

# **Student Assistance Program Mission and Practices**

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**This is a sample (and not official) practices and guideline document for SAPs. It is the responsibility of all SAPs to consult with their building administrators about the content of any guidelines document that covers practices and procedures with students.**

## **Mission Statement**

The Student Assistance Team is a multidisciplinary team whose goal is to improve the educational process for all students by addressing educational and behavioral barriers interfering with student learning. The SAP provides strategies and support to students, staff, and families to help students succeed in school.

## **Goals of the Student Assistance Program**

- To enhance the school's system of identifying and referring students experiencing difficulty
- To improve the delivery of intervention strategies through utilizing the skills, experiences,
- and perspectives of a multidisciplinary team.
- To increase the capacity of the school staff in addressing student problems including identifying and responding to non-academic student needs.

## **Student Assistance Program Team Functions**

- Maintain a systematic process of identification and referral in order to provide support to identified students.
- Utilize a systematic data-driven screening process to evaluate the needs of identified students.
- Develop an individualized plan of support for identified students whose needs are appropriate for SAP services.
- Provide a range of supports to students including school and community resources as well as educational support groups.
- Communicate with others about the SAP and its services and about individual students when it is in the best interest of the student.
- Monitor the identified student's program and adapt support as needed.
- Work collaboratively with other intervention services in the building including response to intervention tiers in order to enhance services and reduce duplication.
- Develop and maintain lists of services throughout the community that provide support to students and families.
- Address school climate through enhanced skill development for staff and others to identify and respond to student needs.

- Evaluate the Student Assistance Program and assess student population needs to maintain a high level of service through the SAP

### **Team Formation and Membership**

The Student Assistance Team functions primarily as a multi-disciplinary problem-solving team; and, therefore, utilizes roles, responsibilities, practices and skills demonstrated by most multi-disciplinary problem solving teams. The SAP team should represent diverse disciplines, skills and experiences in order to utilize different knowledge sets, strengths and styles in problem solving and relating to students, staff, and families.

Team members should be willing and able to support the SAP's mission and goals, and be willing to commit to following practices that support the function of the team. Team members should demonstrate the ability to work well in a team process and demonstrate effective communication skills especially when meeting with students, staff, families and community resources.

Team members should also demonstrate responsibility to commitments including attending team meetings as scheduled and on time, being prepared for and being fully attentive in team meetings, and following through with tasks that can impact student and team success. Team members should be able to address sensitive issues, maintain confidentiality about students, families, and team meetings, and be willing to address team processes as needed.

### **Parent Notification**

The Student Assistance Team is concerned with helping students advance academically and emotionally and should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of early notification with the parent. Parents can be an integral part in problem-solving for their child. Parental permission is generally not required to implement the strategies developed at a non-pre referral SAP meeting. Parents may be brought to team meetings if deemed appropriate.

Parents/guardians of students participating in the Student Assistance Program will be specifically notified of their child's involvement as follows:

- a. Parents/guardians will be informed of their child's involvement in the Student Assistance Program immediately in cases of violations of the school's student violence, and/or alcohol and controlled substances abuse policy.
- b. Student participation in the program through self-referral or other avenues may involve parents/guardians notification when appropriate, and consistent with state law regarding privileged communications. The SAP team will document reasons when making decision when parent/guardian notification and involvement of parents/guardians is postponed or not made.

## **EVALUATION**

Program evaluation should become an inherently implemented practice for any program serving students, and as such is part of the SAPs goals and practices. Program evaluation will include both process evaluation (functioning and practices of the SAP) and outcome evaluation (in what ways students did or did not improve as a result of working with the SAP).

The SAP will set annual goals related to both processes and outcomes of services, and will implement effective practices to measure those goals. Goal measurement will be conducted periodically, including a final year measurement and report. The report will contain no individual student names or other identifying data. This report will be distributed to administration and staff annually.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is key to Student Assistance Program success. All SAP team members must commit to maintaining confidential information regarding students and families. Information discussed or obtained through the Student Assistance Program should be shared only on a legitimate need to know basis.

Legal confidentiality requirements will be strictly maintained by the SAP. An exception may be warranted when a student confides an intent to harm self or others, or is being harmed by self or others. Mandated reporting must be observed by all SAP team members.

## **TEAM MAINTENANCE**

The Student Assistance Team will periodically examine procedures and practices to determine whether any of these may be hindering team function or student services.

Team maintenance should also include discussions about personal boundaries appropriate for SAP services, processes for adding new members to the team, and examining burnout by team members.