

## The National Student Assistance Association

### Ethical Guidelines and Standards of Practice

#### **Philosophy Statement for Student Assistance Programs**

A Student Assistance Program is a school based comprehensive prevention and intervention program for students in Kindergarten through grade 12 characterized by a team approach. This professional, systematic process is designed to provide education, prevention, early identification, intervention, referral and support services for students exhibiting risk behaviors which are interfering with their education. The positive influence of Student Assistance Programs encourages student success in the school environment, fosters risk reduction and positive asset development, provides a safe environment and promotes opportunities for knowledge, skill, and attitude development. Key components are developmental curriculum and education, policy, staff and community in-service and education, early identification, development or support processes, use of community resource, and ongoing evaluation of program effectiveness.

#### **Mission Statement for Student Assistance Programs**

The Student Assistance Program utilizes a multidisciplinary team and intervention system to remove the educational and behavioral barriers which interfere with student learning, and works to enhance the developmental assets of students. This goal is accomplished by providing strategies and support to the school community and parents to improve their ability to help students succeed in school. The team also marshals other school and community resource as necessary for an effective intervention.

This document includes ethical guidelines and standards of practice for those people involved in a Student Assistance Program in any capacity. These guidelines and standards are intended to clarify the ethical responsibilities to students, families, school staff, Student Assistance Teams, community, school support groups, and the profession of Student Assistance.

These guidelines were developed to identify the standards of conduct necessary to maintain and regulate the high standards of integrity and leadership among persons involved in Student Assistance Programs. They are meant to stimulate reflection, self-examination, and discussion of issues and practices.

#### **A. Responsibilities to Students**

Those involved in the Student Assistance Program will:

- Have primary responsibility to the student, who is to be treated with respect and dignity and with concern for confidentiality.
- Be responsible to offer Student Assistance components to all students who indicate a need for such services and include all students with evidence of risk behavior.
- Promote and enhance student's strengths, skills, and capabilities while addressing their developmental needs.

- Inform the student of the purposes, goals, and procedures under which he/she may receive Student Assistance. Include the possible necessity for consulting with other professionals and legal or other authoritative restraints.
- Maintain current knowledge of laws relating to Student Assistance Program practice and ensures the rights of students are adequately protected.
- Make referrals to appropriate service providers based upon student's needs and monitor student progress.
- Protect the confidentiality of student records and exchange personal data only according to prescribed laws and school policies.
- Provide and act upon only accurate, objective, and observable data regarding a student's behaviors.
- Inform appropriate authorities when the student's condition or statements indicate clear and imminent danger to the student or others. This is done after careful deliberation and when possible in conjunction with other professional consultation.
- Provide explanation to parents/guardians and those who provide services to the students of the nature, purpose, and results of screening or assessment interviews.
- Account to each student referred to the Student Assistance Program by continued evaluation of student success and needs and provide additional assistance whenever necessary.

#### **B. Responsibilities to Families**

Those include in Student Assistance Program will:

- Have primary responsibility to the family of the student, who is to be treated with respect, dignity and with concern for confidentiality.
- Respect the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents for their children and endeavor to establish a cooperative relationship with parents.
- Inform parents of the role of Student Assistance Programs with emphasis on the positive nature of the program and the role of confidentiality between students, staff and families.
- Treat information received from families in a confidential and ethical manner.
- Share information about a student only with those persons properly authorized to receive such information.
- Offer ongoing support and collaboration with families for the success of their child.

#### **C. Responsibilities to School Staff**

Those involved in the Student Assistance Program will:

- Establish and maintain a cooperative relationship with faculty, staff and administration to facilitate the provision of optimum Student Assistance Program services.
- Promote awareness and adherence to laws and ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality and the distinction between public and private information.
- Provide staff with accurate, objective and concise data necessary to assist the student.
- Offer appropriate in-service training and current Student Assistance Program information for all staff.

- Encourage awareness and appropriate use of related professions and organizations to whom the student may be referred.
- Provide services within their board-approved job descriptions and with an awareness of the specific areas of responsibilities and limitations.

**D. Responsibilities to Student Assistance Team Members**

Those involved in the Student Assistance Program will:

- Select multidisciplinary teams based upon the goals and mission of Student Assistance Programs/Teams as defined by appropriate state entities and implemented within the particular needs of each individual school system.
- Support the components included in a Student Assistance Program with an emphasis on prevention, asset/resiliency development, confidentiality, referral, identification, intervention, support and evaluation.
- Include team members who meet the guidelines of General Education Interventions (Section 439 of General Education Provisions Act 20 U.S.C. 1232(h)) amended 1994, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 34 C.F.R 104 (Federal Law)
- Select professionals with leadership, communication skills and expertise which relates to the wide range of issues of youth and families.
- Act upon referrals to the team by collecting observable data and planning developmentally appropriate levels of interventions.
- Treat information received from school staff , students, parents, and community resource in a confidential and ethical manner.
- Maintain records according to the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. - 1232(g)) & (34 C.F.R., 99). (Federal Law)
- Provide staff with accurate, objective and concise data necessary to assist the student.
- Know and utilize community resources and services for referrals.

**E. Responsibility to the School and Community**

Those involved in Student Assistance Program will:

- Inform appropriate officials of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the school's mission, personnel, students, or property.
- Work cooperatively with the community agencies, organization and individuals in the school.
- Delineate and promote the Student Assistance Program role and function in meeting the needs of those served.
- Assist in the development of curricular and environmental conditions and programs appropriate for the school and community to meet student needs.
- Develop a systematic evaluation process for Student Assistance Programs.
- Offer ongoing educational opportunities for families and community members regarding issues of our youth.
- Provide an ongoing cooperative link between school and community services.

**F. Responsibilities to School Support Groups**

Those involved in Student Assistance Program will:

- Adhere to the Ethical Guidelines for Group Counselors and Professional Standards for Training of Group work approved by the Association for Specialists in Group Work and promote knowledge of these guidelines among peers.
- Emphasize that school-based student support groups are psycho-educational and information groups, not therapy groups.

**G. Responsibilities to the Student Assistance Profession**

Those involved in Student Assistance Program will:

- Conduct themselves in such a manner as to bring credit to self and the Student Assistance Program practice.
- Actively participate in local, state, and national associations that foster development and improvement of Student Assistance programming.
- Adhere to ethical standards applicable to Student Assistance Program practice and other professional practices, school board policies and relevant statutes established by federal, state and local governments.
- Clearly distinguish between statements and actions made as a private individual and as a representative of the school Student Assistance Program.

**H. Responsibility to the Self**

Those involved in the Student Assistance Program will:

- Monitor one's own physical, mental, and emotional health and professional effectiveness.
- Refrain from any destructive activity leading to inadequate services or harm to self or a student.
- Take personal initiative to maintain professional competence and keep abreast of innovations, trends and legal issues related to the field of Student Assistance Programs.
- Understand and act upon their commitment and responsibilities to the Student Assistance Program.

*Adapted from the work of the Office of Student Services, Indiana Department of Education.*