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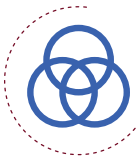
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ALIGN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES/INITIATIVES WITHIN AN MTSS/PBIS FRAMEWORK

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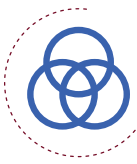
Align Evidence-based Approaches/Initiatives within an MTSS/PBIS Framework

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Purpose

State leadership teams have important roles in implementing and scaling PBIS. Interviews were conducted with team members across 12 states who were either scaling and sustaining PBIS or had lost state-level funding for PBIS. This policy brief provides five recommendations derived from variables the state teams perceived as critical for continuing to scale and sustain PBIS.



What Is the Role of State Leadership Teams in Implementing PBIS?

State leadership teams have important roles in implementing and scaling PBIS. These roles include providing guidance, resources, and professional development to their regions, districts, and schools. In line with the PBIS Blueprint,¹ state teams are involved with two overall functions:^{1,2,3}

- Executive Functions: Partner Engagement, Funding and Alignment, Policy, and Workforce Capacity
- Implementation Functions: Training, Coaching, and Evaluation

State teams also collaborate with the Center on PBIS and other state teams to disseminate implementation resources to districts and schools (e.g., policy briefs, implementation and practice guides).

What Are Some of the Current Challenges to Scaling and Sustaining PBIS?

In recent years, districts and schools have faced significant challenges in scaling and sustaining PBIS and delivering high-quality academic, behavior, and mental health support to students, including:

- Reduced or reallocated federal and state funding
- Increased emphasis on broader initiatives (e.g., MTSS, school mental health, school safety)
- System-level strain following the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., school closures, disruptions to school routines, staffing shortages; Kittelman et al., 2026; McIntosh et al., 2025)

Although some states have shifted resources away from PBIS, other state teams have continued to scale and sustain PBIS and document meaningful improvements in school and student outcomes (e.g., Johnson et al., 2025). Understanding these differences is essential for expansion and long-term sustainability.

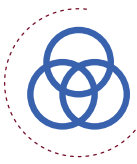
What Are the Recommendations for State Teams?

Interviews were conducted with 12 state team members across 12 states who were either scaling and sustaining PBIS or had lost state-level funding for PBIS. From these interviews, we offer five recommendations derived from variables the state teams perceived as critical for continuing to scale and sustain PBIS (see Kittelman et al., 2026).

Recommendation 1: Invest in Increasing District or Regional Capacity

Schools operating on their own often lack the resources needed to implement and sustain PBIS (e.g., individuals with knowledge in organizational systems and behavior theory; Horner et al., 2014). State teams investing in building district or regional PBIS capacity help to:

- Provide a higher quality of support since local implementers have a greater understanding of their content and culture
- Hire and train key personnel at the district-level with behavior expertise and knowledge of organizational systems
- Establish a common set of implementation materials and curricula to support all schools in the district



The key message is that when state teams provide individualized training, coaching, and technical assistance to districts rather than individual schools, state teams increase their capacity and create a more sustainable infrastructure that enables districts to provide PBIS support in schools.

Recommendation 2: Diversify Funding Streams

Relying on a single funding source places statewide PBIS efforts at risk. States with sustainable PBIS efforts intentionally braid funding streams across:

- Special education and general education funding
- School climate, safety, and mental health initiatives
- Federal and state grants
- University and community partnerships

Diversifying funding streams (a) provides a continuation of support for PBIS implementation, (b) demonstrates that funded work is worthy and important for policymakers and funders, and (c) helps to promote that PBIS is “value added” when integrated with other initiatives.

Recommendation 3: Align PBIS Within MTSS and Other Related Initiatives

Alignment of multiple initiatives within MTSS helps to:

- Address the needs of specific states (e.g., school mental health, school safety)
- Ensure multiple state teams with different content focuses (e.g., academic, behavior) are working together to support student needs.

Although alignment can provide cohesiveness across teams and state initiatives, state PBIS teams will want to advocate for retaining the essential organizational systems (e.g., teaming structures, data and decision systems) needed to implement and sustain PBIS and MTSS practices with strong fidelity.

Recommendation 4: Develop Internal Evaluation and Recognition Systems

Robust evaluation and recognition systems allow state teams to:

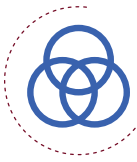
- Identify districts and schools implementing PBIS with fidelity
- Document and communicate impact to partners and policymakers
- Reinforce efforts in improving implementation or student outcomes, or both
- Provide opportunities to recognize PBIS district and school exemplars of successful implementation

States with internal evaluation and recognition systems were able to engage in data collection and analysis, produce annual impact reports, and share results among key partners, whereas states without these systems were more to be overlooked by state partners and decision-makers.

Recommendation 5: Continue to Rely on the Center on PBIS

State teams identified the Center on PBIS as a critical resource for their ongoing implementation efforts, specifically citing:

- Professional learning and implementation guidance



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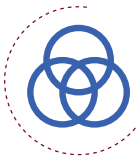
- Access to district and school training materials and fidelity measures
- Opportunities for networking through the national communities of practices and leadership forums

Leveraging the Center on PBIS resources reduces duplication of effort and provides timely, responsive support to address key issues during challenging periods (e.g., fiscal cuts, shifting political landscape).

Conclusion

State leadership teams face significant and ongoing challenges in supporting the academic, behavior, and mental health needs of students. Scaling and sustaining PBIS to support these student needs requires deliberate investments in district capacity, diversifying funding, integrating initiatives, and strong evaluation systems that together create a durable statewide infrastructure. The Center on PBIS continues to be a critical resource for state leadership teams in building, adapting, and sustaining effective PBIS systems over time.





Resources

1. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Implementation Blueprint — <https://www.pbis.org/resource/pbis-implementation-blueprint>
2. District & State PBIS — <https://www.pbis.org/topics/districtstate-pbis>
3. PBIS State Systems Fidelity Inventory (SSFI) — <https://www.pbis.org/resource/ssfi>
4. Do State Recognition Systems Facilitate PBIS Scale-Up? — <https://www.pbis.org/resource/do-state-recognition-systems-facilitate-pbis-scale-up>

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