

SAP OVERVIEW

Since 1989, The Governor's Prevention Partnership has been working with schools across the state to develop Student Assistance Programs. Students who are successful in school are less likely to get involved in risky behaviors such as substance abuse or violence. Research shows clearly that if adults can reach kids as they begin to show behaviors of concern, they are more likely to be able to turn those behaviors around and help students succeed. Student Assistance Programs are the primary mechanism in a school for prevention and early intervention activities. They foster student success and healthy development, enhance a safe school environment, and promote opportunities for knowledge, skill, attitude, and behavior development.

A Student Assistance Program is a school-based prevention and early intervention program for students in kindergarten through twelfth grades. Prevention is an active process of creating conditions and fostering personal attributes that promote the well being of people. Early intervention includes activities that strengthen an individual and that individual's environment by interrupting risky behaviors and influencing healthy change.

The Student Assistance Team is the key component of the system. The team, usually composed of an administrator, teachers, psychologist, social worker, counselor and other key staff, accepts referrals from members of the school community and parents about students who are exhibiting behaviors that are interfering with their education. These behaviors may involve academic, behavioral, social or emotional difficulties, as well as alcohol-and-other drug involvement. The team gathers information and develops a plan that builds on students' strengths and meets their needs to get them back on track. The team collaborates closely with teachers and parents to intervene quickly before a problem becomes entrenched. When appropriate, the team refers students with mental health or substance abuse treatment needs to outside resources.

Other program components include:

- ❖ Systemic prevention and intervention procedures and supports
- ❖ Development and coordination of assistance activities and resources
- ❖ Clear communication to students, staff, parents and administrators
- ❖ Ongoing program development and promotion
- ❖ Timely evaluation of program processes and results

Typical Program Goals

- 1) To promote early identification of and help for students whose problems interfere with school performance.
- 2) To formalize an easily accessible, highly visible, strengths-based helping system within the school that views student misbehavior and academic difficulty as symptoms of student need.
- 3) To increase student awareness of the school's concern and helping resources to promote a school atmosphere that communicates that seeking help is not only acceptable, but encouraged.
- 4) To teach coping skills and information to all students in order to prevent future problems.
- 5) To increase staff awareness of the type and extent of problems currently faced by children and youth.
- 6) To increase staff awareness of helping resources in the school and to increase staff referrals to these resources for specific academic, behavioral, social, or emotional problems.
- 7) To strengthen communication between school and parents.
- 8) To provide educational and helping resources for parents.
- 9) To increase interaction between school and community to provide community support and resources for youth.

Potential Outcomes

- Increased number of students identified and assisted
- Increased staff willingness to identify and refer students
- Improved attendance rates
- Decreased drop-out rates
- Decreased alcohol and other drug involvement
- Decreased disciplinary problems and suspensions
- Increased student achievement as measured by grades and achievement tests
- More accurate placements in special education; reduction of special education placements
- Decreased expenditures for special education
- Increased school-parent contact and cooperation
- Increased school-community coordination of services