

# DBT Steps-A: Inter-agency Collaboration to Promote Positive Mental Health in Adolescents

**Presentation to:**

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Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Services



# Background

- Increasing concerns for young people exhibiting emotional and behavioural dysregulation but a small minority seek professional help
- “CAMHS Standard Operational Procedure”(2015): “seamless mental health services available in a continuum stretching from the community at large to primary care and specialist mental health services.”
- *Connecting for Life*, (DoH, 2015) recommends inter-agency collaboration to support mental health needs of adolescents.
- Local schools approached CAMHS and NEPS for support / ideas / consultation around deliberate self harm
- A Crisis = An opportunity for a **new way of working**

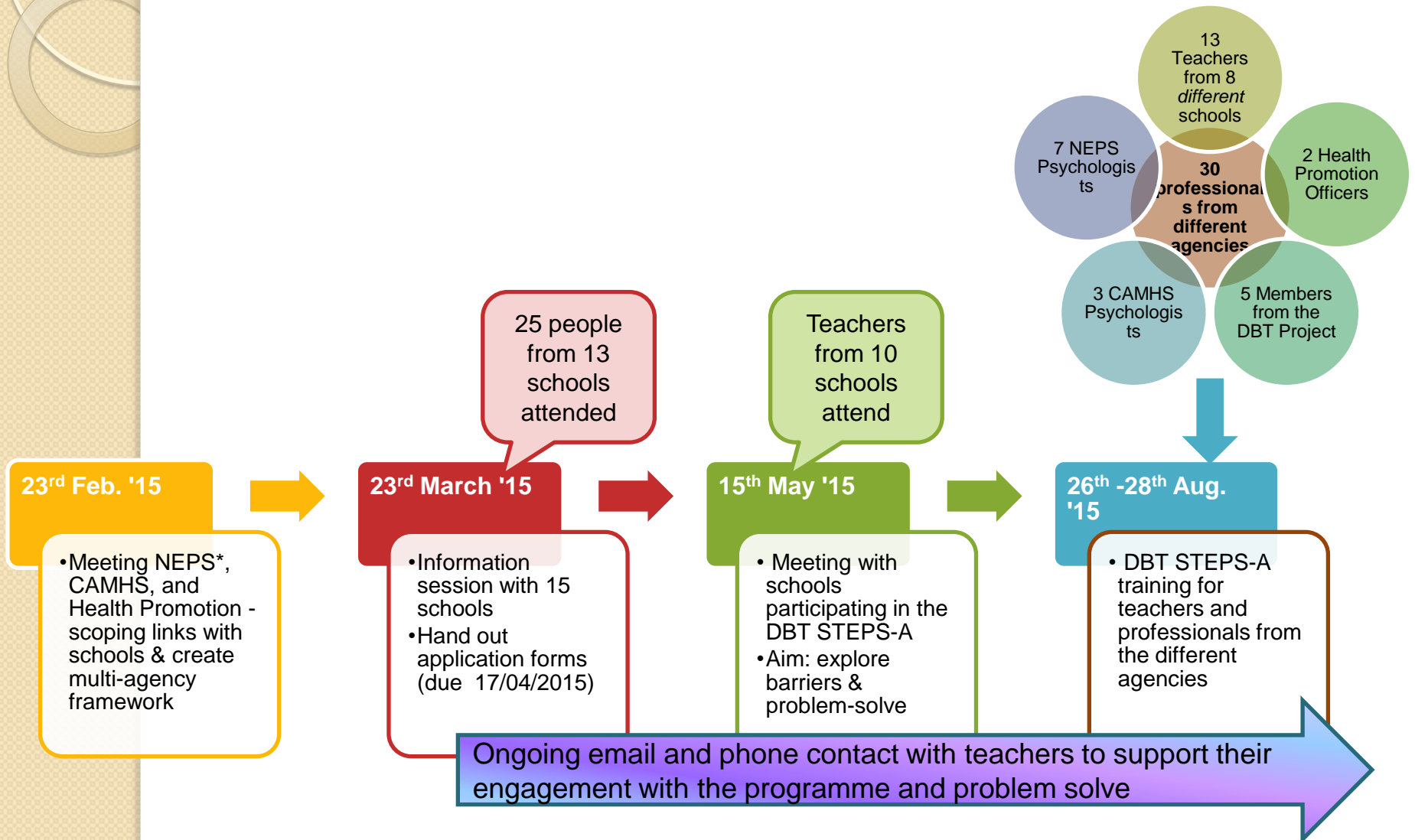
# Aims:

