

Planning for Success: Get Ready to Implement the DESSA Screener for Externalizing and Internalizing Risk (DESSA SEIR)

The DESSA SEIR is a student-completed screener identifying internalizing and externalizing concerns. Combined with the strength-based DESSA results, it equips schools to support student well-being. This guide offers an overview and action steps to prepare for successful implementation.

Overview of the DESSA SEIR

- Student-completed screener for grades 6-12
- 10 items measuring internalizing (e.g., feeling sad, lonely, or withdrawn) and externalizing (e.g., aggressive and impulsive behaviors, defiance, and inattention) behaviors
- Completed alongside the DESSA Student Self-Report (DESSA SSR)
- Delivers two scores – internalizing risks and externalizing risks

Action Steps to Prepare for Implementation

Complete these steps prior to launching DESSA SEIR.

- ☐ **Review district policies on collecting and using student data** to guide your plans, procedures, and timelines. Focus on:
 - ☐ Parent communication and consent requirements, including access to results and opt-out options.
 - ☐ Policies for protecting student data.
 - ☐ Protocols for addressing student mental well-being and existing intervention steps.
- ☐ **Clearly explain how the DESSA SEIR supports your district's strategic goals and vision.** This alignment is key to effectively communicating its value to staff and community stakeholders.
- ☐ **Identify key personnel for a multidisciplinary team**, including administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, special education staff, and teachers. Assess the team's capacity and consider additional support from community partners or external mental health providers if needed.
- ☐ **Form a data team**, including school-based mental health professionals like psychologists, counselors, and social workers. This team will manage student data, receive scores, and handle immediate notifications for students flagged with concern or possible concern scores.
- ☐ **Convene the teams and schedule regular meetings.** Involving key personnel in early planning will help ensure your school is ready to begin this fall. These regular meetings will later be used to facilitate data collection and review, and plan interventions and supports for students.
- ☐ **Create an internal communication plan** with key messages, audiences, timelines, and roles. Highlight the screener's goals and benefits, support for students, and training plan for staff. Plan how you will introduce it to students.
- ☐ **Develop a parent communication plan** aligned with district policies. Use clear, jargon free language to explain the screener's benefits for student well-being, confidentiality measures, and data privacy procedures. Include community mental health resources, if applicable.



Completing these steps will help prepare your school for a successful DESSA SEIR implementation.