

The CNS Program

The CNS (Center for Neuro-developmental Supports) Programs were developed first at the elementary level and have since been implemented at middle and high school. Nationally, children identified with neurointegrative disorders now comprise the second largest group of new referrals for special education evaluations. The CNS Program looks very different at each level but exists to provide support for children with executive functioning difficulties specifically Asperger's and high functioning autism. The students in the CNS Program must have significant CNS needs, such as Asperger's, higher functioning Autism spectrum, exhibit clearly impaired pragmatic language and social skills, have cognitive and social rigidity, low frustration tolerance, and impaired executive functioning skills (planning and organizational skills). The typical profile of a CNS student depicts a child with average to superior cognitive ability and significantly at risk for regression in overall functioning. The students are cognitively organized to focus on detail and often have difficulty understanding social relationships. The students may withdraw to escape the sensory overload of a typical school classroom, or they may "meltdown" and cause disruptions to learning for themselves and others.

Students are typically mainstreamed with support for as much of the school day as possible. This unique program provides students identified with neurointegrative disabilities programming designed to provide the structure, instruction in social and language pragmatics, and the access to grade-level academics required for educational progress.

Elementary CNS Program

The elementary CNS Program is located at Lyseth. This is a district wide program, which services students from Kindergarten to 5th grade. At the elementary level students in the CNS program work closely with a team consisting of a special educator, occupational therapist, social worker, speech and language therapist, and several educational technicians. Based on their needs and their IEP, each student receives individualized programming. Examples of this programming are sensory breaks built into their day, additional adult support in the classroom, social skills lessons, resource room support, speech and language services, and occupational services.

Secondary CNS Program

The district-wide high school program is located at Portland High school and is staffed with a teacher and a variable number of ed techs depending on the needs to the students. The students attend regular classes whenever possible and receive support in the regular setting from ed techs. Social skills groups and individualized services are also provided in the CNS classroom. Freshman typically spend most of the time in the CNS classroom and transition to regular settings when appropriate.

CNS Entry Requirements

Students are enrolled through a process; the IEP Team meeting can generate referrals but the process must be followed to ensure appropriate programming and staffing.

1. Diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum
 - a. High Functioning Autism
 - b. Aspergers
 - c. PDD/NOS
 - d. Executive functioning difficulties (significant)
2. Need additional support either in or out of the classroom more than 50% of their day.
3. Have one or more of the following behaviors:
 - a. meltdowns
 - b. peer interaction difficulties
 - c. sensory issues
 - d. anxiety
 - e. Executive functioning difficulties
4. When to begin CNS?
 - a. Incoming kindergarten students – are they a match for above according to their IFSP?
 - b. Students already enrolled in Portland Public Schools – need to go through the referral process.
 - c. Students moving into the district – see their IEPs, are they a match for the above.
5. Exiting the program – return to home school.
 - a. show a significantly decreased level of support over time (30% or less)
 - b. significantly decreased amount of the above behaviors.

The referral process is the following:

1. Inquiry from learning strategist of student's school to the assistant director of student support services via the consultation process.
2. Complete application process.
3. Send application to CNS program.
4. The CNS team will discuss information they have received – assign a case manager.

5. Set up observations for two CNS staff members to observe in the student's home school.
6. Set up observations for other school staff to visit CNS program.
7. Parent visitation may be arranged.
8. CNS team will follow up with discussion.
9. Arrange to have IEP Team meeting set up.
10. Student is accepted into CNS program or their home school creates a different appropriate plan.

If student is accepted into the CNS program, create a transition plan and assign homeroom teacher and appropriate ed. tech support.

CNS Referral Form

Student _____ Parent(s) _____

School _____ Grade _____

Diagnosis _____

Current therapy/interventions _____

Reason for referral _____

Parent's concerns _____

Recent Evaluation(s)/by whom _____

Recent Neurological Evaluation(s)/by whom _____

Recent Physical(s)/by whom _____

Current medication(s), reason for medication, and dosages _____

Outside agencies working with the student/on what behaviors/contact person

The CNS Team would like a signed release to talk with these outside agencies.
