Universal Mental Health Screening Implementation Guide - This guide poses questions for the screening team to consider to best prepare for administering screening. Use this to support the organization of your approach and to capture essential steps of your implementation plan.
- National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH): Screening Playbook - NCSMH has designed an excellent resource that addresses major components of screening.
- www.TheSHAPESystem.com - Secure an account to access the "Screening and Assessment Library." Use the search features to identify measures that match with the presenting concern you want to screen for, the age of the screening population, et. Most of the tools in this library are free.
- Sample Universal Screening Opt Out Form - Click on the link to the left to create a copy of the opt out form for your district. Please note: This form must be set to allow users outside of your organization to submit responses. Select this option within the form's settings menu.
- Sample Universal Mental Health Screening FAQ Page (English and Spanish) - Use this document to support students' and families' understanding of why screening is conducted and what to expect regarding confidentiality and follow up.
- Universal Screening Measures*** - This folder contains several measures that you can use for universal screening. Each measure is loaded into a Google form and has an accompanying data sheet. Automated scoring is conducted using embedded formulas.

  ***Please review this video for directions on making copies of these measures and linking the Google form to the Google data sheet.
- Progress Monitoring Templates - This repository of progress monitoring templates includes a host of measures that you may wish to use for universal screening. Use these templates to pilot screening with individual students during your initial phase of implementation. This approach will allow you to reflect on the utility of multiple tools, gain confidence with the process of screening in a more controlled manner, and allow for the team to consider the implications of implementing a variety of measures, before having to make a decision about which tool will be administered universally.
- PDSA Worksheet - Use this worksheet to design your small tests of change and to memorialize the approaches you have taken to scale up screening. This structured

approach to implementation allows for you to make an informed decision about how to proceed as you move from one test of change to another.

- Methuen Public Schools: Screening Coordinated Follow-up Guide - This coordinated follow up guide includes information to support individuals who will be engaged in the coordinated follow up interviews with students who score in the elevated range on the measures you administer.
- Video guide for prepping screening data in Google sheets - This brief video tutorial is designed to support your team in using Google sheets to autoscore and organize your screening data, which will support the follow up team in prioritizing their response to students. Organizing data in this manner will also support analysis of the aggregate needs of students and serve as a single point of data entry to capture staff's follow up.
- www.masmhc.org - The MASMHC web page includes a host of resources to support the development of a comprehensive school mental health system (CSMHS).