School Policies And Procedures Related To Substance Use And Possession, Violence And Other Factors Impacting Student Success

The following information is offered as an aid in taking steps to address the policy and procedure needs of schools in considering the health and welfare of students and staff. The information contained in this resource should not be construed as a comprehensive guide to creating a school district's policy and procedures for any area of concern presented on this site.

For any school, prevention should precede problem solving. School policy and procedures serve as a tool to promote just that. A well-written policy and procedures goes beyond a punitive intent and establishes the groundwork to support safety, appropriate conduct and healthy living.

Well-crafted policy creates a balance between clear procedures for addressing inappropriate behavior and a supportive school environment promoting help for those needing assistance.

A school's policy and procedures should serve multiple functions including:

Provide a framework for the rights and responsibilities of students, staff, and families.
Provide a consistent set of guidelines for administering consequences for inappropriate behavior.
Empower adults in the building with tools for handling situations that may impact the safety, health, and well being of all those in the building.
Enable the school to minimize legal complications.
Maximize safety for students and staff.
Serve as a preventive strategy in promoting appropriate behavior for all students and staff.
Provide a framework for documentation of inappropriate behavior by students and staff.
Serve as a step in the legal obligation to protect the students and adults in the building.
Promote staff training as a vital link in both the preventive and problem-solving nature of policy and procedures.
Define the relationship of the school to local law enforcement when violations include community ordinances, local, state, and federal laws.
Equip staff members to respond appropriately when confronted with a potential violation.
Create a more uniform stance in responding to potential violations through "What should be said and done".
Create better understanding through staff training which can result in better identification, stronger response to violations, and more consistent enforcement.
Establish baseline rates of behavior.
Translate need assessment results into appropriate actions.

Topical areas often addressed in school policy include:
- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, manufacture, possession, and distribution (including inhalants and prescription and over the counter medications)
- Paraphernalia possession
- Destruction of private and/ or school property
- Harassment including sexual, racial, ethnic, and religious
- Gambling
- Gang activity including appearance
- Fighting, assault, or threats to do bodily harm
- Weapon and/or explosives possession and use
- Vandalism
- Bullying
- Use of force
- Abuse

- Attendance and/or Truancy
- Tardies
- Technology including computer, internet and cell phone use
- Cheating or falsifying documents
- Money as gifts or used in extortion
- Distribution of written material
- Clothing and grooming

Policies and procedures should also address discouraging the glamorization of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and their effects by any staff member or student through apparel, messages, or behaviors. Students, staff members, parents and sponsoring community members and partners should view themselves as influencers and role models to others in the school and community.

Policy and procedures should:
- Present a clear no use message
- Be developmentally appropriate for the students in the building
- Serve as part of the larger efforts at preventing ATOD use and violence
- Address self-referral procedures and constraints
- Address all parameters of time and space when the policy and procedures will be in effect
- Offer an abeyance for expulsions when appropriate to promote getting help
- Address co curricular policies and procedures

The Student Assistance Program may be written into school policy allowing for a helping component while not circumventing appropriate consequences. The policy and procedures should address when and how the Student Assistance Program will be involved with violations.

A number of school districts recommend review of the policy and procedures annually based on need. The review committee usually includes representatives of all who will be affected by the policy and is often composed of least one student at the middle and high school levels; an administrator, at least one parent from each school level; a school board member; a pupil services professional; a classroom educator, and at least one counselor. Including a comment period prior to board adoption of the policy will also build faculty, student and parent support. The district's legal counsel should serve in an advisory capacity for all policy and procedure issues.

Many schools post their substance use and violence policies on the Internet. For examples of these policies, a search engine query on 'high school substance use policy and procedures' can yield an abundance of resources.

References:

JoinTogether, *How Do We Know We Are Making a Difference?* http://indicatorshandbook.org/

Mazin, Ed.D., Hestand, and Koester. *An Educator's Legal Guide to Stress-Free Discipline and School Safety*, National Educational Service, 1998.

NYU Child Study Center, *Adolescent Substance Abuse and School Policy* by Jonathan Eger. http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/adol_subabuse.html

School Development Planning Support, Substance Abuse Policy. http://www.into.ie/ROI/SchoolAdministration/AdministrativePolicies/SubstanceUse/filedownload,831,en.pdf.

Substance Abuse Policy. ERIC Digest, Number 80. http://www.ericdigests.org/1993/abuse.htm

Title IV of the No Child Left Behind Act.   http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/page_pg31.html#iv-a