Positive Behavior Support in Minnesota: Scaling Up With Advocate-Driven Leadership at Regional and State Levels

Rachel Freeman, Ph.D.
Director of State Initiatives

Purpose of Presentation

- New directions in Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

- Integrating disability and social justice into PBS

- Aligning PBS across regional and statewide efforts in Minnesota

Kindness, Connection and Coproduction*: Looking for the heart and soul of PBS*

New Directions in Positive Behavior Support

The role of disability and social justice

Leadership of advocates and language of PBS

Updating PBS standards

Original Definition of Positive Behavior Support

Positive behavior support includes:

- Valued outcomes
- Behavioral and biomedical science
- Validated procedures
- Systems change

….to enhance quality of life and prevent challenging behavior

Evolving Nature of Positive Behavior Support

- Improving and changing how we use language
- Using a tiered model as a way to prevent challenges
- Expanding social and disability justice
- Co-creation and co-leadership of advocates with disabilities in PBS
- Emotional regulation and our internal landscape

Challenging Behavior

- Everyone engages in behaviors that:
  - Interfere with quality of life
  - Can result in injury to self or others
- When these challenges become intense and chronic the goal is to help problem solve and come up with solutions
- Avoiding the term "behavior" makes it more difficult to find solutions

The principles of behavior are like gravity….we need to understand these principles in order to make sure we do no harm to others.

How Changing Values Drive Change

- A growing awareness that we need to attend to language used in all of our work

- Co-leadership and direction from advocates with disabilities can help change this…
  - Statewide advisory board
  - Co-training and materials development
  - Guidance in tool development
  - Providing leadership in policy changes across systems
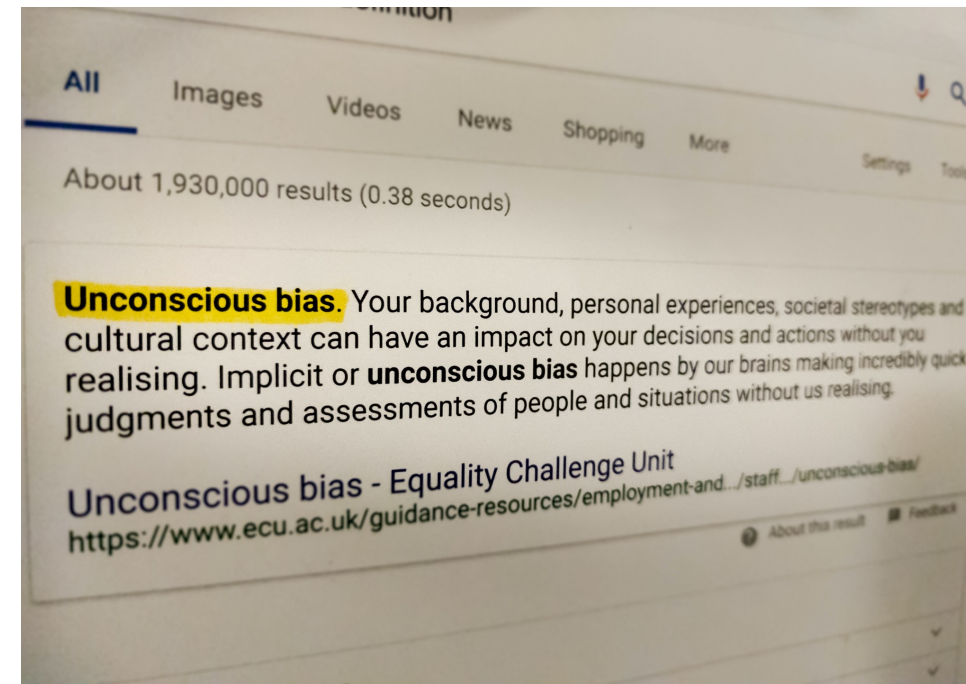
Leadership of Those Most Impacted

People from marginalized communities must be actively involved in the meetings where decisions are made for positive change to occur

-Community Toolbox

"Americans have long been trained to see the deficiencies of people rather than policy. It's a pretty easy mistake to make: People are in our faces. Policies are distant. We are particularly poor at seeing the policies lurking behind the struggles of people."

-Ibram Kendi

Changes Observed in the Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS) Practice Guidelines

2023

APBS
PRACTICE
GUIDELINES

apbs.org
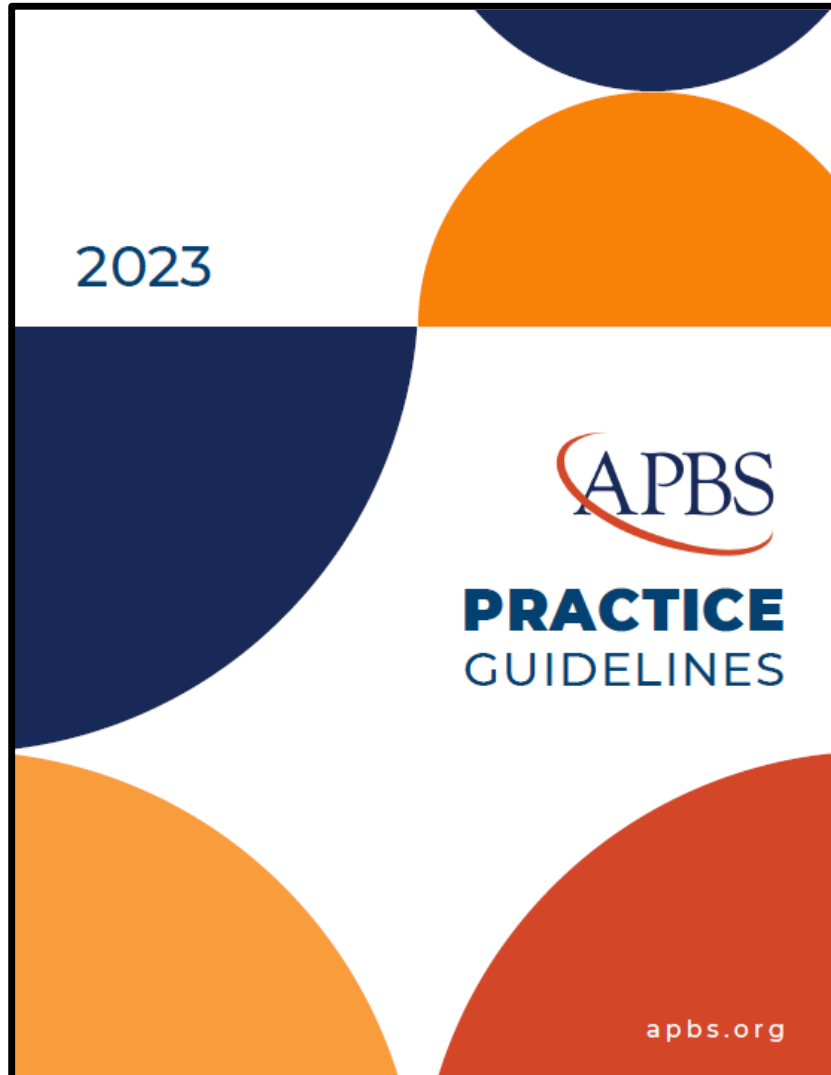
Major Sections

- Strength based/prevention focus
- Science, data, evidence-based practice
- Social justice and equity
- Preventative systems and healthy communities
- Collaboration
- Cultural & professional humility

APBS IDD Committee Discussion About Guidelines

- Review with advocates, families
- Create plain language versions of all key materials
- Expand feedback from members and partners

Artist Jimmy Reagan throughjimmyseyes.com This work is licensed by agreement with TJE, LLC. Any other use must be authorized by TJE, LLC.

