

STUDENT ASSISTANCE CENTER

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Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse

Student Assistance: A Key Characteristic of Your Social-Emotional Learning Strategy

Illinois passed the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act in 2003. Among its key provisions, the Act called for:

- **Development of a Children's Mental Health Plan for Illinois that provides substantive and strategic direction for building an effective children's mental health system that addresses the prevention, early intervention, and treatment needs of children ages 0-18.**
- **Development by local school districts of policies for incorporating social and emotional development into their educational program; these policies would include the teaching and assessment of students' social and emotional competencies and protocols for responding to children with social, emotional, or mental health problems, or a combination of such problems that affect learning ability. (The Illinois Report 2011)**

Student Assistance Programs are uniquely positioned to address the key provisions of this Act. SAP has traditionally worked from a three-tiered model utilizing universal, selective, and indicated strategies to assist students with social, emotional, mental health, or other problems which impacts their ability to be successful in school and in life. It is through prevention, early identification, and early intervention that SAP has been able to connect students with the resources both inside schools and in the community to meet not only treatment needs but other needs as well.

The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) conducted an evaluation of 21 SEL initial implementation pilot schools in Illinois, CPRD included a question asking whether the school was "implementing a Student Assistance or guidance program to address SEL" (The Illinois report 2011) as a characteristic of SEL. This shows that researchers identify Student Assistance as a key characteristic of SEL implementation.

Additionally, since 1994, IASAP/SAC Year-End Report data has shown that SAP can and does support the development of social and emotional skills in students. The data shows that as a result of having a Student Assistance Program:



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at www.prevention.org to learn more about free training, technical assistance, webinars, and resources for standards-based Student Assistance Programs in grades K-12 Contact Dale Gasparovic, SAC Administrator, at dalegasparovic@prevention.org or at 217.299.8803 for more information.

- **85% to 90% of responding schools saw improved identification of at-risk students. Similarly, staff attitudes toward helping students improved in 63% to 84% of responding schools. Both of these measures contribute significantly to getting students in need connected to social supports provided by or connected through the Student Assistance Program.**
- **72% of responding schools report that “student support services improved.”**
- **45% of responding schools stated that life skill lessons are included in the school day.**

Achieving the Goals of SEL

Recognizing the essential priority of building the skills necessary to be successful in all students, we must continue to strive toward meeting each of the social emotional learning goals. The Student Assistance services model offers opportunities at each level to assist schools in meeting the goals of SEL shown in the chart below.

Universal:

- Periodic classroom-based modules through character education or prevention curriculum.
- Peer mediation programs.
- Recognition programs that focus on displays of positive skills.
- Peer leadership programs.
- Staff development that builds capacity in fostering a sense of responsibility for all students in the building, recognizing indicators of student distress, and responding appropriately when concerns arise.
- Policy and protocol recommendations that increase opportunities for students to get help.

Illinois Social and Emotional Learning Goals and Standards

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- Standard 1A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.
- Standard 1B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
- Standard 1C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- Standard 2A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
- Standard 2B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
- Standard 2C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- Standard 2D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

- Standard 3A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- Standard 3B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.
- Standard 3C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

Source: http://isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm

Selective:

- Inclusion of the SEL goals within educational support group content.
- Connecting students to positive staff within the building who display and foster the SEL skills included with the goals.
- Developing a student ambassador program to connect new students to peer role models who demonstrate positive social emotional skills.

Indicated:

- Creating action plans for individual students that incorporate the SEL skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, decision-making, responsibility, and relationship management.