



Student FAQs

Edition 01



What is DBT in Schools?

DBT is short for “Dialectic Behavioral Therapy” – which is basically a skills-based approach to helping individuals manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and cope with stress by balancing acceptance and change. Cayuga County’s DBT in Schools program brings many of the skills from this approach into your classroom, where it can benefit you and all of your fellow students. More specifically, DBT in Schools is intended to provide you with practical skills to help you manage your emotions, tolerate stress, improve interpersonal relationships, and benefit from the practice of mindfulness.



Why is a school environment an appropriate setting for accessing students?

Schools are where students spend most of their time, making them the perfect place for teaching emotional resilience and coping skills. By integrating DBT into the school environment, we ensure early intervention, reduce mental health stigma, and provide consistent, accessible support for all students. When social-emotional learning is a part of everyday education, students are better equipped to manage stress, succeed academically, and build healthy relationships. Let’s make school a place where mental wellness is just as important as academic success!



Why is it needed today?

In today's world, youth face increasing stress, anxiety, and mental health challenges, making it essential to equip them with skills to manage emotions and build resilience.

DBT helps you navigate daily challenges – from managing conflicts with peers and handling test anxiety to effectively asking for what you need. It also provides critical skills for coping with overwhelming emotions, reducing self-harm behaviors, and managing suicidal thoughts in a supportive and constructive way.

By integrating DBT into schools, we empower you with the tools you need to handle both big and small challenges with confidence and emotional stability.



Will it be disruptive to my everyday education?

No! By teaching you DBT in School skills like combating impulsiveness and reducing unregulated behaviors, teachers will be better able to keep hold of your attention and focus on their classroom throughout the day as they teach English, History, etc.



What if I feel DBT in Schools “doesn’t apply to me?”

Please keep in mind that for students not currently struggling academically, socially or emotionally, these DBT skills serve as preventative measures, helping to ensure you are well-educated and well-prepared to handle emotions and stressors in the future.

Know, too, that DBT in Schools is not a therapy program, but is a curriculum used to teach certain helpful skills.



How will we know if it's working? In other words, how will program success be measured?

In schools that have successfully implemented DBT in Schools program, outcomes are typically measured through a combination of:

- Self-report questionnaires are where students complete surveys to assess their own perceptions of emotional regulation, ability to cope with stress and use of DBT in School skills.
- Behavioral observation scales occur when teachers use checklists to track specific behaviors related to DBT in School skills, such as appropriate responses to frustration, active listening during discussions or ability to self-calm.
- Teacher feedback where teachers can provide qualitative feedback on how students are applying DBT in Schools skills in the classroom, such as improvements in classroom behavior.



Does the universal approach to DBT in Schools help identify anyone who may require additional one-on-one attention?

Absolutely! If you or your parents have specific concerns, or you're at a point where you think general training in DBT in Schools skills may not be adequate, there will be a DBT in Schools' specialist/onsite therapist at school a couple of days each week.



How will it be implemented in my school and in my classroom?

Each school district who adopts the program (and it's optional) will have a DBT in Schools specialist/onsite therapist on site a couple of days a week to teach the teachers how to adapt the skills in their classrooms. Those same therapists will also be available for anyone who requires more intensive DBT engagement.



What are the goals for DBT in Schools as implemented in Cayuga County schools?

It's possible to work on a healthy lifestyle for mental wellness, just as programs have been introduced to promote your physical health. By incorporating mental health skills via DBT into your school's values, we will give you the knowledge of how to address a variety of challenges you may face in the future. Typical goals would include aiding you in how to better solve problems or how to effectively communicate with your peers and teachers.

Other goals would include helping you manage difficult emotional situations, cope with stress and make better decisions. Obviously, a number of these results would also apply outside of school, many within your family setting.



Watch for other DBT in Schools FAQs.

In the meantime, if you have questions about the advantages of DBT in Schools in YOUR classroom – please feel free to contact your DBT in Schools onsite specialist. Cayuga County Mental Health will also be sending out occasional updates through ParentSquare, social media, and our DBT in Schools website.