Minnesota Standards of Practice

Help MNPBS Develop the Minnesota Standards of Practice for Positive Behavior Support

The MNPBS Network is posting a draft copy of the Minnesota Standards of Practice for review by members. The purpose of these standards is to improve communication across education and human services by defining the key elements of positive behavior support together. When it is approved by members, the standards will be placed online as a resource for people interested in learning more about positive behavior support.

Each of the sections below will become separate website pages with additional related links and resources. The MNPBS Network will be adding stories to the website that will show how positive behavior support is implemented across the lifespan an in different education and community settings. Please review the following draft documents and complete the Standards Survey (coming soon) to help us make sure that these standards will be useful for everyone. The information gathered in this process will be used to improve and finalize the standards. Email MNPBS at mnpbsnetwork@gmail.com if you would like to be included as a collaborator on the Standards.

- Table of Contents
- Introduction to the Standards
- Tier 1 Positive Behavior Support
- Tier 2 Positive Behavior Support
- Tier 3 Positive Behavior Support
- Glossary
- References

FEW

SOME

ALL
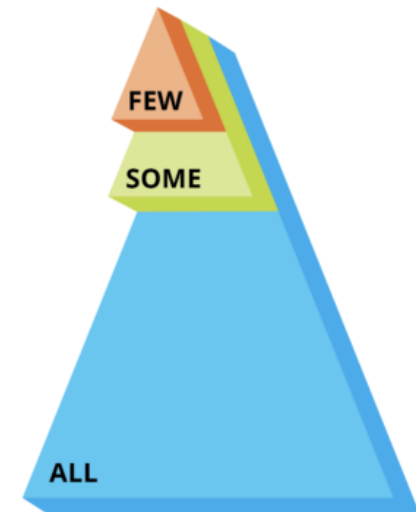
Minnesota PBS VALUES

V=   **V**alues build on the strengths of children and adults, empower people and encourage culturally-responsiveness

A=   **A**ll settings are important -- home, school, community

L =   **L**ifespan emphasis of PBS supports diversity and inclusion

U=   **U**nderstand & build on social and emotional skills

E=   **E**vidence-based practices using behavioral, biomedical, and social science research

S=   **S**ystems change including universal strategies, minor problem solving, & individualized supports

Key Shifts in Positive Behavior Support

- Improving and changing how we use language
- Using a tiered model as a way to prevent challenges
- Expanding social and disability justice
- Co-creation and co-leadership of advocates with disabilities in PBS
- Emotional regulation and our internal landscape
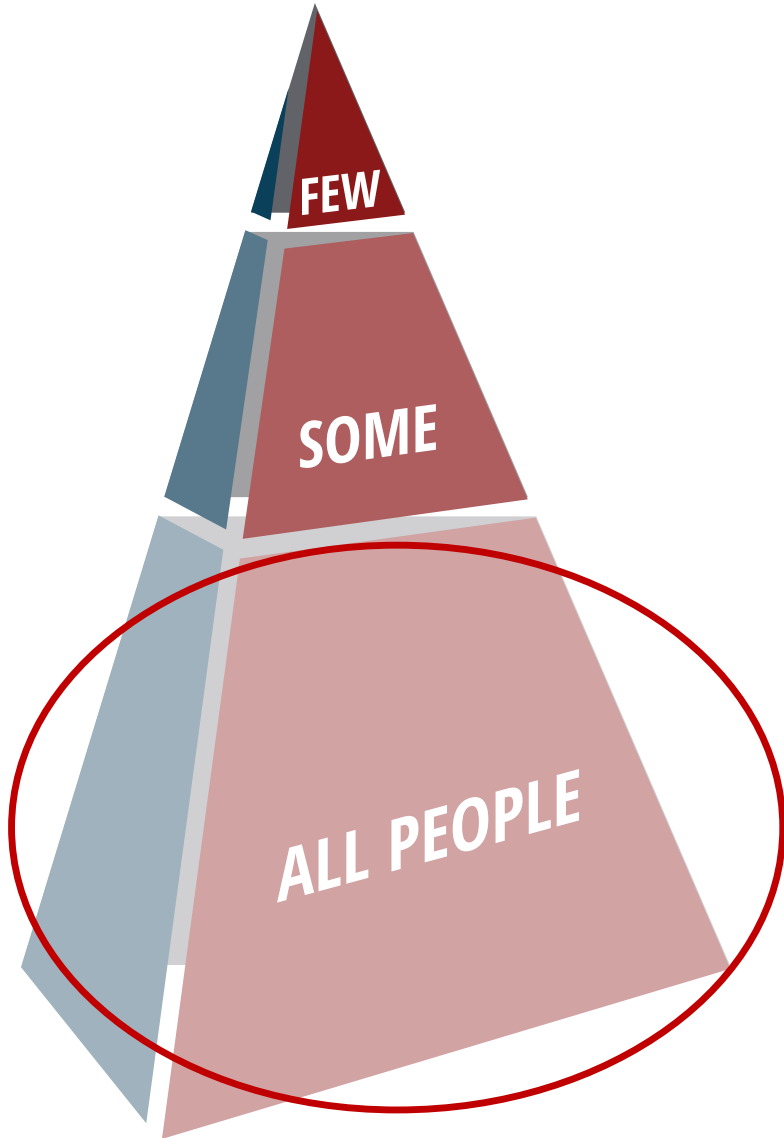
Implementing a Tiered Prevention Model
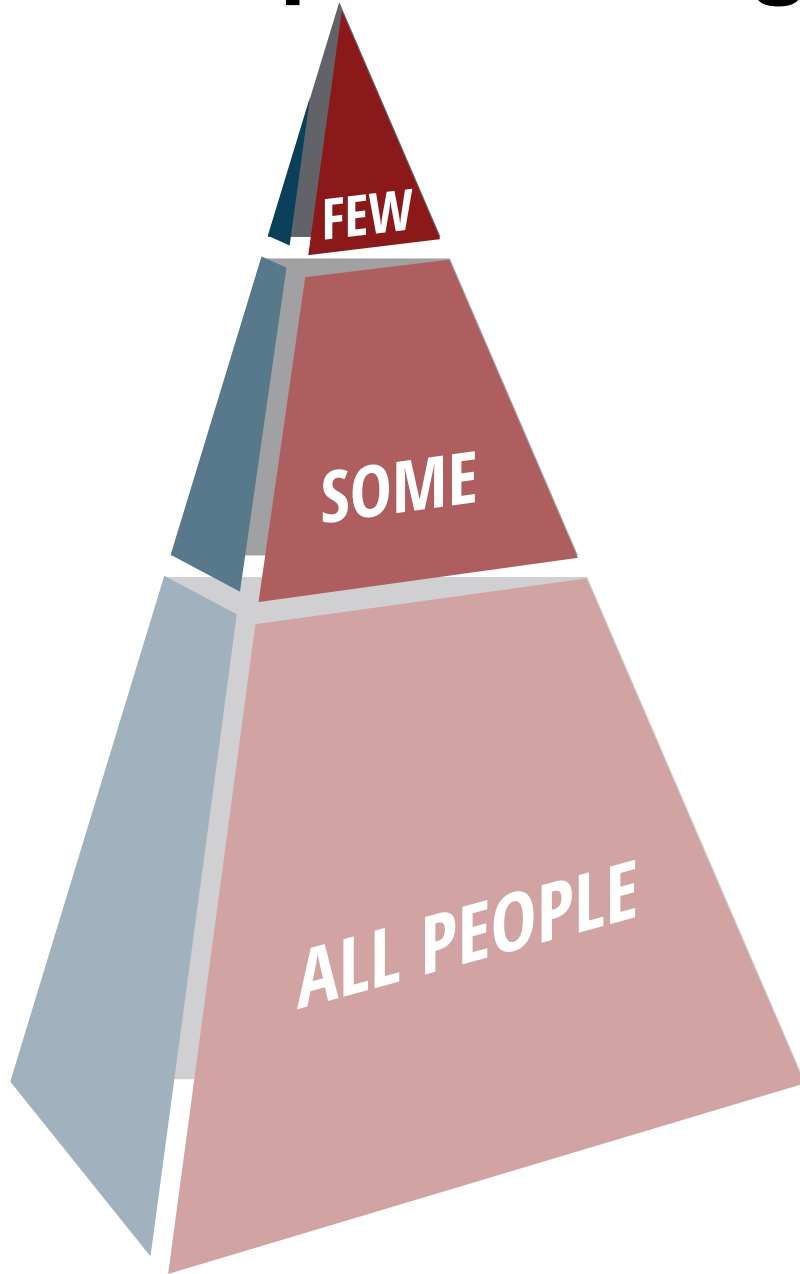
Tier 3 - Individual Plan with Multiple Supports

