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Hi, I wanted to welcome everyone to this webinar on Selecting Evidence-Based Tools and Programs for Implementing Response-to-Intervention. My name is Allison Gandhi, and I am the Coordinator for the National Center on Response to Intervention's Knowledge Identification activities. As part of that role, I manage our three Technical Review Committees, and their charge is to review and rate the evidence on existing screening tools, progress monitoring tools, and instructional programs that can be used within an RTI framework. Today I'll be talking about what those committees do, the tools charts on our website that publish the committees' ratings, and how to use those tools charts to select an evidence-based tool or program that is right for you.

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I want to start by just offering our Center's definition of RTI:

> Response to Intervention or RTI integrates assessment and intervention within a school-wide, multi-level prevention system to maximize student achievement and reduce behavior problems.

Some important points to keep in mind are that RTI is a framework intended to improve outcomes for ALL students, and also its preventative, in other words, it is designed to provide immediate support to students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes.

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The National Center on Response to Intervention has identified a number of Essential Components of RTI and on this slide I've listed three of those which are relevant to what we will be discussing today.

The first is universal screening. The purpose of screening is to identify those students who may be at risk of poor learning outcomes. When we say universal, we mean that schools should be conducting a screening of ALL students in their school, at the beginning of each year and also preferably 1 or 2 more times throughout the year. Screening instruments should be brief, valid and reliable. The idea is not to diagnose students but instead just to identify those students who might need more support and more assessment to find out some more information.

Next is progress monitoring. Progress monitoring involves the repeated and frequent measurement of academic performance to help inform instruction. And progress monitoring should be conducted ideally on every student who is identified at risk and the purpose is to estimate rates of improvement over time, so that we can identify students who appear not to be responding to instruction at the same rate as their peers. These data can then help educators make decisions about any changes in instruction that might need to be made.

The third essential component is tiered instruction, or what we often refer to as a multi-level prevention system. And again, the idea behind RTI is that instruction should target ALL students, but students may need instruction at different levels of intensity. We often refer to three different levels of prevention. A primary level of prevention would be instruction that meets the needs of approximately 80% of the students in a school and this is really the high-quality core instruction that is going on and differentiated to meet varied needs in the classroom. Next would be a secondary level of prevention, and that refers to additional or alternative intervention programs that are conducted in small groups or individually, and that are designed to improve academic outcome for the students not progressing in the general education curriculum. Finally, at the third level or tertiary level of prevention, instruction is highly individualized to meet the most intense learning needs of those students who are not responding to instruction at the primary or the secondary levels.

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So a common theme running through these three essential components that we just discussed is that the tools you use should be first evidence-based and also second relevant to your needs. So first of all when we talk about evidence-based, what that means is that these tools' ability to do effectively what they are intended to do should have been tested and validated through rigorous research. As an example, for a screening tool, you want to be using a tool that has been demonstrated through research to provide an accurate indication of whether or not a student is at risk of academic difficulty. For progress monitoring, you want to be using a tool that has been demonstrated through research to provide an accurate assessment of the extent to which a student is responding to instruction at an appropriate rate of progress. Finally, for an instructional program, you want to choose a program that has demonstrated, again through research, improved academic performance.

So while evidence of validity and effectiveness is important, it is also important that the tools are relevant, and by that we mean that they address and meet the very specific needs that you have in your school or district. For example, there may be a tool that's been validated in terms of its ability to screen for difficulty in reading comprehension let's say in the upper elementary grades, but you may be more interested in screening for difficulty in something in the lower elementary grades, so may be phonemic awareness. You need to think about your needs and priorities in addition to the evidence base when selecting a tool.

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As I've mentioned, that National Center on RTI coordinates the work of three Technical Review Committees, or TRCs, who review the evidence on existing tools and programs, and then we publish their ratings of this evidence on our tools charts, which are on our website. We recommend that you look at these tools charts when thinking about selecting a tool or program, but we also recommend that you spend some time first thinking deeply about what your needs and priorities are before actually selecting a tool. We actually recommend a 4 –step process for selecting a screening tool, progress monitoring tool, or instructional program. And those four steps are outlined here on this slide.

