

Student Assistance Program: SAP Components

School Board Policy

- The policy includes the school's "zero tolerance" for crimes involving alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, weapons or violence; includes consequences for violations; and identifies procedures for attaining help through the SAP.
- The policy clarifies the process of self-referral, the limits of confidentiality for minors, parents' right-to-know, procedures for reporting knowledge of a crime (i.e. illegal possession), the responsibility of a witness. The relationship of student assistance services to policies regarding other co-curricular activities, including athletics, plus the involvement of law enforcement, juvenile justice and mental health professionals are explained in a school board policy.

Staff Development

- Staff development should be customized for the culture of the local community, based on a thorough needs assessment, and focus on reducing barriers to learning that effect students' social and academic performance.
- Training programs should be practical, experiential and designed to increase the knowledge and skills necessary to provide educational support groups, agency referrals, mediation, mentoring and research-based prevention curriculum.
- Staff development should include support for faculty wellness and information about community resources for high-risk staff whose work performance is negatively influenced by personal issues.

Program Awareness

- The goal of SAP awareness is to involve parents, students, agency personnel and community members in developing safe, disciplined and drug-free schools and communities.
- Parents and community members are educated about the school policy on alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, weapons and violence and are made aware of student assistance services that promote resilience and student success.
- SAP awareness informs parents that they will be notified of any concerns regarding their child's education, health or safety and that they will be involved in each step of the SAP solution-finding process.
- Awareness of SAP services, such as educational support groups, agency referrals, mediation, mentoring, character education and research-based prevention curriculum can be delivered through homeroom presentations, SAP posters, newsletters, parent education, media coverage and inclusion in the parent/student/teacher handbooks.

Internal Referral Process

- The goal of the internal referral process is to identify and refer students with academic and social concerns to a multi-disciplinary problem-solving and case management team that will review all data, identify solutions and decide upon the next logical step.

- The internal referral process includes a review of objective data (grades, attendance and discipline), faculty observations and comments and to identify solutions and decide upon the next logical step.
- Faculty observation forms should include identification of strengths, assets and learning styles as well as descriptive data on the problems.
- Student may be referred to the problem-solving team by school administrations, parents, staff, peers, or through self-referral.

Student Assistance Program Evaluation

- SAP outcomes should be evaluated periodically to assess progress toward its goals and use the evaluation results to refine the objectives, improve program activities and services.
- Program evaluation should include an objective assessment of student needs, prioritization of student problems, measurable goals and objectives, and results of researched-based or promising programs.
- The process of evaluation is a partnership between student assistance professionals, school administrators, students, parents and community members.
- Evaluation can measure changes in attitudes, substance use, violence, grades, attendance, discipline and/or disruptive behavior.

Educational Student Support Groups

- Group topics may include, but are not limited to: study skills, social skills, changing families, grief and loss, homework, anger management, careers, refusal skills, abstinence from alcohol and other drugs and concerned others.
- Staff advisors receive specialized training in facilitating curriculum-based, solution focused student discussion groups.
- Groups provide the opportunity for students to participate in solving their own academic and social problems.
- Educational support groups can, also, be used with faculty, staff and parents to provide information, support, problem-solving skills and solution-focused strategies for building relationships with children and adolescents.

Cooperation and Collaboration with Community Agencies and Resources

- Community agencies and counselors working together can help students with assessment, evaluation and counseling for educational, substance use, mental health or family concerns.
- Parents, community agencies, law enforcement and private practitioners can help schools with prevention activities, consultation, technical assistance and support.
- Parents are key partners in the success of all student assistance services.

Integration with Other School-Based Programs

- A comprehensive multi-disciplinary approach to prevention, intervention and support services strategies must be integrated with other school-based programs.

- Depending upon your needs assessment, the following additional Student Assistance services may be integrated into the program: Classroom Prevention Curriculum; Parent Education; Character Education; Identification of Learning Styles; Career Exploration; Conflict Resolution; Peer Mediation; Mentoring; Service-Learning; Community Mobilization; Asset Development; Violence Prevention and a Crisis Response Team.
- Through their school improvement process, each school and community must assess the services that best meet the needs of their diverse population.

Source: National Association of Student Assistance Programs

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