Tier 2 – Group or Simple Problem Solving

Tier 1 – Home, Work, Community

Tier 1 Positive Behavior Support Involves Everyone

- Team-based approach
- Introduce major messages from different practices
- Practice, model and teach universal strategies (staff, people supported, families, and community members)
- Create a positive reinforcing climate
- Use data to make changes and improve outcomes

Universal Person-Centered Strategies are not a Person-Centered Plan
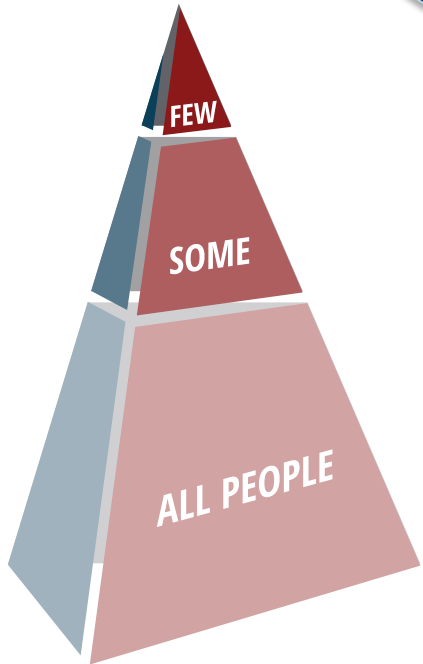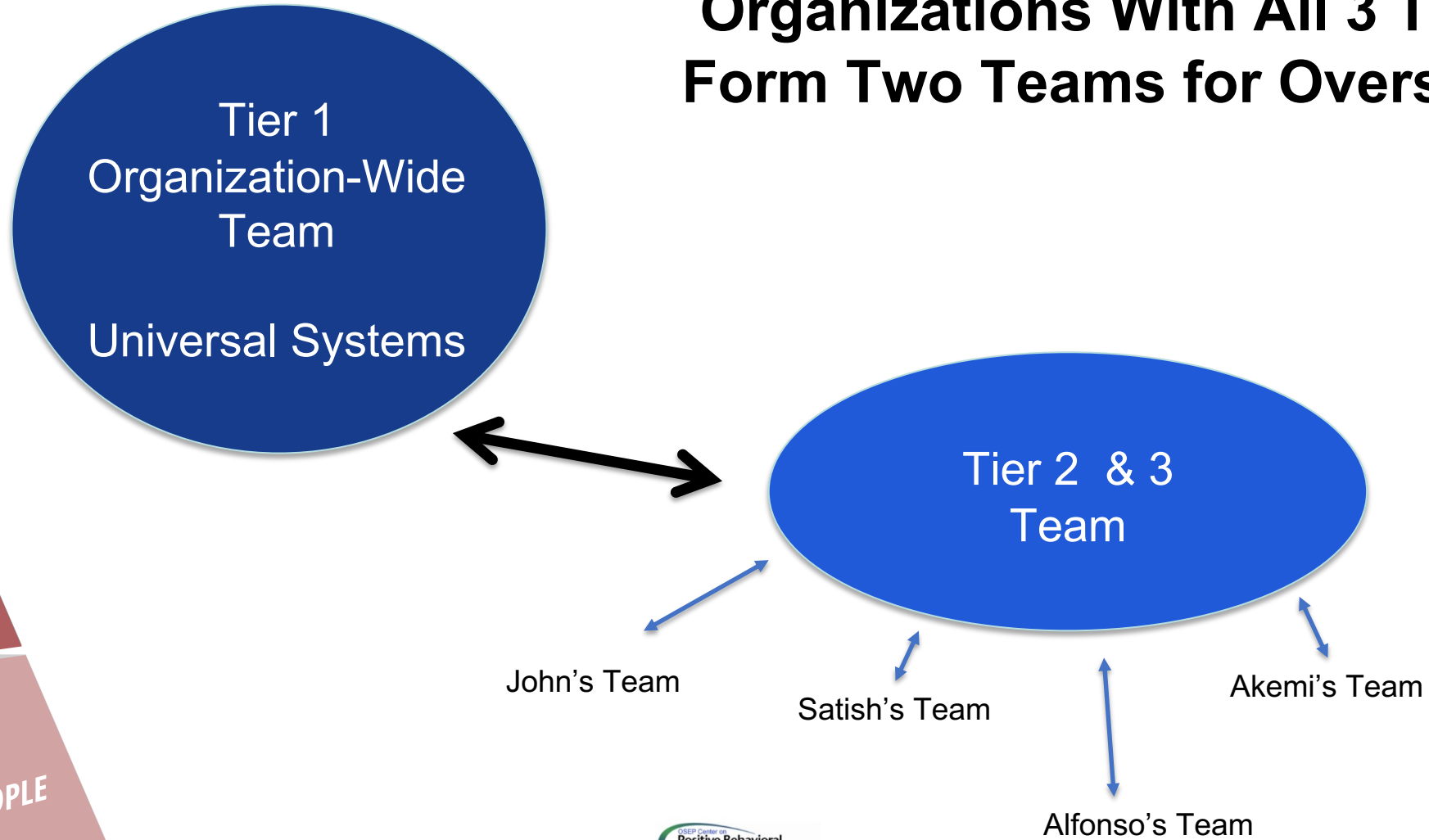
- Use person-centered tools and strategies to build relationships