First, we recommend that you establish a team for making this decision. It is important that the decision to use any particular tool or program has buy-in from key constituents in your school or district, and also that you are bringing multiple types of expertise to the table to discuss your options. For example, you will need probably the school-based person or people who will actually be using the tools on your team, and you will also need someone with technical knowledge regarding how to interpret the evidence base behind each tool.

Next we recommend that you work with your team to conduct a needs assessment to determine what kind of tool you need. Third, we recommend you identify and learn about the tools that are available, many of which are on our tools charts, and we will talk about those later. Finally, you are ready to select tools that meet your needs and priorities.

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I'm going to spend some time now talking about the second step in the process, which is Understanding Your Needs and Priorities. It's important to keep in mind that there may be things that you need or want to focus on but you're limited due to resources, and you need to also think about your priorities as well as your need.

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In going through this exercise we recommend that you think about your purpose, and part of that developing an understanding of how you will use your results: what are the results that you hope to achieve? We also recommend that you establish your scope: think about your target population, the time you have available, what kind of skills you will need to implement the tools and so on. And finally, we recommend that you think about logistics, and a big part of that is resources: what resources will you need and what funds will you have available?

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So in terms of the purpose, ask yourself first, what is your purpose for implementing screening, progress monitoring and instruction? Also, you will want to make sure, as we talked about before, that you have achieved consensus among key stakeholders in your school or district about what that purpose is.

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Next, for understanding your results, one helpful exercise is to think about your purpose in terms of specific research questions. In other words, what do you want to know by using one of these tools? An example of a research question might be, for a screening tool, how many of my students and which students are at-risk for difficulty in reading? For progress monitoring, are my students improving their reading performance at an acceptable rate? And for instruction, are the students who are receiving intervention in reading improving in their reading performance?

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You will also want to think about how you envision using your results. How will you use results from screening and progress monitoring assessments to inform decisions? Who will have access to the results and how will the results be reported? Thinking about these types of things will help you make some specific decisions and plans around where to target your funds, resources and training efforts.

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The next part of the exercise is to establish your scope and you should start by thinking about your initiative and situating it within a large context. For example, if you are a school, you want to find out more first about what is going on at the district or state level in terms of selecting evidence-based tools for RTI, and make sure your efforts are aligned as much as possible with those efforts.

Additionally, there may be other initiatives going on in your school or district that are related to instruction and assessment that could be aligned with your efforts to choose a tool for RTI and you should think about ways that you can work, works together with those other initiatives.

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Another component of scope is the target population. What schools will be involved, and what grade levels? Also are there specific sub-populations you are interested in, for example will you be targeting all students, or are you interested specifically in addressing issues related to a sub-group, for example, English language learners?

Also, even if you are targeting all students, you definitely want to get a good handle on the demographics and characteristics of this population. For example, you may have a population that has high percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged, or a high percentage with a certain type of disability. And this type of information will help you when you review the evidence on specific tools and programs- because ideally you'll want to be selecting a tool that has been validated on a population of students with similar characteristics as the population that you're interested in serving.

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You also will need to think about issues related to timing. Think about when during the school year you plan to conduct your screening, when and how often will you progress monitor your students, and when do you plan to implement interventions? You also want to decide whether you want to administer assessment or implement interventions individually or in a group? Again, all of these issues will be important to understand when you start reviewing available tools, because they do vary in terms of how much time is required and whether they can be delivered to individuals or in groups.

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In terms of skills and outcomes, you want to think about broad skill areas you are interested in addressing as well as specific outcome measure within those. For example, are you interested in academic skills or behavioral skills or both? What specific outcomes do you want to improve? Is it phonemic awareness? Is it reading comprehension? Math computation? Or is it some combination of a number of these outcomes?