- Target non-referred, universal population of school-going adolescents in Cork
- Teach emotional problem solving skills within Transition Year curriculum to build resilience
- Capitalise on existing interagency relationships and build confidence in teachers as agents of change
- Evaluate robustly – outcomes and experiences from all perspectives

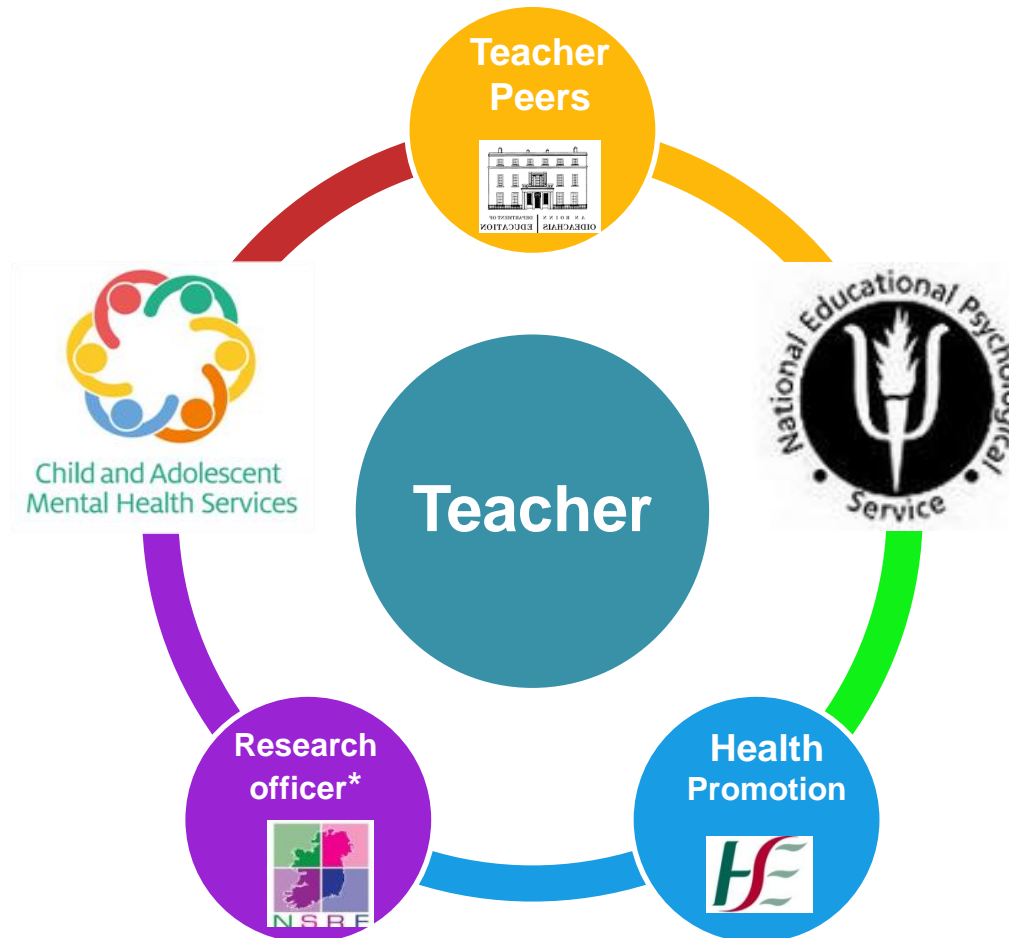
# What is DBT Steps-A?

- DBT Skills in Schools: Skills Training for Emotion Problem Solving for Adolescents
  - Universal Social Emotional Learning curriculum for middle and high school students (30 x 1h lessons).
  - Developed in the US by Psychologists in Seattle, WA at the University of Washington
- Based on Skills from Dialectical Behavior Therapy
  - Core Mindfulness Skills
  - Distress Tolerance Skills
  - Emotion Regulation Skills
  - Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

# Planning and Engagement



# Continuous inter-agency collaboration as a support for the champions of change



\*Funding was provided by the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), Ireland

# Evaluation of Effectiveness:

Intervention : N= 386  
Control: N= 49  
Transition year Students across 8 schools