- Practice and encourage empathy and active listening

- Explore and celebrate cultural differences

- Increase self-awareness of how we interact with others

- Reflect and change our use of language as well as our behavior

- Use data to reflect on progress

Universal Positive Behavior Support *is not the Same as a PBS Plan*

- Teach, prompt, and model social and emotional skills

- Reinforce and celebrate positive skills in use

- Create a consistent response when challenges occur

- Use data to reflect on progress

"Whatever you feed, will grow."
~Bishop TD Jakes

Organizations With All 3 Tiers Form Two Teams for Oversight

Tier 1 Organization-Wide Team — Universal Systems

Tier 2 & 3 Team

John's Team
Satish's Team
Alfonso's Team
Akemi's Team

FEW
SOME
ALL PEOPLE

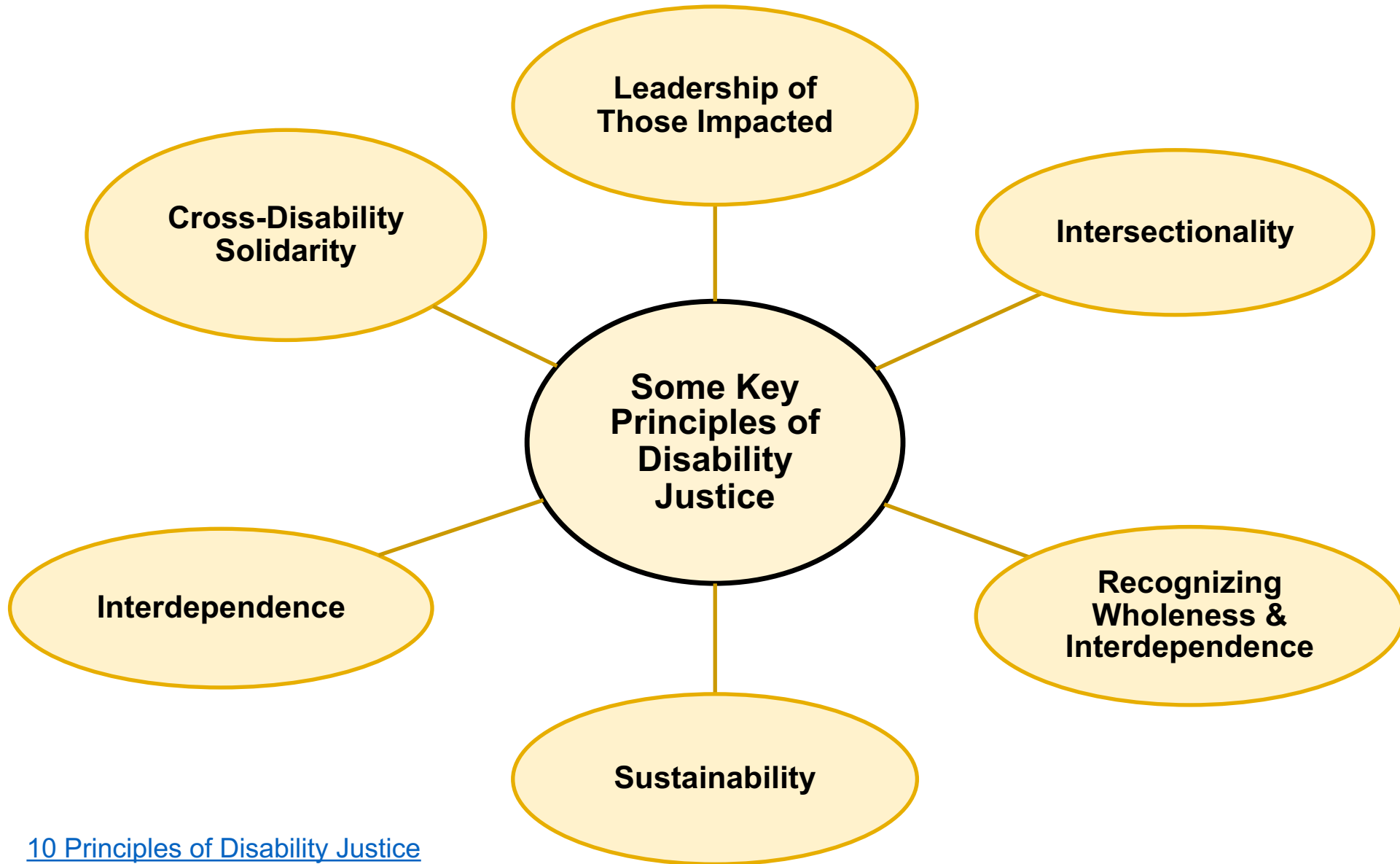# Key Shifts in Positive Behavior Support

- Improving and changing how we use language
- Using a tiered model as a way to prevent challenges
- Expanding social and disability justice
- Co-creation and co-leadership of advocates with disabilities in PBS
- Emotional regulation and our internal landscape

Ableism and Disability Justice

Cross-Movement Solidarity

…the idea is to lift up all of our community members, especially those who are often left out and not considered

Some Key Principles of Disability Justice

- Leadership of Those Impacted
- Intersectionality
- Recognizing Wholeness & Interdependence
- Sustainability
- Interdependence
- Cross-Disability Solidarity

10 Principles of Disability Justice

Current Conversations in PBS

- How language is used to describe challenges

- Reaching out to Autistic community about PBS (Linda Bambara)

- Meetings with the advocate community to discuss the definition of PBS

- Relationship-building activities with advocate groups

- Integrating leadership, guidance, and co-training into PBS

Key Shifts in Positive Behavior Support

- Improving and changing how we use language

- Using a tiered model as a way to prevent challenges

- Expanding social and disability justice

- Co-creation and co-leadership of advocates with disabilities in PBS

- Emotional regulation and our internal landscape

Emotional Regulation and Wellness as a Universal Feature of Quality of Life

Understanding Operant Learning & Respondent Learning Together…

Any learning experience someone has almost always includes operant and well as respondent learning.

-Martin and Pear

- Operant learning explains why a little girl that is bitten by her pet rabbit no longer wants to play with the bunny and runs away

- Respondent learning explains why she has a fear response that results in increases in breathing, sweating, shaking, etc.

Other Examples of how Emotional Regulation is Expanding within PBS

- Cognitive Behavior Therapy

- Motivational Interviewing

- Mindfulness training

- School-linked mental health and positive behavioral interventions and supports

Aligning Policies and Services with PBS in Minnesota
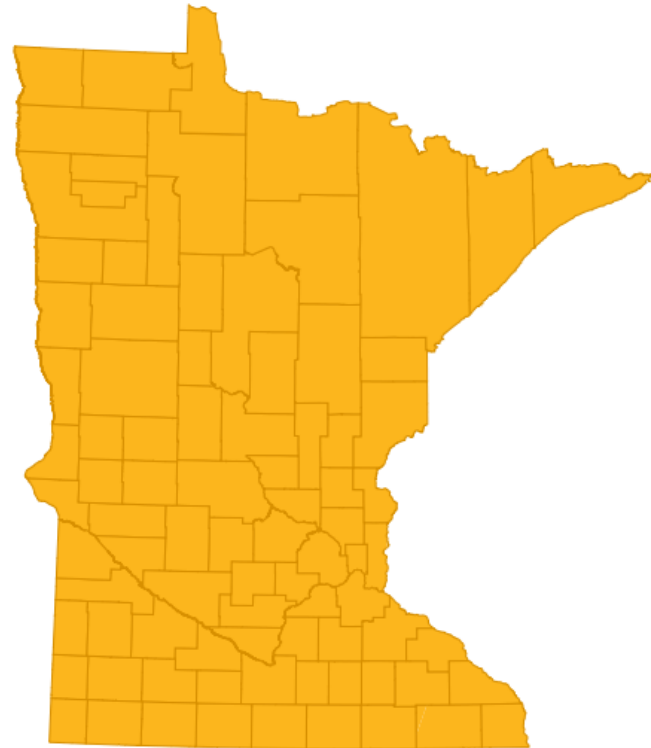
Positive Supports Defined

Refers to all practices that include the following characteristics:

