

# STUDENT ASSISTANCE CENTER

at  **PREVENTION FIRST**  
*Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse*



## The 5 Essentials and Student Assistance: Tools for Strengthening Your School

It takes just five essential elements to make a difference. A Student Assistance Program for many schools is one valuable tool in their comprehensive efforts to strengthen those 5Essentials supports, as well as address barriers to academic success and healthy development. For the past 50 years, many schools nationally have chosen to add Student Assistance Programs to their toolbox to assist them in reaching their goals. Data from Illinois schools implementing standards-based Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) are already strengthening the 5Essentials. Student Assistance is recognized as an evidence-based strategy. For more information visit [www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=237](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=237)

### **Student Assistance contributes to**

**Effective School Leadership** recommending policy and procedures around behavioral health and life issues.

**Parent - Community Ties** engaging parents in trusting relationships, creating networks of support and developing working relationships with community partners to collaboratively address the needs of youth and families often securing services for youth on site.

**Professional Capacity** strengthening staff development, enhancing the sense of collective responsibility for all students in the school, and utilizing a collaborative problem-solving practice for life issues which regularly facilitates “close collaborative relationships among teachers.”

**Supportive Environment/Student Centered Learning Climate** building social capital and supports for students through a network of relationships that offer moral support, information and access to resources.

## What is a Student Assistance Program?

Students can find it overwhelming when balancing the demands of school, family, and relationships, leading to academic, emotional, and behavioral health issues. These challenges can create the perfect storm for at-risk behaviors and stress related responses to life events. In many cases these challenges impact a student's ability to be successful in school and in life. Student Assistance responds to these stress-related personal barriers, which may not be addressed in behavior management plans and academic remediation plans.

### Student Assistance Offers:

- A high-return, low-cost systems approach
- Evidence-based strategies
- Systems of support for students and families
- Engaged families and communities in improving outcomes for students

Student Assistance emphasizes bonding and connectedness, academic achievement, school motivation/positive attitude toward school, presence and involvement of caring and supportive adults, social competencies and problem-solving skills, social support from adults and peers, and positive expectations/optimism for the future.

A specialized Student Assistance problem-solving team matches students with identified concerns to appropriate supports. These supports may include in-school services such as:

- support groups
- after school activities
- mentors
- skill groups
- peer helpers
- individual counseling
- school sponsored programs

Student Assistance links the student or entire families to community services.

Data shows Student Assistance reduces problem behaviors, although it is not a behavior management system.

Student Assistance is not an academic remediation system or special education pre-referral process. It can enhance a school's response to intervention efforts especially with Tier 2 strategies.

- Improved overall school climate
- Strengthened protective factors that concentrate on life issues including mental health, substance use, family and other relationship issues impacting a student's ability to focus and do well in school



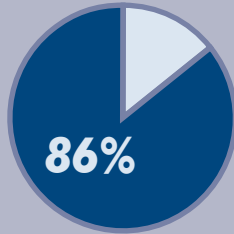
### 5Essential Elements and Student Assistance Data

Data collected in Illinois from school years 2008-2009 through 2012-13 shows that Student Assistance is impacting the 5Essentials.\* Evaluation reports demonstrate that Student Assistance services benefit the school as a whole, including elements of the 5Essentials, as well as improving outcomes for targeted students and families.

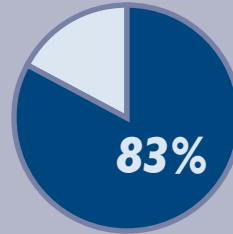
# STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS:

## Contribute to a Supportive Environment/Student Centered Learning Climate.

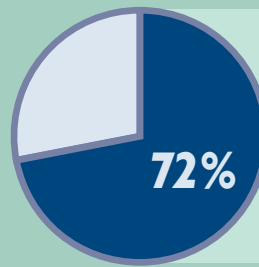
86% of schools report that at-risk students are more effectively identified.



83% of schools report improved communication between staff, students, and parents.

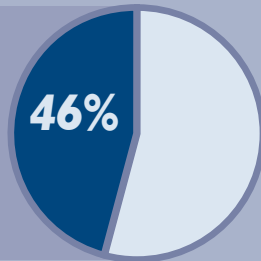


## Reduce Problem Behaviors.

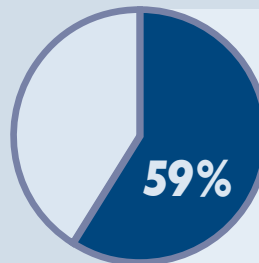


72% of schools report a reduction in problem behaviors.

46% of schools reviewed and/or revised student conduct and attendance policies.



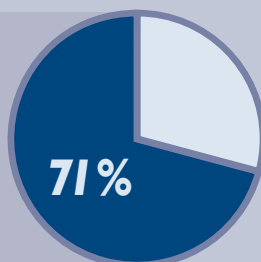
## Participate with Effective School Leadership.



59% of schools with SAPs report increased parent education about support services.

## Build Parent – Community Ties.

71% of schools report improved staff attitudes about helping students.



## Strengthen Professional Capacity in Staff Members'

- understanding student needs
- skills to identify and respond to indicators of distress
- collective responsibility for all students in the school
- close collaborative relationships among teachers

\*Data collected by the Illinois Association of Student Assistance Professionals (IASAP) and the Student Assistance Center at Prevention First for 4 school years (2009-2013) through a voluntary evidence-based reporting form process.

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**PREVENTION FIRST**  
*Building community capacity to prevent substance abuse*

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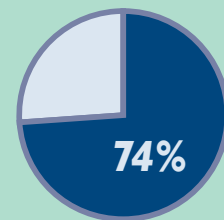
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**Student Assistance contributes to a Supportive Environment/Student Centered Learning Climate** building social capital and social supports for students through a network of relationships that offer moral support, information, and access to resources. SAPs report increased:

- communication between staff/students/parents
- community resource utilization
- student support services
- effective at-risk student identification
- connections to community services
- positive relationships between students and non-familial adults
- student connections to a positive adult in the building



**74%** of schools reported their students support services improved.

**Visit the Student Assistance Center** at [www.prevention.org](http://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 [dale.gasparovic@prevention.org](mailto:dale.gasparovic@prevention.org) or at 217.299.8803 for more information.

*The Student Assistance Center (SAC) at Prevention First, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to building community capacity to prevent substance abuse, is headquartered in Springfield, and is the only organization in Illinois providing comprehensive Student Assistance training and technical assistance to Illinois public and private schools.*

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