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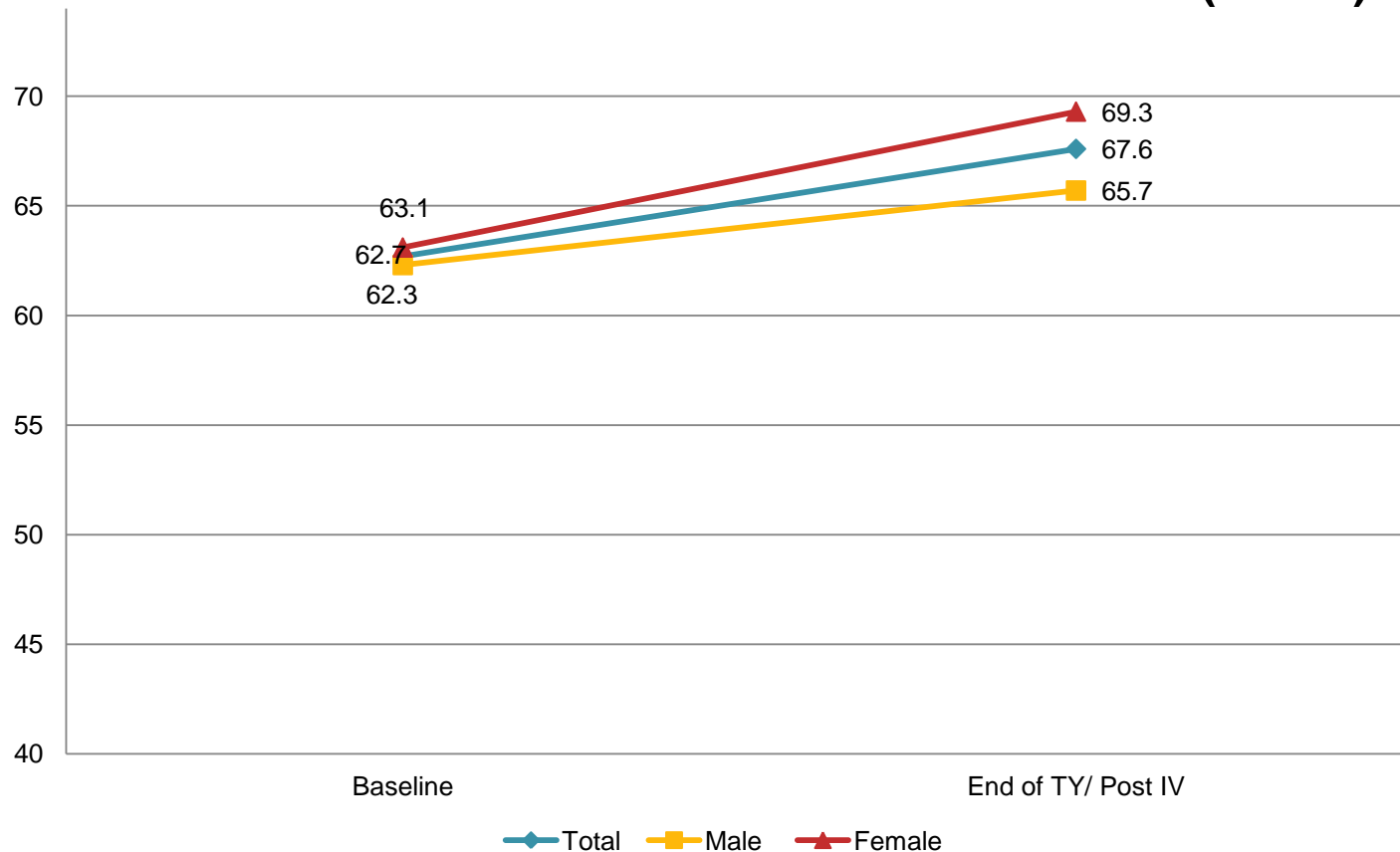
<b>Measures of Change</b>	DERS (Difficulties with Emotion Regulation Scale) DBT-WCCL (DBT Ways of Coping Checklist)
<b>Outcome Measure</b>	BASC-2 (Behaviour Assessment System for Children): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- 4 composite clinical scales</li><li>- 12 clinical subscales</li><li>- 1 adaptive scale with 4 subscales</li></ul>

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# Preliminary Results: DBT WCCCL

