

# Best Practices for Implementing BrainSTEPS CO Brain Injury School Consulting Program



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## Structure and Organization of the BrainSTEPS CO Teams

BrainSTEPS is a nationally recognized program based on current research and best practices for supporting students with brain injury in the educational setting. This program is free to all Colorado school districts and BOCES that are located within the state of Colorado. BrainSTEP CO Teams may vary slightly according to the local district/BOCES organization. However, successful BrainSTEPS CO Brain Injury Consulting Teams are expected to have the following characteristics, structure, and organization.

### Team Members

All BrainSTEPS teams should have a minimum of one team leader(s), and no more than two. The team is made up of multidisciplinary school professionals that offer differing perspectives to best support all students with brain injuries.

A BrainSTEPS multidisciplinary team should include:

- Administrator
- School Nurse
- School Psychologist/Social Worker
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Vision/Hearing Itinerants
- Additional staff identified as beneficial



- Team members will need flexibility in their schedules to attend:
  - Team trainings
  - Monthly meetings
  - Consultation activities
- Team members will require support from their building/district/BOCES level supervisor(s) to serve as a BrainSTEPS CO team member
- Team members are expected to stay up to date on the latest brain injury information through:
  - Professional Development
  - Self-study
  - Team development

- Team members are expected to attend a monthly team meeting facilitated by team leader(s):
  - Have an agenda
  - Review all current cases
  - Review and assign new referrals
  - Provide professional development
- **Team leaders** are expected to attend monthly team leader teleconferences facilitated by CDE Brain Injury Specialist(s)

## New BrainSTEPS CO Team Members

To maintain the expectations listed above, BrainSTEPS CO teams may add new members throughout the school year.

- All BrainSTEPS CO team members must complete *New Team Member Training* before access to the ORBS (Online Reporting for BrainSTEPS) database will be granted according to CO privacy laws.
- New members who have not yet completed *New Team Member Training* may participate in monthly team meetings and provide training and consultative recommendations **ONLY** in conjunction with one or more trained members of their BrainSTEPS CO team.

All BrainSTEPS CO team members must participate in the following:

- New Team Member Training*
- ORBS training
- Annual update training
- Subscribed to the BrainSTEPS listserv
- Team leader training (**team leaders only**)



## Team Plan

An annual BrainSTEPS CO team plan is developed by each District/BOCES team individually.

- The monthly team meeting schedule should be developed each spring for the upcoming school year by the **team lead(s)**.
- An annual Team Plan is developed at the start of each school year, and re-evaluated and completed in the spring, prior to the end of the school year.

- BrainSTEPS CO teams should be marketing the team and their purpose to:
  - District personnel
  - Local and referring hospitals
  - Rehabilitation units
  - Community members
  - Medical providers
  - Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
- Marketing can be done through:
  - Email
  - Newsletters
  - Brochures
  - Websites
  - Educational opportunities

## BrainSTEPS Referrals

A BrainSTEPS Referral is completed by the person who identifies a student with a Brain Injury (BI):

- Mild TBI (concussion) 4-6 weeks after concussion with persistent symptoms.
- Moderate to Severe brain injury immediately, even if the student is still in the hospital or rehabilitation.
- Congenital BI that may require additional educational support.

The referral may be completed by:

- An outside agency (i.e hospital, medical providers)
- School personnel
- Families

The referral process includes families, a school team and BrainSTEPS team members. The process involves a student observation, review and consultation and a written report with recommendations for student support. See below for the BrainSTEPS team member referral process.

## BrainSTEPS CO Activities

Please see the end of this document for a listing of activities by month.

### Brain Injury (BI) Training

Teams will provide educational presentations regarding brain injury to school staff in order to best support students.

- Provides education and resources to:
  - Educators
  - Families
  - Community providers

## Consultation Activities

BrainSTEPS CO teams provide consultative recommendations to all students that demonstrate educational impacts due to a BI. Consultation and training will vary depending on individual student injuries and educational needs.

Primary expectations of each BrainSTEPS CO team are education and consultation to educators and parents on specific BI student cases. This may include:

- Individual case consultation
- Participation at school team meetings
- Recommendations for:
  - Section 504 Plan
  - Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Gathering medical, rehabilitation, and educational (learning and behavior) documentation to assist in making recommendations.
- Consulting directly with:
  - Families
  - Teachers
  - Student
  - Additional pertinent school staff
- BrainSTEPS CO teams will provide written recommendations on the BrainSTEPS [BrainSTEPS Observation Form](#) for all referrals requiring support in the school building.
- School re-entry coordination:
  - Facilitating the transition from hospital/rehab to the school setting for all students with BI.
    - This requires that teams develop a system for notification of students who are hospitalized with BI.



## Communication

Once a referral has been received, the BrainSTEPS CO team will begin communication with all pertinent individuals supporting the student.