1) Person- centered interventions that demonstrate cultural competence and respect for human dignity
2) Evidence- based and promising practices
3) Include strategies for ongoing assessment and monitoring at individual and organizational levels
4) Are often implemented in combination with more than one practice

Examples of Positive Support Strategies

- Person- centered thinking/ planning- foundational values
- Positive behavior support
- Applied behavior analysis
- Assertive community treatment
- Cognitive behavior therapy
- Dialectical behavior therapy
- Motivational interviewing
- Wraparound planning/ Systems of care
- Trauma informed practices
- School- linked mental health
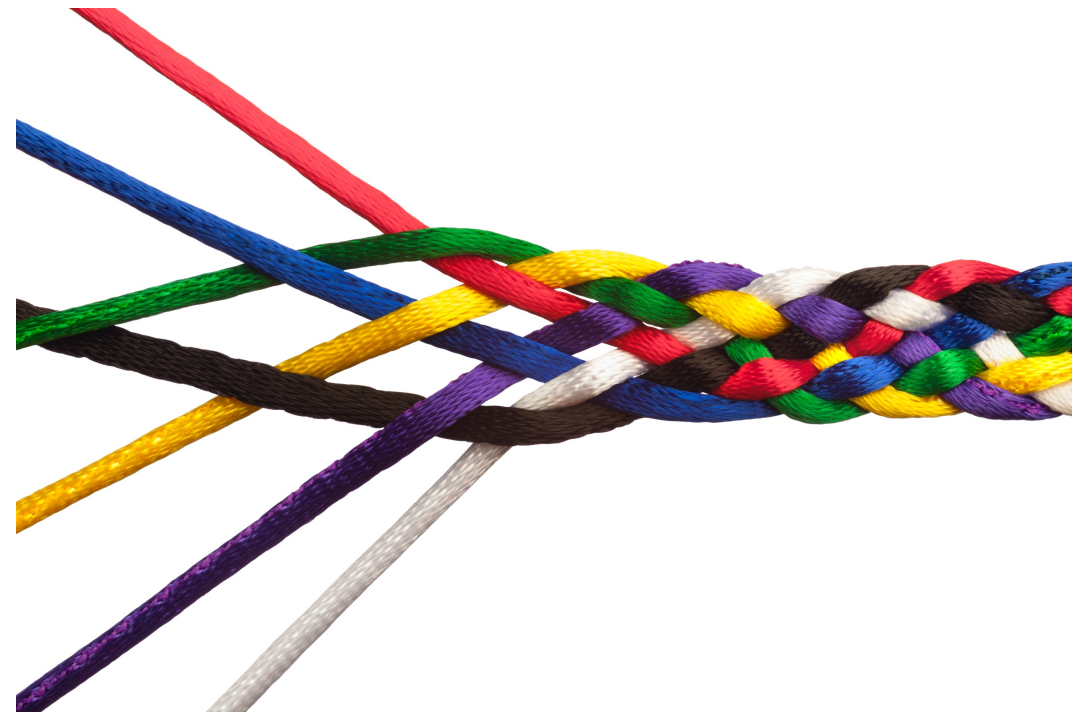
Minnesota Policies, Services, & TA Related to PBS
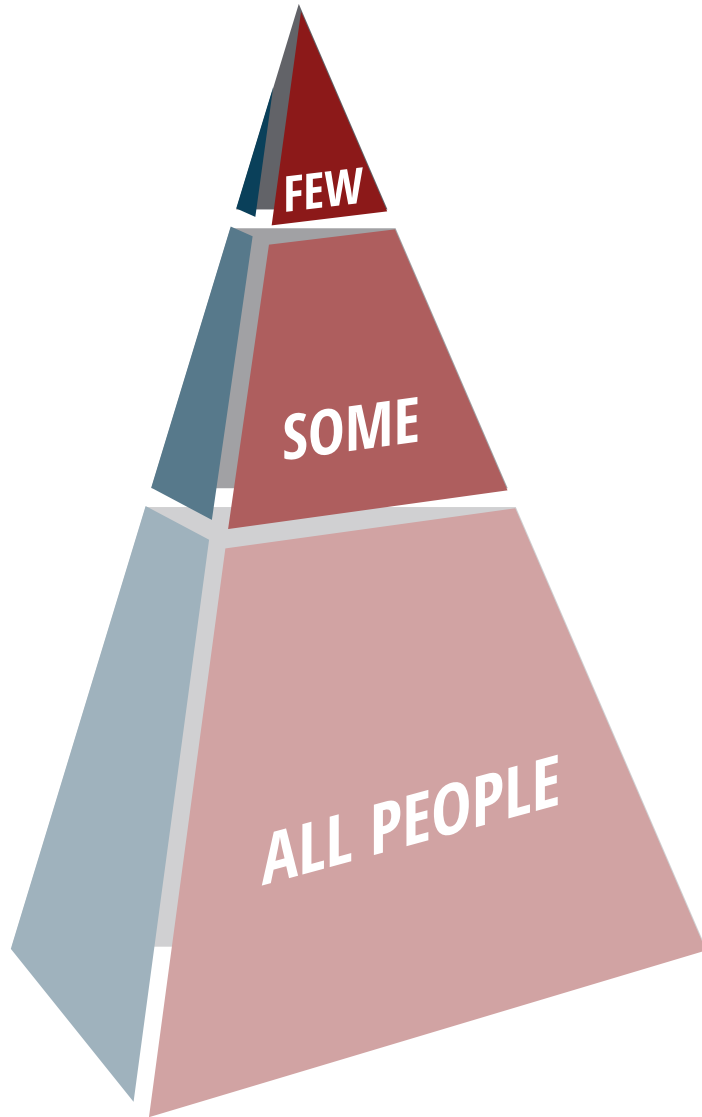
Tier 2 & 3 – Services, Training, Policies
- Systems of care efforts for coordinating services
- Children and adults needing intensive supports in transition
- Medicaid reimbursement for staff, analysts, and professionals using positive supports
- PBS standards of practice across home, school, work, and community settings
- Expand trainers for evidence-based practices
- Advocate-driven leadership in service, training, and policy development
- Incentives for organizations supporting people who challenge our systems

Tier 1 Services, Training, & Policies
- Systems of care efforts to coordinate services
- Organization-wide training systems
- Systems supporting smaller organizations
- Regional capacity building and sustainability of practices
- Trainers - universal person-centered practices
- Awareness of key elements of PBS
- Advocate-driven leadership in service, training, and policy development
- Award and recognition for organizations with high fidelity

MNPSP.ORG Website Training Materials Page

Minnesota's Regional Quality Councils

Who is Involved:

- People with disabilities, their families
- County and state leaders
- Organizations supporting people
- Community members

What RQCs Do:

- Collaborates with regional partners
- Improve quality of services
- Work with regions to monitor outcomes related to quality of life & person-centered outcomes

