Student Risk Screening Scale Frequently Asked Questions

There are several frequently asked questions from schools about the Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS). The questions are listed here with corresponding answers.

**Author:** Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI)

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**Question 1:**

Why would a school implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports use a measure like the SRSS that focuses so heavily on negative student behaviors?

The SRSS is a research-validated tool that measures student risk. Risk has historically been measured by examining the presence of problem behavior. While protective factors are also important, the presence of protective factors does not necessarily indicate the absence of risk factors. Presently, the SRSS is the only tool in its class that is both free and can be conducted efficiently, meaning that schools can use a reliable, valid measure, and do so quickly, taking less time away from instruction and student learning.

**Question 2:**

Does the SRSS measure internalizing behavior?

For elementary schools, the SRSS-IE includes 7 items that measure externalizing behavior and an additional 5 items that measure internalizing behavior. For secondary schools, the SRSS-IE includes 7 items that measure externalizing behavior and 6 items that measure for internalizing behavior. Peer rejection is rated on the externalizing scale, but summed into the score for both internalizing and externalizing. SRSS researchers recommend caution when interpreting the total score and suggest schools continue to look at multiple sources of data for making all instructional decisions.

**Question 3:**

Can we modify the SRSS items by adding more items, changing the wording or deleting an item all together?

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Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI) is a Grant Funded Initiative (GFI), funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through the Michigan Department of Education.
No. Any modification to the SRSS will invalidate the supporting research. The 0-3 Likert-type scale must also be used. The SRSS must be used exactly as provided.

Question 4:
Why do the screening items lack operational definitions? Wouldn’t operational definitions help improve screening accuracy and consistency?

All psychometric studies conducted to date have examined the reliability and validity of SRSS and SRSS-IE scores without operational definitions. Additional descriptions of each item should not be provided as this would change procedures for this established tool. Similarly, staff should not work to develop consensus on how to interpret any items before or during screening.

Question 5:
How can SRSS and SWIS data be used together?

SRSS and SWIS data are compatible, but provide slightly different types of information. The SRSS is a universal screening tool. All students are screened using the SRSS. This happens early in the year, which may allow students to be flagged for additional support sooner than waiting for problem behavior to escalate to the point of one or more discipline referrals and exclusion from instruction. SWIS is a progress monitoring and problem-solving tool. SWIS will only capture students’ overall level of problem behavior as documented through a major or minor discipline referral record. Both can be used to measure overall levels of externalizing problem behavior in a school.

Question 6:
Can we conduct the SRSS at the same time as our academic universal screening?

The SRSS should be conducted 6-8 weeks after the start of the school year, in December, and again in May. The delayed fall screening is intentional so that teachers have an opportunity to get to know students and observe patterns of student behavior before conducting ratings. Conducting winter screening in December rather than in January will allow staff to plan supports for students that can be implemented right after the winter break. As academic data are collected later in January, that information should be considered alongside the SRSS results.

Question 7:
Our school does not yet have tier 2 and 3 systems and practices firmly established. Should we wait to use the SRSS for screening until tier 2 and 3
support systems are fully implemented so that students identified as at risk can be immediately matched to interventions?

While a team should have a plan in place for how the screening data will be used, a fully developed secondary and tertiary support system does not necessarily have to be in place before universal screening can occur. Using the SRSS to collect screening data on all students will help a team know where to best direct their efforts. Most schools will have at least some evidence-based intervention opportunities available to students. Teams can start by strengthening what they are already doing. Then, as the data show it is needed and as the school and district develop capacity to implement additional supports with fidelity, those supports can be layered.

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