

What Is Mine to Notice, Do, and Escalate?

An Adult Capacity Check for a Responsive School Mental-Health System

Adult capacity isn't asking educators to carry more.
It's making sure they know what is theirs to do, what isn't, and what system is there when they need help.

1. ROLE CLARITY

Do adults know what is theirs to do?

NOTICE:

Changes in behavior, participation, or emotional presentation.

DO:

Respond within my role, connect to the support pathway.

ESCALATE:

Concerns beyond my role, or a safety concern.

NOT MINE:

Diagnose, treat, or carry it alone.

RATING:

☐ Clear ☐ Somewhat ☐ Unclear ☐ Depends on adult

2. RESPONSE SKILLS

Are adults prepared for the moment?

- ☐ Notice signs of distress within their role
- ☐ Pause before reacting in a difficult moment
- ☐ Use calm, clear, predictable communication
- ☐ Know when the situation exceeds their role

Are these practiced capabilities — or topics staff once heard about in a training?

3. ESCALATION PATHWAY

An adult asks: "This student needs more than I can provide."

1. WHO do they contact?
2. HOW do they contact them?
3. Expected response time?
4. WHO owns the next step?
5. How is the loop closed?

IMMEDIATE SAFETY CONCERN?

Follow district crisis/safety procedures immediately. Do not wait for the ordinary MTSS process.

Does every adult know this pathway — or only the student-services team?

4. SYSTEM SUPPORT

What are we putting around the adult?

- ☐ Clear roles and boundaries
- ☐ Accessible referral/escalation procedures
- ☐ Practice and coaching — not just information
- ☐ Access to consultation when unsure

Where are we relying on individual heroics instead of a reliable system?

5. STAFF SUSTAINABILITY

Can adults keep doing this work?

- ☐ Responsibilities aligned with roles, training, capacity
- ☐ Consultation/debriefing available after hard situations
- ☐ Secondary traumatic stress treated as occupational, not personal failure
- ☐ Staff feedback leads to real system change

What is our system asking adults to carry that the system itself should be carrying?

ONE THING WE WILL FIX

The adult-capacity gap we identified:

One system change we will make:

WHO OWNS IT? _____

BY WHEN? _____

HOW WILL WE KNOW ADULTS HAVE GREATER CLARITY? _____

Don't ask only: "Are our staff trained?"

Ask: "Do they know what to notice, what to do, when to escalate — and does the system support them?"

Clear roles + practical capacity + reliable pathways + organizational support → stronger student-support infrastructure

THE 60-SECOND ADULT CAPACITY TEST

Choose one common situation and walk it through your current system:

- A student shuts down.
- A student escalates in class.
- A student repeatedly leaves the room.
- A student tells an adult they're struggling.
- A teacher notices a major change in behavior.

1. What should the adult NOTICE?

2. What should the adult DO?

3. What should they NOT be expected to handle alone?

4. WHEN should they escalate?

5. WHO takes the next step?

Would different adults in our school give the same answers?

If not: you've found a system-clarity gap — not an individual staff problem.

"**GROUNDING IN**": SAMHSA/NCTSN Trauma-Informed Schools Framework (Staff Self-Care & Secondary Traumatic Stress) · NCSMH School Mental Health Quality Guide: Teaming · Illinois RSSI / REACH.

Disclaimer: "This is a school-system reflection tool, not an evaluation of individual staff. It does not replace district policy, crisis/safety procedures, or professional clinical judgment."