Quality Of Life

Minnesota's Regional Quality Councils
(Video)
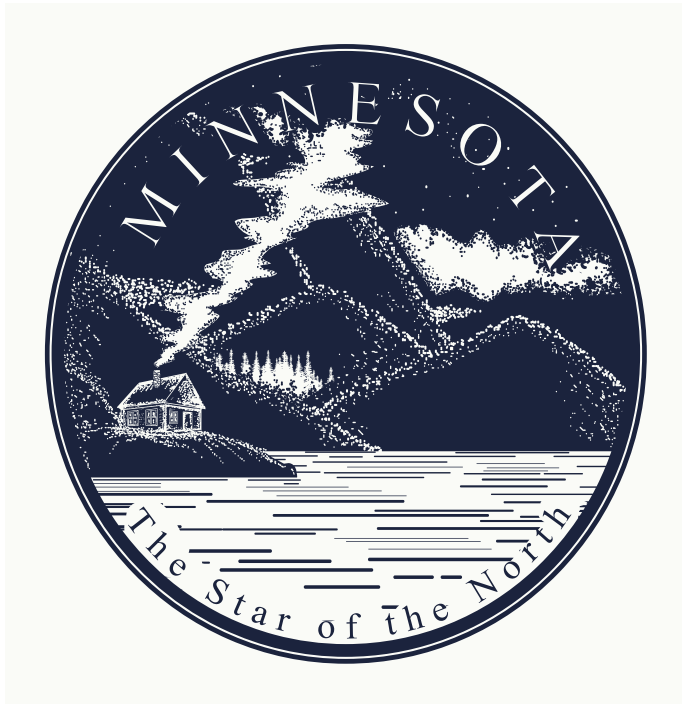
Co-Leadership Planning Efforts in Minnesota

- Advise within statewide planning in positive supports

- Partnership with ICI and Regional Quality Councils
  - Plain language material development
  - Assist with co-training in
    - Universal person-centered practices
    - Regional trainers supporting organizations
    - PBS Facilitator training
  - Quality of life measurement tools

FEW

SOME

ALL PEOPLE
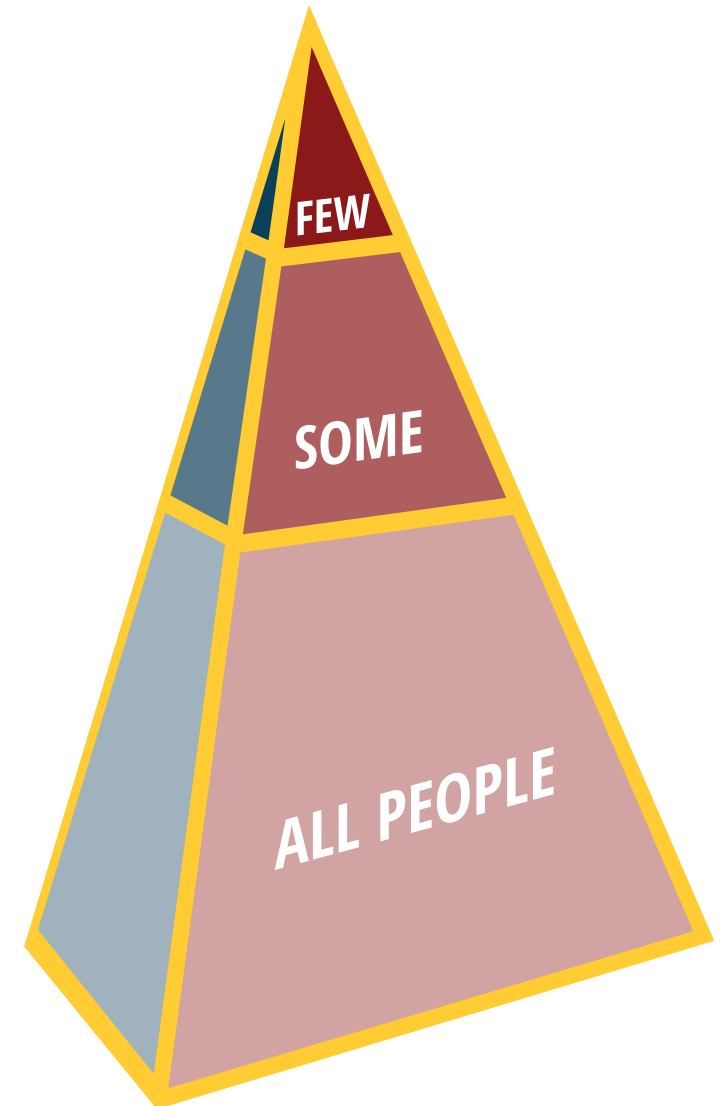
Establishing Measurement Systems for PBS

Summarized Data for Regions

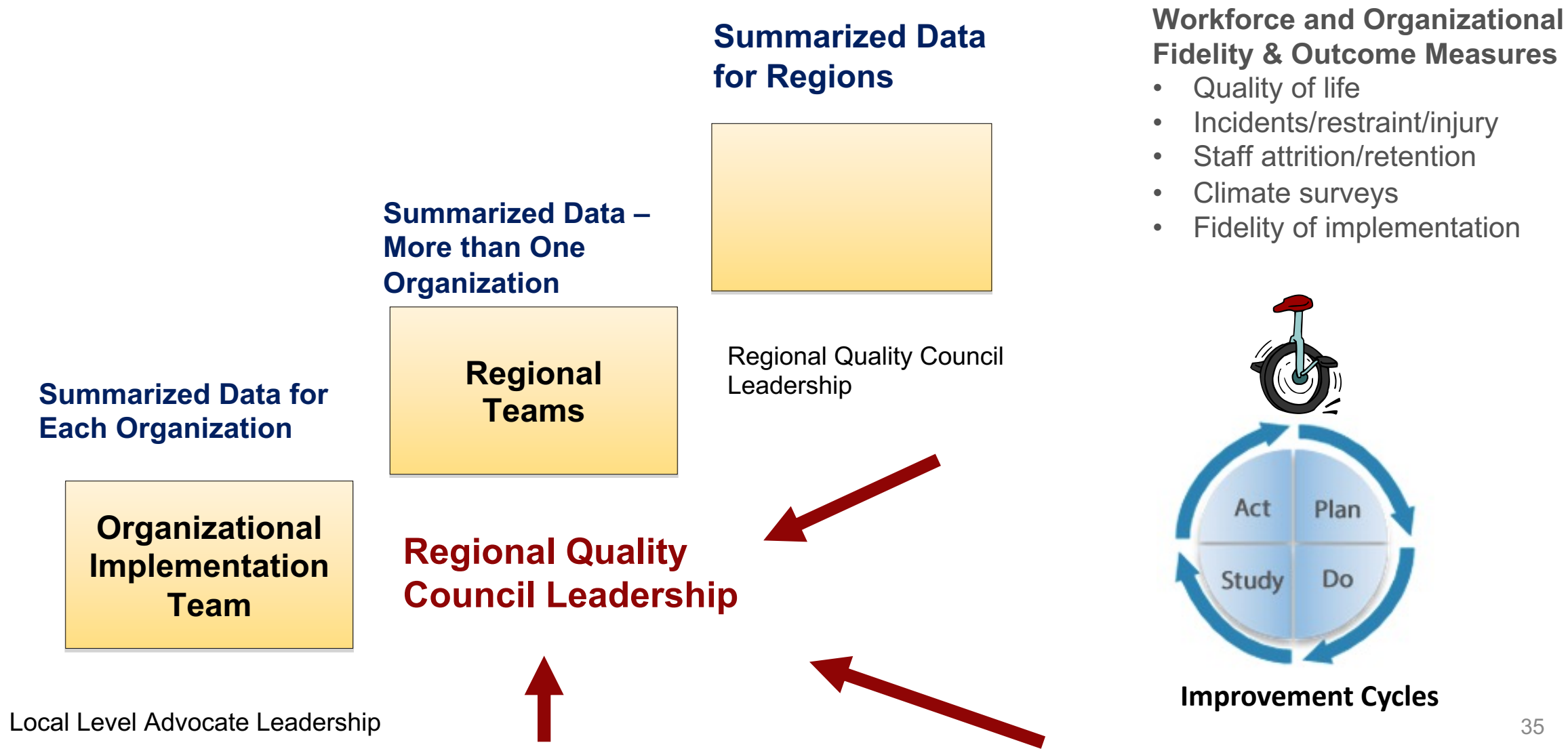**Summarized Data – More than One Organization**