## Skill Use STEPS-A students (n=250)

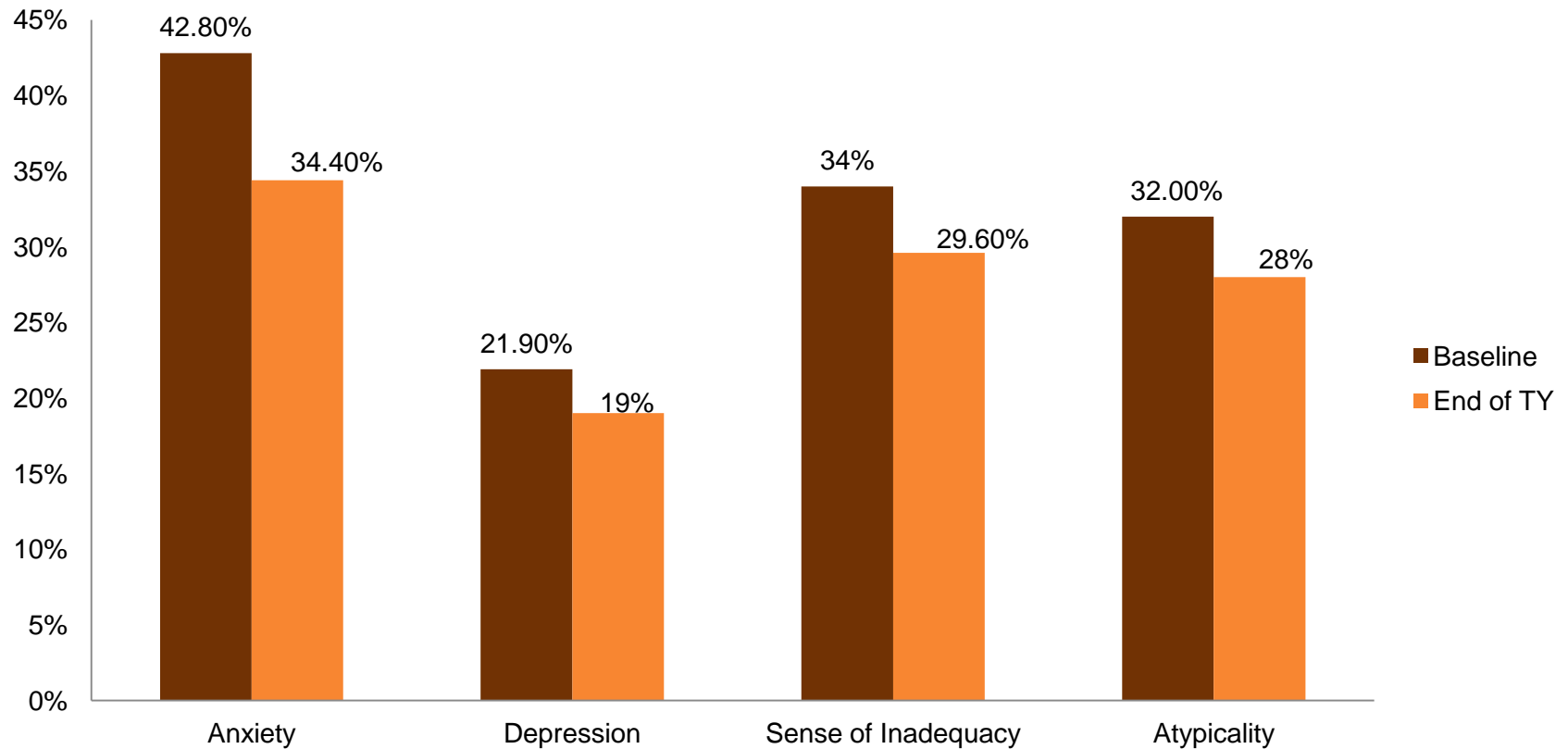


Analysis	Sign.
Total	$p = .000^*$
Males	$p = .023^*$
Females	$p = .000^*$



# Preliminary Results: BASC-2

Percentage of Students "at risk" across subscales (n = 250)



Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .011*
Males	p = .035*
Females	p = .154