And then also, when thinking about outcomes, think about your current curriculum, and how your outcomes align with that curriculum. And although all of these outcomes are obviously important, again you will need to prioritize. So you should look at your recent performance data to see which areas seem to be having the most challenges right now and you may want to focus on those outcome areas first.

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Finally, for scope, you should think about the different roles you will need staff to play in order to implement the tool or program. For example, you are probably going to need people to conduct the assessments, score the assessments, and to interpret results. You'll also need people to implement instructional interventions. And again just, getting a good understanding of what kind of staff roles you will need helps then to start thinking about some of your logistical needs which, actually, leads us into the next section.

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This is the final step in thinking through your needs and priorities. You want to think about the logistical issues that are involved in implementing RTI-related tools and programs. You are going to need materials and space, time, funds, and training, all of which require resources. So the first step in thinking through all of this should be to identify any other potential initiatives with which you might be able to align to share resources. For example, your district may already have staff available who are trained in administering assessments, so maybe these staff can be used to implement a new screening tool for RTI.

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You should be thinking about what would be required to administer any screening or progress monitoring assessments or instructional interventions. For example, where will the test or intervention delivery take place? What is required- in other words, do you need a computer, paper and pencil, or any specific books or materials? Will you need a tool or program that includes accommodations for special needs or languages?

For the analysis and reporting, think about whether or not you have available statistical software that may be necessary to conduct analysis, reporting and monitoring? Or if you don't have it available, do you have the funds available to purchase this?

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Time is also an important factor to consider. You should think about your current school schedule for students and staff and how you might build in time to implement any new tools or intervention. Think about how much time could you make available for students to participate? How much time could be available for the administration of a test as well for scoring and reporting? And just in general how much staff time will you need?

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You will also need to think about your needs for training and technical assistance. So take a look at your current staff and consider their level of expertise and experience in administering and delivering the types of tools and programs that you're interested in. Will you need any training at all? And if so, how much training will you need and who will provide it?

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And of course, you need to have a conversation about money. You need to have a good understanding of how much money you have available to spend- both for purchasing the tools themselves as well as any necessary training or supplementary materials that would go along with it.

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Once you've established a shared understanding within your team of what your needs and priorities are, you're ready to start investigating what tools are available. There are probably hundreds of different tools and programs available for implementing screening, progress monitoring, and instruction within an RTI context, and so it can be very overwhelming to try to navigate through all of the information out there about these tools and select one that is most appropriate for you.

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At the National Center on Response to Intervention, we have produced three tools charts which list and provide ratings for commercially available screening tools, progress monitoring tools, and instructional programs. All of the tools that you will see on these charts are here because their developers voluntarily submitted them to us for review in response to one of our "calls for submissions" that we issue every year. And I wanted to make sure to point that out because what that means is that the tools charts are by no means an exhaustive list of every tool that is out there. So there may be a tool or program that you have either heard of, or maybe you are considering using it, or maybe you are currently using it, and you don't see it on our chart. That doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with that program, it simply means that that program hasn't gone through out Center's review process. It is important to keep in mind, these charts are intended to be a source of information that can help you select tools, but also help you think about what information you need to know in order to select an appropriate too. If there is a tool you're considering but it isn't on the chart and you're concerned about their technical quality, we recommend that you actually call the developer directly and ask them to submit their product to our review process.

On this slide we've included links to each of these tools charts, and we encourage you to take advantage of these links and take a look at the charts yourself, since we don't have time during this webinar to go through them in very much detail. But I will take a moment to show briefly one of the charts which is the screening chart to give you a sense of what it looks like.

LINK TO SCREENING CHART

So here on the screening chart what you can see is that each row on the chart represents one of the tools that was reviewed, and the columns represent the different standards against which the tools were rated by the TRC. The bubbles and text within each cell are the ratings. A few features I wanted to point out. If you click on the name of any of these tools you will come to what is called an implementation table, and that gives you some basic information about the tools, things like what does it cost, what kind of equipment will you need, and where can you go for training and technical support. Also, if you click on any of the column headers, so for example if you clicked on the header for classification accuracy, you will get an explanation of what that technical standard means and the scoring rubric that was used to rate the tool on that standard. And then finally if you click on any of the actual ratings, you will see the actual data that were submitted by the developer.