Workforce and Organizational Fidelity & Outcome Measures
- Quality of life
- Incidents/restraint/injury
- Staff attrition/retention
- Climate surveys
- Fidelity of implementation

Regional Quality Council Leadership

Summarized Data for Each Organization

| **Regional Teams** |

| **Organizational Implementation Team** |

Regional Quality Council Leadership

Local Level Advocate Leadership
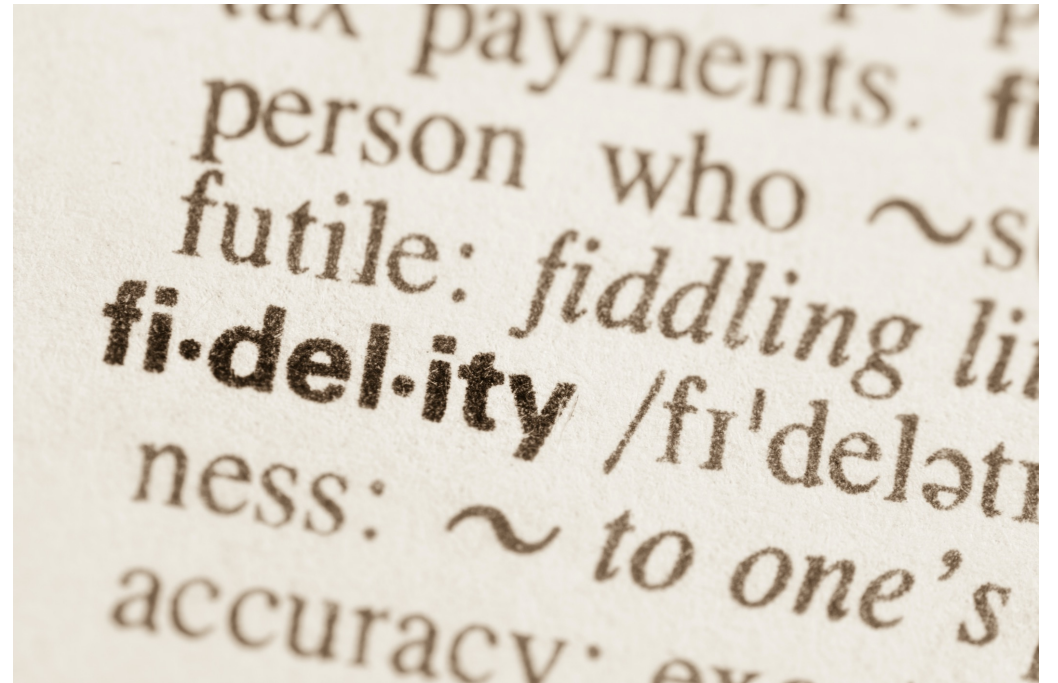

Improvement Cycles

Assessing Progress in Organizations
Tiered Onsite Evaluation Tool (TOET)

Key Characteristics

- 2-4 Hours Onsite Visit to Organization
- Outside Evaluation of Implementation
- Review of Documentation
- Interviews
- Observations

Scoring the TOET

- Implementation points
  - Achieved = 2
  - In progress = 1
  - Not Started = 0
- Criterion for scoring provided for each item
- Percentage of Items Implemented
  - Overall Total
    - ✓ Number of items scored as "Achieved" divided by Total # of items
  - Subscale Scores
    - ✓ Number of items in each subscale area scored as "Achieved" divided by the number of items in that subscale area

Co-Creation of Section of the TOET

- Work with regional team and organizations

- Regional Council members will develop and assist in piloting quality of life assessment

- 2 provider organizations implementing over 3+ years will participate

- Help to establish and finalize evaluation

Breaking Down Fragmentation Across Fields is a Challenge in the United States

- Use Systems of Care to improve service coordination

- Integrate interventions in behavioral health with PBS plans

- Dual diagnosis including mental illness and learning disabilities
  - Adapt behavioral health practices for each person supported
  - Prevent self-injury and suicide before formal diagnoses
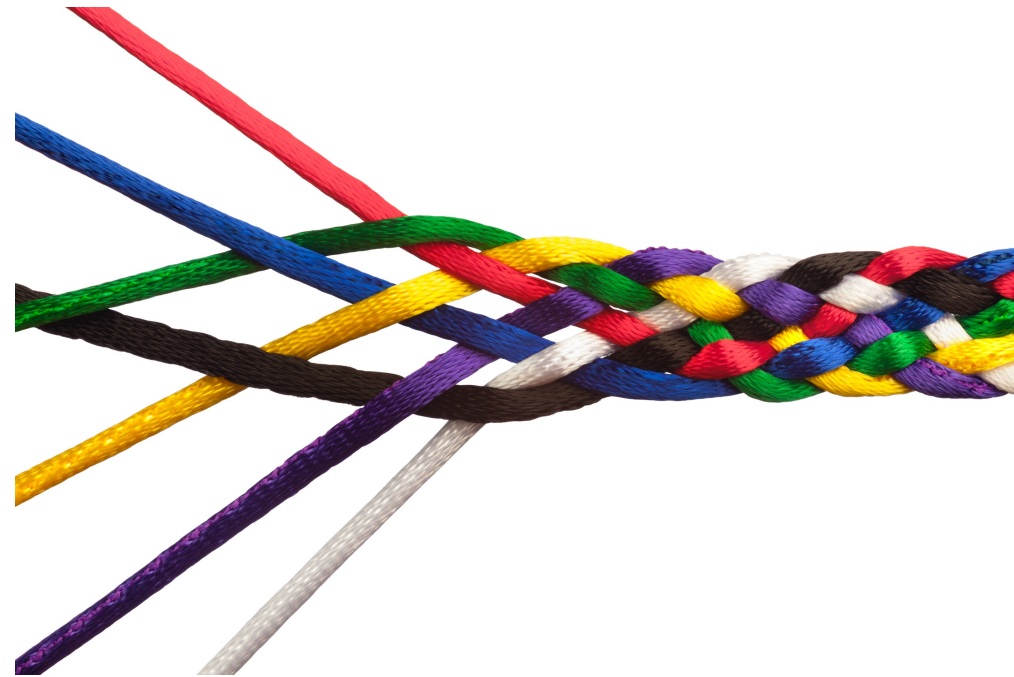
Self-Injurious Behavior (SIB) Workgroup

- Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- Psychology and Educational Psychology
- Pediatrics, and Computer Science and Engineering
- the Autism and Neurodevelopment Clinic
- the Fragile X Clinic
- Institute on Community Integration
- College of Computer Science and Engineering

Important Facts About Suicide, Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI), & Self-Injury

- [Suicide leading cause of death](#) (CDC 2020):
  - 2nd among ages of 10-14 & 25-34
  - 3rd for ages 15-24
  - 4th for ages 35 and 44
- NSSI occurs in approximately 5.5% (adults) and 17.2% (children- Swannel et al., 2014)
- SIB is estimated to be present in 5% to 15% of the IDD population
- Autistic people are 50-60% more likely to engage in self-injury (Kriby et al., 2019; Hirvikoski et al., 2016)
- Many interventions in NSSI are adapted from adult interventions (Harris et al., 2022)
- The divide between mental health and disability systems can interfere with services

