IEP, SENSORY REGULATION, & INCLUSIVE SUPPORT EVALUATION

Trauma-Informed School Assessment: Special Education

KLASEY CONSULTING

At the Intersection of Disability, Neurodiversity, & Trauma: Students with disabilities experience disproportionately higher rates of adverse childhood experiences, medical trauma, bullying, and exclusionary discipline—yet trauma responses are frequently misattributed solely to disability labels or "noncompliance" **(NCTSN, 2016)**. A trauma-informed special education program honors communication access, sensory regulation, least restrictive environments, and non-coercive behavioral support **(U.S. Dept. of Education, 2022)**.

Program / Campus / District: _____	**Date Completed:** _____
Multidisciplinary Team / Roles: _____	**Settings Assessed (Inclusion / Self-Contained):** _____

Rating Scale (0–3): Rate each indicator across special education classrooms, related services, and IEP team practices.

0 = Not Yet in Place: Practice is absent or inconsistent across settings.

1 = Emerging: Piloted by individual educators or early planning stages.

2 = Established: Practiced consistently across most classrooms and IEP teams.

3 = Embedded & Sustained: Program-wide standard with coaching and fidelity review.

Part 1: Special Education Trauma-Informed Practice Domains

Evaluate your special education program across four specialized domains (4 indicators per domain; 12 points maximum per domain) **(SAMHSA, 2014)**:

Special Education Program Indicator	0	1	2	3
Domain 1: Sensory-Safe Environments & Multimodal Communication Access				
1.1 Classrooms actively accommodate sensory processing needs (lighting, noise reduction, movement breaks, weighted/tactile supports) to prevent nervous system overload.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.2 Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), visual supports, and choice boards remain accessible at all times—especially during distress or escalation **(NCTSN, 2016)**.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.3 Visual schedules, social stories, and transition previews prepare students ahead of fire drills, assemblies, substitute staff, or schedule shifts.	☐	☐	☐	☐
1.4 Personal care, mobility, and medical routines honor student privacy, bodily autonomy, consent, and clear verbal/visual narration before touch.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Special Education Program Indicator	0	1	2	3
Domain 1 Subtotal: ____ / 12				
Domain 2: Trauma-Informed FBA/BIPs & Elimination of Restraint/Seclusion				
2.1 Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBAs) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs) examine trauma history, sensory triggers, and nervous system dysregulation rather than treating behavior solely as willful noncompliance.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.2 Staff prioritize non-coercive de-escalation and sensory co-regulation, actively eliminating seclusion and restricting physical restraint strictly to imminent physical danger **(U.S. Dept. of Education, 2022)**.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.3 Informal exclusions—such as shortened school days, frequent caregiver pick-up calls, or hallway isolation—are tracked and replaced with in-school regulation supports.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.4 Trauma-specific counseling, occupational therapy, and speech/language services are integrated directly into IEP goals and classroom routines when needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 2 Subtotal: ____ / 12				
Domain 3: Inclusive Belonging & Strengths-Based IEP Family Partnership				
3.1 Students with IEPs participate meaningfully in general education classrooms, clubs, and peer communities with authentic belonging rather than isolated placement.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.2 IEP and 504 meetings open with student strengths and interests, use jargon-free language, and treat parents/caregivers as equal decision-making partners.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.3 Students are supported to participate in their own IEP meetings and self-advocacy planning using preferred communication modes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.4 Teams actively prevent and address disability-based bullying, peer victimization, and vulnerability to exploitation **(NCTSN, 2016)**.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 3 Subtotal: ____ / 12				
Domain 4: Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Equity, & Staff Sustainability				
4.1 Special educators, paraprofessionals, general educators, and related service providers share aligned trauma-informed regulation plans across all settings.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.2 Paraprofessionals and bus/aide staff are included as full team members in IEP briefings, sensory strategies, and paid trauma-informed training.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.3 Leadership audits special education referrals, Emotional Disturbance classifications, and restraint/suspension data to eliminate racial and linguistic disproportionality.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.4 Structured debriefing, crisis recovery time, and secondary traumatic stress supports protect special education teachers and paraprofessionals from burnout **(SAMHSA, 2014)**.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Domain 4 Subtotal: ____ / 12				

Part 2: Scoring Guide & Program Action Plan

Total Score (Max 48)	Readiness Stage	Recommended Special Education Implementation Focus
0 – 15 Points *(Total: _____ / 48)*	**Trauma-Aware**	Train teachers and paraprofessionals on the overlap of trauma and disability, guarantee continuous AAC/sensory access, and audit informal exclusions.
16 – 32 Points	**Trauma-Sensitive**	Revise FBA/BIP templates to include sensory/trauma triggers, replace coercive responses with co-regulation, and restructure IEP meetings around strengths.
33 – 48 Points	**Trauma-Informed**	Sustain practices through cross-disciplinary coaching, disproportionality and restraint-reduction audits, and institutionalized staff debriefing protocols.

Priority Goal Area	Action Step, Lead Person(s), & Target Timeline
1. Sensory & Communication Safety	
2. Trauma-Informed FBA/BIP & Non-Coercion	
3. Paraprofessional Training & Team Wellness	

Sources & Evidence-Based References

1. National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), Adapted Trauma-Informed Care Workgroup. (2016). *The Road to Recovery: Supporting Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Who Have Experienced Trauma*. National Center for Child Traumatic Stress / SAMHSA.
2. U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights & Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. (2022). *Supporting Students with Disabilities and Avoiding the Discriminatory Use of Student Discipline under Section 504 and IDEA*. U.S. Department of Education.
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
4. National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), Schools Committee. (2017). *Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework*. National Center for Child Traumatic Stress / SAMHSA.

Partner with Klasey Consulting

Interested in trauma-informed special education trainings, paraprofessional workshops, or IEP/BIP protocol consultation? Contact us at **info@klaseyconsulting.com** to learn more about our trainings and consultation services.