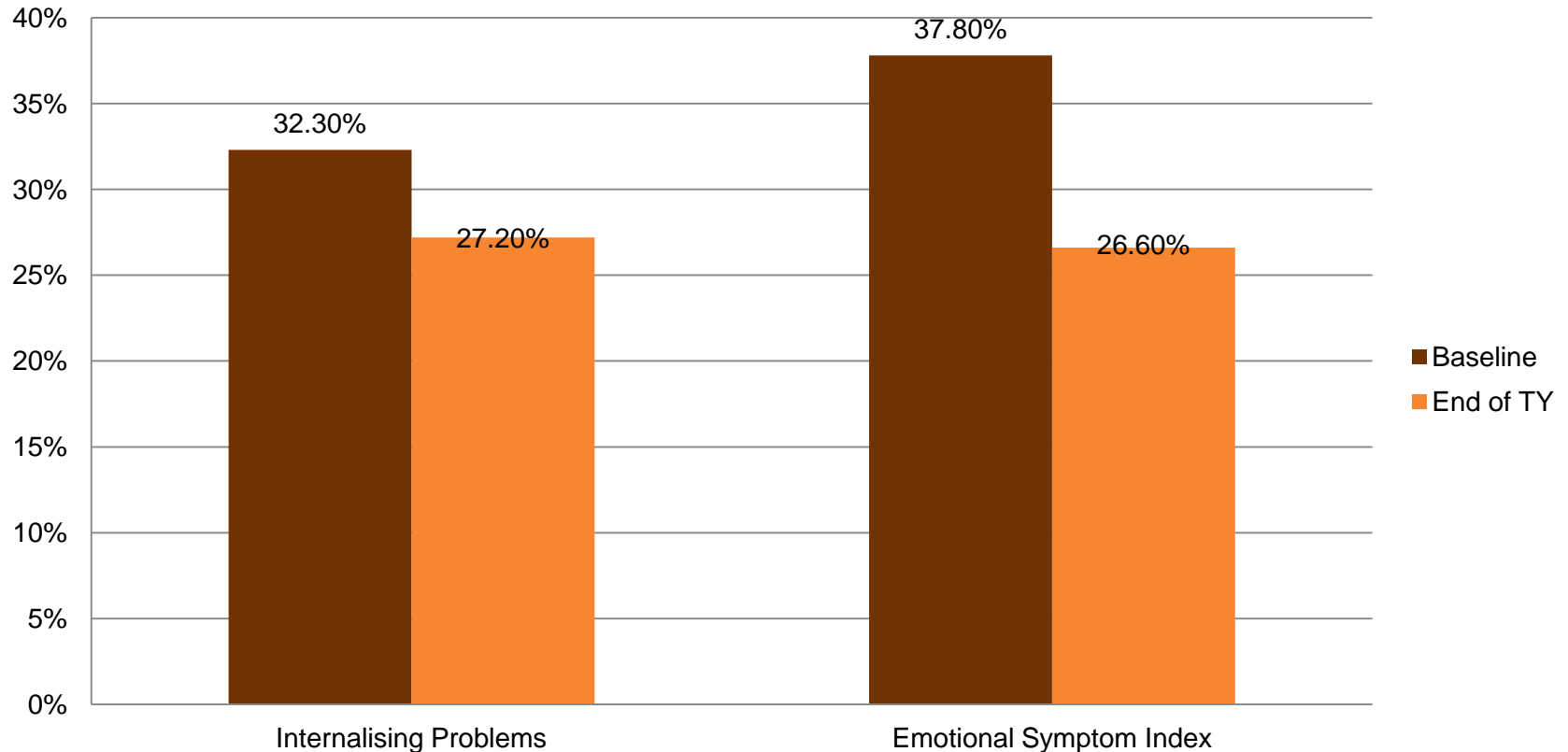
Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .360
Males	p = .678
Females	p = .503

Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .185
Males	p = 1.000
Females	p = .043*

Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .245
Males	p = .711
Females	p = .029*

# Preliminary Results: BASC-2

Percentage of Students "at risk" on composite scales (n = 250)



Composite of:  
Atypicality, Locus of Control, Social Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Sense of Inadequacy, Somatisation.

Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .088
Males	p = .332
Females	p = .230

Emotional Symptom Index

Analysis	Sign.
Total	p = .000*
Males	p = .263
Females	p = .000*

Composite of:  
Social Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Sense of Inadequacy, Somatisation, Self-Esteem, Self-



# Lessons Learned:



- Working within and across systems
- No multimedia teaching material
- Ordering of modules
- Structure of programme (USA v's Irish System)
- ? SEN students?
- ? Linking in parents
- Changed vocabulary / culture in school
- Relationship with students as facilitator
- Teacher creativity and flexibility
- Mindfulness well received by students
- Importance of interagency support

# Conclusion:

- DBT-STEPS-A represents a promising model of successful inter-agency collaboration between health and education – working “upstream”.
- An opportunity to build resilience, normalise school-based conversations around mental health and potentially identify earlier adolescents who need onward referral.