National Trends

- Dramatic rise in psychiatric hospitalizations for children and adolescents in past 2 decades

- Severe shortages in mental health providers at all levels, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic

- Even before COVID-19, the opioid epidemic significantly worsened the picture by taking away many children's caregivers

- COVID-related strains on families– poverty, etc.
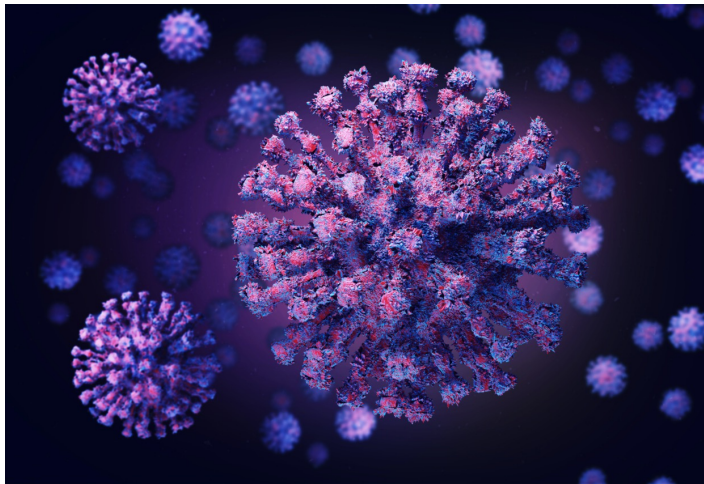
Pain Points

- Unable to access necessary services in the community due to...
    - Staff shortages,
    - Racial and socioeconomic disparities, or
    - Other systems failures
- Problems escalate to crisis level and children end up in the emergency room in hospital
- Emergency rooms are typically not equipped to provide mental health crisis intervention, only assessment and triage
- Not enough hospital beds
    - Children board in emergency department for days and sometimes weeks
    - Situation is magnified during COVID-19 surges

A Unified Approach for Self-Injury

Rationale: Interdisciplinary approach that integrates research will provide new insights into:

- Self-injury and disabilities
- Nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI)

Workgroup First Steps: Implement interventions exploring SIB:

- Meta analyses and reviews
- Qualitative research

Addressing the Challenge

Statewide planning

Regional collaboration and capacity building

Use implementation science to embed evidence-based practices

Focus on establishing a continuum of increasingly intense interventions using a tiered approach

Thank you for your time!

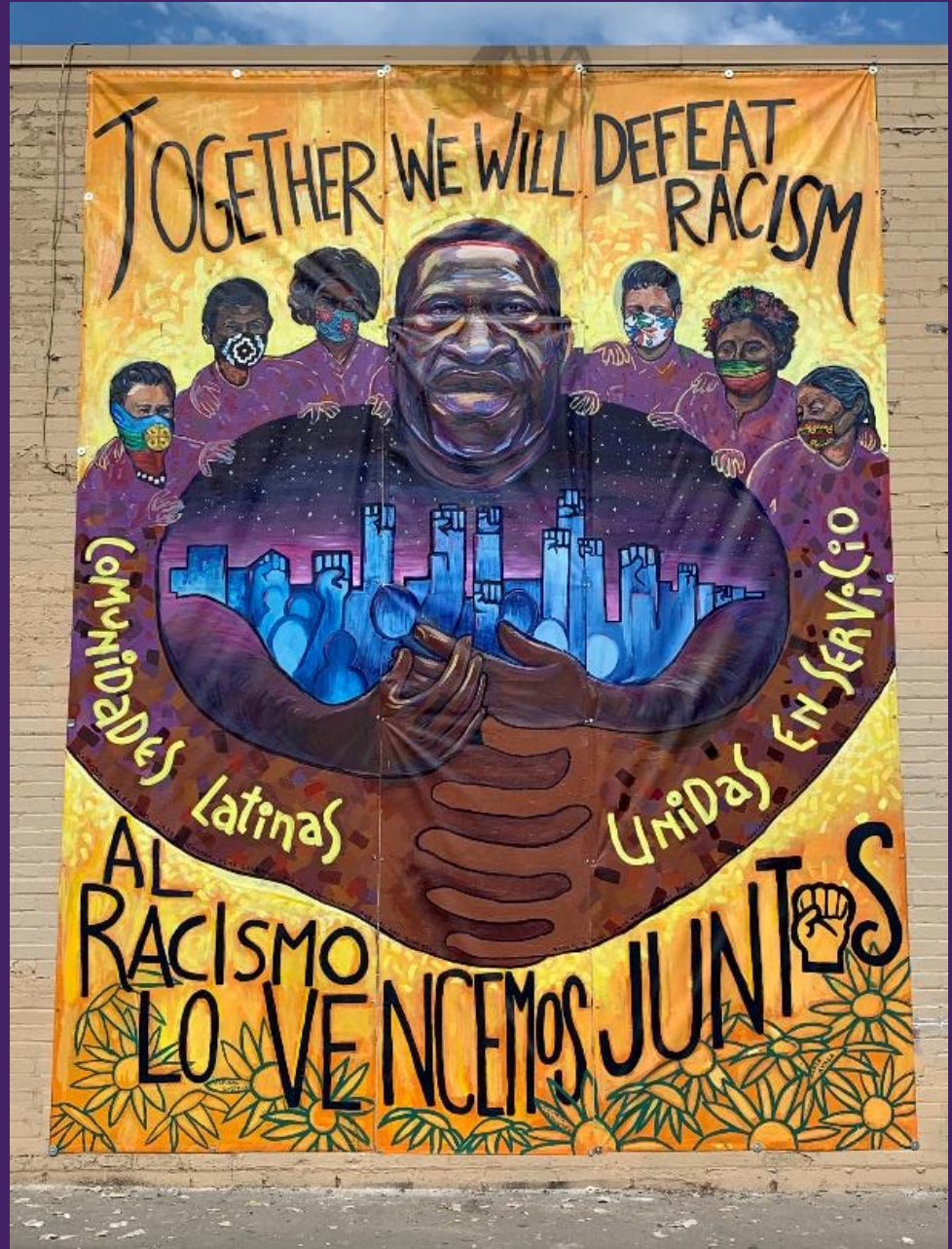**Contact Information**

Rachel Freeman

Email: freem039@umn.edu

APBS Conference in Minneapolis, 2026

Quality of Life Links

- [Quality of Life Tools for Caregivers](#)

- [My Best Life: A Tool to Tell Others How You Feel](#)

- [Family Quality of Life Survey](#)

- [Quality of Life Resources from Home and Community PBS Network](#)

- [World Health Organization Quality of Life Assessment](#)

Resources

Home and Community Based Modules

MNPSP.ORG Universal Social Skills

Implementation Resources

Learn More About Person-Centered Strategies

MNPSP.ORG Resources Online

Positive Social Strategies

Examples From Page…

- Positive Social Strategies Self-Assessment
- 8 Dimensions of Wellness
- The Power of Positive Thinking
- Why Mindfulness is a Superpower

Friends: Connecting People with Disabilities and Community Members

MNPSP.ORG
- Training Materials
- Universal Social Skills

http://rtc.umn.edu/docs/Friends_Connecting_people_with_disabilities_and_community_members.pdf

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to Discover®

Crookston Duluth Morris Rochester Twin Cities