I, also, wanted to point out that on the actual tools chart page there is a box called supplemental resources and here we included a few resources that can help you use the chart. So, we have, for example, a video tour that will walk you through in some detail how to navigate the chart. And we also have a users' guide which will give you some more tips on how to use this chart. So again, we encourage you to take some time to go through all of these resources when you're using this chart to select a tool.

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As I mentioned before, the reviews are conducted by members of one of our three Technical Review Committee or TRCs. All of the members of the TRC are national experts in their respective areas. And also, they all have very specialized expertise in measurement and research methodology, so they have the skills and qualifications necessary to evaluate the evidence of effectiveness that developers are submitting for their tools and programs. If you want to find out more about the members of the TRCs, who they are and what their qualifications are, you can visit the TRC membership page on our website and there is a link included here on this slide for that page.

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Each TRC goes through a very systematic process to conduct the reviews. The process consists of 6 steps. The first step is submission. What we do is we issue a call for tools- this is something that is posted on our website and marketed widely to vendors around the country, and we give interested vendors about 6 weeks to respond. They are required to fill out a detailed evaluation protocol when they respond, and that protocol which provides all of the data that the TRC will need to evaluate the adequacy of the tool or program. Next we have what is called the first-level review. During this stage we assign each tool that we received to two members of the TRC and each of those members will review and rates the tool independently. They are required to enter their ratings and any comments they have into an online review system, and at this point they do not know who their co-reviewer is. However, once both reviewers for a particular tool have finished their first level reviews, we move into the second level review, and that is when the co-reviewers get a chance to review each others' ratings and comments, and they're then required to come to consensus and enter a joint rating and comment. The next step, which is step 2, is the interim communication with the vendors. At this point we send all vendors a letter letting them know what their ratings and comments were, and they are given a chance to submit any kind of additional evidence or clarification in response. They have two weeks to provide a response, and once we get those we pass on to the reviewers who then complete their third and final review. For this final review, each reviewing team needs to again come to consensus and enter a joint final rating and comment, and then what happens is the entire TRC will convene for a debrief meeting in which we review the results for all submissions and discuss and resolve any issues that may have come up during the review. Once the debrief is completed, that is considered to be the official sign-off on the results from the full TRC, and then we go ahead and publish the results on our website.

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On the next few slides, I've included some information about what the tools charts tell you and how tools are rated, but again we encourage you to go back and look at the tools charts on your own after the webinar just to learn more. So first, as we have mentioned, each tools chart offers ratings of the technical rigor of the tools or programs. We use a bubble system for the ratings. In other words, a full bubble means that the tool received a rating of "Convincing Evidence" for a particular standard, a half bubble means that the tool received a rating of "Partially Convincing Evidence," an empty bubble means "Unconvincing Evidence," and a dash means no evidence was submitted for that standard.

Second, in addition to the ratings, the charts provide information on the implementation requirements for the tool or program. This information can be found by clicking on the name of any of the tools on the chart, as we showed you a few slides ago when looking at the screening chart.

Third, the charts offer detailed date submitted by the vendor, and these can be found by clicking on any of the rating bubbles. This is important because you may be want to dig a little bit deeper than just the rating. Many of the tools on the chart have the same ratings, and you may want to find out how some tools with the same ratings differ from one another, and you may also want some more specific information about why a tool received the rating that it did. And looking at the actual data can help you with that.

