

What is Student Assistance?

Student Assistance is a framework of support services for students that integrate well with existing services in the school. Student Assistance (SAP) has been implemented by schools across the country over the past 50 years, and is recognized as an evidence-based model.ⁱ

Student Assistance provides a systematic data-driven screening, intervention, and student monitoring process for identified students. Student Assistance focuses primarily at the indicated student level to address life issues (mental health, substance use, family dynamics, bullying and other relational violence, homelessness, gender-related, youth development, and other issues) interfering with educational and life success. The framework integrates Student Assistance services with other existing services in the school to provide supports for all students, including those not being successful with academic or behavior remediation programs.

The Student Assistance framework builds on a school's existing behavior management and skill deficit remediation strategies including existing multi-disciplinary problem-solving teams to create a comprehensive system of student supports.

What are the outcomes of implementing Student Assistance?

Student Assistance can assist a school in reaching their 5Essential goals through strengthening effective school leadership, strengthening parent-community ties, building professional capacity, and enhancing the supportive environment / student centered learning climate. (See *The 5Essentials and Student Assistance: Tools for Strengthening Your School* included in this folder.ⁱⁱ)

Schools implementing Student Assistance Programs report:ⁱⁱⁱ

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| 1. Improved academic success | 7. Improved effective intervention plan development |
| 2. Decreased problem behaviors | 8. Increased and improved student support services |
| 3. Improved staff attitudes toward helping students | 9. Increased community resource utilization |
| 4. Improved identification of at-risk students | 10. Increased creative collaboration among staff to address student needs ^{iv} |
| 5. Increased school connectedness | |
| 6. Improved communication between staff, students, and parents | |

Can Student Assistance help us if we already have response to intervention or positive behavior supports?

Student Assistance is particularly beneficial to students dealing with life, family, and relationship issues impacting their ability to focus on the educational process. Student Assistance integrates well with Response to Intervention (RtI) especially at Tiers 2 and 3 intervention levels, although SAP is not an academic remediation platform. Students receiving SAP services are able to be more fully present and ready to learn from response to intervention academic and behavior interventions. Student Assistance also does not utilize a universal behavior management teaching or remediation program. Many students impacted by life stressors do not have academic skill deficits or behavior management problems. Students experiencing family, relationship, and other life issues do not always find these issues sufficiently addressed through behavior or academic remediation plans; yet these students need school and community supports to be successful.

How does the Student Assistance framework function?



Universal SAP Services: Staff are better trained and more motivated through professional capacity development to identify students needing non-academic supports. Students are more inclined to self and friend refer when needs exist. School supports are created or enhanced to provide a broad array of coordinated services. School policies are identified that include strategies for getting help for students and families. Collaborative relationships are developed and strengthened with community service providers.

Selective SAP Services: Students at-risk receive additional support through educational support groups, after-school programs, tutoring, and others. Students often self-refer for Selective SAP services.

Indicated SAP Services: A trained Student Assistance team assists identified students by creating intervention plans grounded in data. The team then monitors and adjusts those plans to build student success. Interventions include utilizing existing school-based services, and connecting students and families to community services and resources.

Who is the Student Assistance Team?

The SAP team is a consistent, trained multi-disciplinary team that may be composed of administrators, classroom teachers, school counselors, social workers, school nurses, support staff, and school resource officers for middle and high school teams. Team members do not fluctuate based upon which student is being helped, and receive skill-based multi-disciplinary problem-solving team training in the screening, problem-solving, and monitoring processes.

A basic Student Assistance Program includes:

- a multi-disciplinary problem-solving Student Assistance Team;
- methods for identifying and screening needs and concerns; and,
- school-based and community-based strategies for supporting student's needs.

For More Information Contact:

Dale Gasparovic, SAC Administrator, 217.299.8803, email dale.gasparovic@prevention.org or Kristie Shurtleff, SAC Specialist, at 800.572.5385 Ext 226, e-mail kristie.shurtleff@prevention.org.

Additional resources can be found at www.prevention.org/Resources/SAC-Resources.aspx

The Student Assistance Center at Prevention First is supported by the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide Student Assistance training and technical assistance to schools in Illinois.

ⁱ STARS, National Registry of Effective Programs and Practices, www.nrepp.samhsa.org

ⁱⁱ 5Essentials and Student Assistance.

https://www.prevention.org/Resources/documents/5Essentials_andStudentAssistance.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Illinois Association of Student Assistance Professionals and the Student Assistance Center Annual Report Data, www.prevention.org

^{iv} Student Assistance Best Practices Standards Capacity Assessment, Student Assistance Center at Prevention First, 2013.