

Student Assistance Programs: Program Implementation & Cost Benefit Report - School Year 2000 – 2001

Executive Summary

This study was designed as an implementation monitoring and cost benefit assessment of Student Assistance Programs in Connecticut. With little having been done in the past to evaluate Student Assistance Programs, either within the state or nationally, this study is intended to provide baseline data to use in future Student Assistance Programs studies and to stimulate further evaluation of these programs.

This evaluation was conducted in two main phases. Since previous records identifying all schools with Student Assistance Programs were incomplete, a preliminary survey of all schools in the state of Connecticut was conducted to identify schools with existing programs.

One hundred and sixty-three schools responded and were then mailed a second survey. Data from the fifty-five returns on this second survey were compiled and analyzed. The major findings of the study include:

Administrative Support: The vast majority of Student Assistance Teams (SAT) included the active involvement of a school administrator, thereby demonstrating the commitment to Student Assistance at the administrative level.

Referrals: An average of 6% of students were referred annually. The primary reason for referrals across all grade levels was problem classroom behaviors and poor academic performance. Equally prominent at the high school level were referrals for attendance, depression and family problems. The higher the grade level, the greater the variety in referral reasons and the more even the spread of types of referrals. The higher-grade levels also tended to have more complex referrals, e.g., two or three reasons for the same student.

Services Provided: Classroom interventions through support to teachers were the assistance option most often provided by SATs at the elementary and middle school levels. Behavior monitoring and in-school counseling were the two assistance options used most often by high school SATs. Referrals to DCF were made by 26% of elementary schools, 30% of middle schools and 33% of high schools. Referrals for “outside” counseling were made by 31% of elementary schools, 50% of middle of schools and 67% of high schools. Other supportive in-school services include mentoring, parent education and peer tutoring.

Effectiveness: When asked for examples of program effectiveness, 60% of responding Student Assistance Teams reported that students demonstrated academic and social improvements, while 26% of the teams cited improvements in school system issues. Improved parental involvement and teacher performance were also cited.

Cost Savings: Many of the respondents reported substantial cost savings from Student Assistance Programs, particularly related to decreased need for psychological evaluations and outplacements. Respondents submitted comments such as:

- “In 7 years, we have reduced the number of special education students from 18% to 7-8%”.
- “With at least 6 of our high-risk students we saved the cost of residential treatment for short-term and long-term placements.