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In terms of the technical standards, each TRC has developed its own set of standards that are specific to the type of tool being evaluated. So for screening, the TRC established 5 technical standards: classification accuracy, generalizability, reliability, validity and disaggregated data. I won't go into detail about what each of these means right now because it involves considerable technical explanation, but I do encourage you to go to the tools charts, click on the column headers where you can get a more detailed definition, and also to look at some of our additional resources on screening that can be found in the supplemental resources box on the tools chart page. Ideally you really should have someone on your team who is familiar with these technical concepts and can help interpret the data on the tools charts.

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For progress monitoring, our TRC rates tools on two sets of standards: one for tools that are considered general outcome measures and one set for tools that are considered mastery measures. General outcome measures are tools that measure competence in one specific skill. For example, letter naming fluency or addition. Mastery measures, on the other hand, are broader progress monitoring systems, that usually include a hierarchy of skills that students are expected to master in sequence in order to achieve competency in a broader skill area. Again, I won't go into detail into each of the standards but we encourage you to look for more information on our website about these.

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Finally for instruction, our tools chart provides two types of information—first we provide ratings on the technical rigor of specific studies that have evaluated the efficacy of the interventions, and second, we have information on the effect sizes that were found in those studies. In terms of study quality, studies are rated against four dimensions- Participants, Design, Fidelity of Implementation and Measures. And for effect size, the TRC actually does not rate this information but rather calculates the effect size across all studies submitted, using a standard formula and then offers this information so that viewers of the chart can compare for themselves across studies for the outcome measures they are interested in.

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So now that you know what the tools charts are, and how to use them to identify available tools and programs, the next step is to actually start the process of selecting a tool.

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As I mentioned earlier, we have Users Guides for all three charts that are available to help guide you through this process of selecting a tool. The links to those guides can be found here on this slide. We encourage you to take a look at these after the Webinar.

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There are some important points to keep in mind when you look at the tools chart and start selecting a tool. First of all, these charts provide a lot of information but they will not tell you what tools are right for you; this is something that you need to do based on your own knowledge of your specific needs and priorities.

Second, as I mentioned earlier, these charts do not provide an exhaustive list of all the tools and programs that exist; so you should be aware that there are likely going to be many tools out there that you are familiar with that have not been reviewed.

Third, you should go through the chart and try to match your needs and priorities to the information about the tools listed, but be aware that it is very unlikely that any one tool is going to meet all of your needs. You need to think carefully about your priorities and you may need to find more information.

Which leads to the last point, and that is, if you need more information, please contact the vendor or developer of the tool. They have volunteered for this review process specifically because they want to be put into contact with consumers like you and they want to be available to answer questions and help provide you with a tool that meets your needs.

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We wanted to end with an example of how one state our Center has worked with, used the tools chart to choose a screening tool. That state is Louisiana. Our technical assistance staff worked with them to go through this process. First, they identified their questions and needs based on the resources that they had, their purpose, and their population. Next, they looked at the tools chart to see if any tools fit their needs and they were then able to narrow it down and selected tools that seemed to fit their needs. What they did next was critical, they brought the publishers of these tools in to meet with them and present additional information about the tools. The Louisiana team was then able to ask direct questions of the vendor based on their specific needs.

After seeing presentations on all of these tools, they were able to rate the tools for themselves and select the one that best fit their needs.

We encourage you to go through a similar process on selecting a tool, again emphasizing that only you and your team will know what is best for you. The tools charts really are here as a resource to help you by providing information that can help inform your decision.

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If you need more information we encourage you again to go to our website, look at the tools charts and supplementary materials. Also, you can send an email or call our 800 number at any time with specific questions and someone will respond.

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Finally we will be holding a live chat on Thursday Oct 21 from 2-3pm EST, where I will be available to answer questions about this presentation. Please check our website for information on how to connect to this chat. We won’t be opening the connection until about 15 minutes prior to the 2pm start time but anytime after then you will be able to join. We also encourage you to submit questions ahead of time through email so that we can be sure to get you an answer.

Thank you again for listening- we hope that this has been helpful and that if you have questions we hope that you will contact us and of course join the live chat on the 21st.

Thank you.