



Develop crisis plan to curb dangerous behavior before anyone gets hurt

If a student's behavior has in the past escalated to a point where he almost hurt himself or others, it's important to create a plan to protect everyone.

Having a crisis plan as part of a student's [behavioral intervention plan](#) can also reduce the amount of time the student misses learning and is exposed to aversive strategies, such as restraint.

In *In re: Student with a Disability*, [76 IDELR 202](#) (SEA DE 2020), for instance, a district proactively addressed a student's behavior by analyzing behavior data, implementing the functional behavioral assessment process, assigning a behavior analyst to work with the student, and revising the BIP to include a crisis plan. Because the district implemented the student's behavioral interventions and continued to address the behavior, the state ED found no implementation failure or violation of the IDEA.

IEP teams must take time to develop a thorough, individualized crisis plan for a student if he has a history of dangerous behavior. A plan can prevent injuries, curb the use of aversive techniques, and ensure the student is present for learning. Include the following components in a detailed crisis plan.

✓ **Clarify what crisis looks like.** Convene an IEP meeting to discuss what behaviors the student exhibits that prompt the need for a crisis plan, said Samantha Lewis, an attorney at Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP in Atlanta, Ga. Some students may need a crisis plan because they engage in self-harm, while others may engage in behavior that is threatening to others. Describe the behavior in the plan. "Understand what the behavior is that you're trying to mitigate and handle within the school environment," she said.

When possible, involve the student in creating the plan so she can self-advocate and talk about what might help her in a crisis, Lewis said.

✓ **Spell out triggers for student behavior.** Note what triggers the behavior, Lewis said. To unravel what triggers may be lurking, walk through the student's day, from getting off the bus to going home. What kinds of situations drive the student to engage in that behavior? For example, a certain topic in class or a certain person approaching may set off the student. The student may lash out because he feels overwhelmed. He

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may not do well in noisy, crowded spaces. "It's so individualized to the student," she said.

✓ **Detail steps to take when student's behavior escalates.** What staff do during the crisis will depend on the student's behavior, Lewis said. If a student is engaging in self-harm, it may make sense to remove her from the classroom. Have an adult who is designated as safe by the student, such as a coach or counselor, take her to a quiet room. Or, if the student is endangering others, it may make more sense to remove the rest of the class to keep them unharmed while the student calms down in the classroom. If the student has been involved with the justice system, you may have to include specific directions about how to escort her somewhere safe while protecting other students. You may also want to detail at what point school administrators might want to call paramedics. "If we feel like we need to call outside individuals to come and assist, that's going to have to happen," she said. "We don't want anyone being in danger."

✓ **Note what to do after crisis.** After things have settled, consider debriefing with the student to discuss what worked and didn't work, Lewis said. Also recommend holding a [staff](#) meeting to talk about everyone's roles and whether anything needs to change. "It's always valuable after an incident to look back and determine whether what you put in place worked," she said. Discuss whether you noticed any new behaviors not addressed by the [plan](#), Lewis said.

✓ **Emphasize communication with parents.** Document when an administrator will contact the student's parents to report the incident, Lewis said. "Typically, what I have seen schools write is 'as soon as practicable after a situation is under control,'" she said. "Once the student has calmed down and is not in a position to harm themselves or others, they can call the parents." The last thing you want to happen is for the student to go home and tell the parent before you do, Lewis said.

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