

Supporting Implementation of Behavioral Classroom Interventions for Children with ADHD in Urban Schools

Statement of Problem

Children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are at increased risk for negative social, emotional, and health outcomes, and face particularly significant challenges in the academic setting. Without effective treatment, children with ADHD are more likely to drop out of school and experience social challenges. This problem is especially urgent in low-income, urban communities, where a large number of children show symptoms of ADHD or related concerns. It is, therefore, critical to increase the accessibility and quality of support these children receive at school.

Behavioral classroom management interventions (for example, using high rates of specific, contingent praise) are well-established treatments for elementary school-age children with ADHD. However, teachers face many challenges that may make it difficult to use high levels of behavioral classroom management practices. Little is known about specific barriers or facilitators to teachers' use of behavioral classroom management interventions for children with symptoms of ADHD, or about ways to effectively support teachers in using these practices.

Description

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In providing this resource for educators, our goal is to enhance outcomes for children with ADHD.

This project seeks to address knowledge gaps on effective approaches to support teacher use of evidence-based behavioral interventions for students with symptoms of ADHD in urban schools. Through partnerships

with community stakeholders, the research team developed and pilot tested an implementation resource package that supports teacher use of evidence-based classroom management interventions. In providing this resource for educators, our goal is to enhance outcomes for children with ADHD.

For the first step of this work, we conducted surveys and interviews with teachers to identify barriers and facilitators to implementing four evidence-based classroom management interventions, as well as their attitudes and perceived norms related to the interventions. Based on what we learned, we iteratively developed the implementation resource package to support teacher use of behavioral classroom interventions with increased frequency and fidelity, obtaining feedback from teachers throughout its development.

Next Steps

As the final step of this project, we pilot tested the refined resource package in a small-scale randomized controlled trial in order to determine its feasibility and promise for use among educators. Results suggested that the resource package was highly acceptable and feasible and may help teachers use behavioral classroom interventions, although larger-scale evaluation is still needed.

Supporting teachers in their use of effective interventions to enhance outcomes for students with symptoms of ADHD is crucial for child development and to achieve equitable mental health care and educational opportunities. The results of this study address a gap in understanding the implementation of behavioral classroom management interventions, and provide a foundation for future work supporting these interventions on a larger scale.

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Suggested Citation

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PolicyLab Leads

Gwendolyn Lawson PhD

Faculty Member

Gwendolyn Lawson (she/her) is a faculty member at PolicyLab and in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, and an assistant professor of psychiatry at the Perelman School of Medicine of the University of Pennsylvania. She is a

licensed clinical psychologist, with a particular interest in disruptive behavior disorders and classroom consultation.

Dr. Lawson is a former classroom teacher and has a background in implementing evidence-based interventions for children in schools, including consulting with teachers regarding managing disruptive behavior difficulties. Her current research focuses on developing and testing implementation strategies to promote teacher use of behavioral classroom interventions for students with symptoms of ADHD. Overall, her research aims to increase the quality of services youth with or at-risk for mental health problems receive in schools, particularly within under-served communities.

Dr. Lawson earned her doctorate in psychology with clinical training from the University of Pennsylvania in 2017. She completed her predoctoral internship at the University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health, where she provided prevention, intervention and consultation services in a Baltimore elementary school. She completed a T32 postdoctoral fellowship in implementation science at Penn's Center for Mental Health. Her research is currently funded by a K23 award from National Institute of Mental Health.



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Team

Molly Kerstetter **MPH**

Clinical Research Coordinator

Molly Kerstetter (she/her) is a clinical research coordinator at PolicyLab and within the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Molly is interested in utilizing school-based research and programming to improve equitable outcomes for children and adolescents. She currently works with Dr. Gwen Lawson, developing and testing implementation strategies to support caregivers' and teachers' use of behavioral interventions to support students with symptoms of ADHD within the School District of Philadelphia. In her role, Molly is also supporting the CHOP Tri-County School Mental Health Consortium to implement Tier I and II mental health programming for Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery County school districts.

Prior to her role at CHOP, Molly completed her Master of Public Health at Temple University in Social and Behavioral Sciences. While completing her degree, Molly also coordinated a school-based project for Temple with the aim of improving implementation of the school meal program within the School District of Philadelphia. She helped to conduct a needs assessment, consisting of surveys and focus groups with students, caregivers, and school faculty and staff to better understand barriers and facilitators to meal program implementation. In her free time, Molly loves to cook and bake for friends and family and trains Brazilian jiu jitsu.



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Funders of Project

National Institute of Mental Health

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Related Tools & Publications

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[Exploring Teachers' Intentions to Use Behavioral Classroom Interventions](#)
[Article](#)

Mar 2023

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[Implementation Resources to Support Teachers' Use of Behavioral Classroom Interventions: Protocol of a Randomized Pilot Trial](#)
[Article](#)

Aug 2023

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[Barriers and Facilitators to Teachers' Use of Behavioral Classroom Interventions](#)
[Article](#)

May 2022

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[A Community-partnered Research Process for Implementation Strategy Design: Developing Resources to Support Behavioral Classroom Interventions](#)
[Article](#)

Jun 2024

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[Toolkit to Support Teachers' Use of Behavioral Classroom Interventions: Results from a Randomized Pilot Trial](#)
[Article](#)

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Related Projects

[Supporting Caregivers in Implementing Behavioral Interventions and Home-School Communication Strategies](#)
[Behavioral Health](#)