- The assigned team member will communicate directly with the referred students:
  - Families
  - Teachers
  - Additional pertinent school staff
- The assigned team member will gather medical, rehabilitation, and educational documentation.
  - Direct communication with medical providers may be necessary.
  - Utilizing a medical records release when needed.
- The assigned team member keeps the family informed through regular communication.
- The assigned team member provides recommendations to the school team prior to a section 504 Plan or IEP meeting.

## ORBS Database

Team members are expected to upload corresponding student documents and enter all activities related to referred students in ORBS.

- Any consultation activity from:
  - School staff
  - Families
  - Student
  - Medical professionals
  - Time spent in consultation
- Technical assistance:
  - Modeling and coaching of supports and behavioral techniques
  - Educational training on BI to school staff
- Annual student check-in

Team members are expected to upload student specific documents:

- Medical reports
- Rehabilitation reports
- Educational documents
- Written recommendations on the [BrainSTEPS Observation Form](#)

**Team leader(s)** expected activities in ORBS

- Document team goals
- Complete best practice review
- Document time spent at meetings
- Run reports as needed
  - Active students
  - Time spent on any activities
  - Annual goals
  - Best practices reviewed
  - Team member assignments



## BrainSTEPS Team Member Referral Process

- A BrainSTEPS [Referral](#) is completed by the person who identifies a student with a Brain Injury (BI):
  - Mild TBI (concussion) 4-6 weeks after concussion with persistent symptoms.
  - Moderate to Severe brain injury immediately, even if the student is still in the hospital or rehabilitation.
  - Congenital BI that may require additional educational support.
  
- The referral may be completed by:
  - An outside agency
  - School personnel
  - Families
  
- Team leader(s) request or assign a BrainSTEPS team member as the point person
  
- Team leader(s) enters the point person in ORBS
 

The assigned BrainSTEPS team member contacts the referral source. The initial contact should include:

  - Acknowledgement of referral
  - Confirm that families are aware of the BrainSTEPS referral
  - Obtain family permission if required by your school team
  - Provide the following resources:
    - BrainSTEPS Brochure
    - [Colorado Kids with Brain Injury](#)
    - [Brain Injury Manual](#)
  
- The assigned BrainSTEPS team member contacts the family to:
  - Discuss the goals of BrainSTEPS CO
  - Introduce the team
  - Begin the initial interview.
  - During this interview
    - Utilize the [Brain Check Survey](#)
    - Gather information regarding the student's:
      - Developmental history
      - Medical history
      - Functioning at home
      - Functioning at school
      - Concerns
    - Obtain a Release of Information if needed
  
- An email containing the following information is sent to the family at completion of the phone call:
  - A summary of the phone call
  - BrainSTEPS team Brochure
  - Provide the following resources:
    - [BIAC](#)
    - [Colorado Kids with Brain Injury](#)
    - [Brain Injury Manual](#)
  - Next steps in the BrainSTEPS process
  - Contact information for the assigned BrainSTEPS team member

- Submit a referral to [BIAC](#) for:
  - Resource Navigation
  
- The assigned BrainSTEPS team member will [email](#) the school team to inform them:
  - The initial family interview has been completed
  - An observation date will be scheduled with the school team
    - The school team should include the following:
      - IEP / 504 team if one established
      - Case manager if one established
      - Administrator
      - District nurse
      - All of the student's teachers
    - Determine school team members involved in observation
    - Determine BrainSTEPS team members involved in observation
    - Date of observation
  
- During observation:
  - Each BrainSTEPS team member should utilize the [BrainSTEPS Observation Form](#)
  
- The assigned BrainSTEPS team member will debrief with the school team
  - In person following the observation or
  - Virtual meeting or
  - Share observation recommendations and obtain feedback
  - BrainSTEPS Observation team is expected to summarize all observations, and include any other relevant data collected into a written [BrainSTEPS Observation Form](#)
  - Copies of the completed [BrainSTEPS Observation Form](#) should be sent in separate emails to:
    - Student's family
    - School team
  
- All BrainSTEPS team members that participated in the observation will update the student's ORBS record:
  - All activities completed during the consultation
    - Time spent
      - Reviewing records
      - During observation
      - Writing report
      - Any other associated activities
  - Written consultation report is entered into ORBS under *upload documents* for the student
  
- The assigned BrainSTEPS team member will follow-up with both parent and school team in one month after the observation was completed to ensure:
  - Recommendations are being followed
  - Parent concerns are being addressed

- The BrainSTEPS team leader(s) will complete or assign a BrainSTEPS team member to complete an annual check-in each school year following the initial referral. The annual check in should include:
  - Medical updates
  - New educational concerns
  - Social/Emotional changes
- ORBS database should be updated with information obtained during the annual check-in
- ORBS database should be updated with BrainSTEPS team members time spent on annual check-in

**Questions? Contact:**

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