

Student Assistance Programs: Program Implementation & Cost Benefit Report - School Year 2001 – 2002

Executive Summary

This study was designed as an implementation monitoring and cost benefit assessment of Student Assistance Programs in Connecticut. Its purpose was to extend and enhance a similar study that was conducted last year, and to stimulate further evaluation of these programs.

A survey was mailed to about 400 schools and 100 schools were randomly selected for a follow-up reminder to complete and return the survey. Fifty-one surveys were returned and data from these surveys was compiled, analyzed, and used to evaluate the Student Assistance Teams in Connecticut.

Administrative Support: The vast majority of Student Assistance Teams (SAT), over 94%, included the active involvement of a school administrator, thereby demonstrating the commitment to Student Assistance at the administrative level.

Referrals: About 8.2% of all traditional elementary school students were referred to SATs compared with 12.3% of middle school students, and 7.2% of high school students. The primary reason for referrals across all grade levels was problem classroom behaviors and poor academic performance. Other prominent referral reasons at the high school level were referrals for depression, alcohol/drug policy violations, suicide issues, and weapons. 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. Support groups and behavior monitoring were the two assistance options used most often by high school SATs. Referrals to DCF were made by 25% of elementary schools, 30% of middle schools, but only 19% of high schools. Referrals for “outside” counseling were made by 18% of elementary schools, 34% of middle of schools and 23% of high schools. Other supportive in-school services include mentoring, parent education and peer tutoring.

Effectiveness: When asked for examples of program effectiveness, 25% of responding Student Assistance Teams reported that students demonstrated academic and social improvements, while 13% of the teams cited reductions in special education testing. Significantly increased ability of the SAT staff to both detect problem behaviors and effectively intervene, strengthening parent/child/teacher relationships and improving outside agency involvement were also cited.

Cost Savings: Some of the respondents reported substantial cost savings from Student Assistance Programs, particularly related to decreased need for special education testing and residential outplacements for students. Respondents specified savings such as:

- An estimated a 42% reduction in special education testing overall
- A \$120,000 savings due to a decrease in placement to a residential setting
- An estimated reduction of \$44,420 in special education testing