



**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's**  
**Student Assistance Program**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**and Best Practice Responses**



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**Provided by: Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS)**

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\* School counselor is used to denote school or guidance counselor in this document.

## Frequently Asked Questions and Best Practice Responses

### SAP RELATED LAWS AND GUIDELINES

**1. Are all school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools required to have Student Assistance Programs?**

Yes. Pursuant to sections 1547 and 1732-A of the School Code, 24 PS §§ 15-1547, 17-1732-A, 17-1749-A, and 22 Pa Code Chapter 12, 22 Pa. Code 12.42, all school districts, charter schools and cyber charter schools (collectively, "school entities") are required to have Student Assistance Programs (SAP). Every school within a school entity should have SAP.

**2. Are Pre-K programs required to have SAP?**

No. A school entity is not required to provide SAP services to Pre-K students. A school entity is not prohibited from providing these services, but if SAP services are provided to Pre-K students, the school entity should address this in its comprehensive and integrated K-12 program of student services plan developed pursuant to 22 Pa. Code 12.41 and 22 Pa. Code 4.13(c).

**3. At a minimum, who should be members of a SAP team?**

SAP team members should be representatives from any or all of the following groups: administrator, teacher, counselor, psychologist, school social worker, nurse, or other related professional staff. It is recommended that each SAP team consist of at least four members, but the size of the team should be sufficient to effectively handle the caseload.

Representatives from the county behavioral health and drug and alcohol systems should be appointed as liaisons to SAP teams.

**4. What training is required to serve on a SAP team?**

All team members must successfully complete SAP K-12 training conducted by a commonwealth-approved SAP training provider (see also questions 34-45 below).

**5. What is the role of administration on a SAP team?**

Each school building should have a building level administrator who is properly trained and who serves as an essential member of the SAP team. Additionally, each school entity should have a central office administrator who is properly trained and who serves as an ad-hoc member to the SAP team(s) within the school entity in order to ensure that the SAP teams are operational.

**6. Can a school have more than one SAP team?**

Yes, due to caseload, building size and student population, many schools have separate teams. There is nothing that prohibits a school from having more than one team as long as there are adequate team members and time to process referrals.

**7. How often should a SAP team meet?**

The best practice guideline is that SAP teams should have a minimum of 80 minutes per week/cycle available for team work. Included in that time frame could be:

- At least 40 minutes per week or cycle for team members' common meeting time, and;
- Planning time for case management/intervention activities.

It is recommended that meeting times occur during the contract day, and not be assigned during the teacher preparation periods.

**8. How is technical assistance provided to SAP teams?**

Each year PA Network for Student Assistance Services (PNSAS) requests SAP core team information. This provides the most up-to-date basic team information. Upon review, SAP Regional Coordinators can offer technical assistance based on any identified area of need. Also, many county SAP coordination teams will routinely review local team implementation and extend assistance when needed. At any point in time, school entities and SAP teams may contact their regional coordinator to request assistance.

**9. What is SAP team maintenance and how often should it occur?**

Team maintenance includes those activities and interactions designed to promote cooperation and respectful working relationships among SAP team members. Its purpose is to maintain the emotional health of the team members and to ensure the quality of the SAP process so that SAP teams effectively work together as a problem-solving group when dealing with at-risk issues.

The best practice is for the school entity to provide time for team maintenance sessions at least once or twice a year. SAP agency liaisons should be included in maintenance activities. For at least one session, it is advisable for the facilitator to be a non-team member, knowledgeable of group dynamics and SAP.

**10. What happens if a school entity does not have a SAP team?**

If a school entity does not have “a program to provide appropriate counseling and support services for students experiencing problems with drugs, alcohol, and dangerous substances” (i.e., SAP services), the school entity would be in violation of section 1547 of the School Code and 22 Pa. Code 12.42. If someone is aware that a school entity is not making SAP available to all students and reports it to PDE or PNSAS, staff will contact the school entity to offer technical assistance and may subsequently schedule a site visit. PDE and PNSAS will provide technical assistance to help the

school entity come into compliance with the requirements of section 1547 of the School Code and 22 Pa. Code Chapter 12. School entities that do not provide required student services may assume liability for the failure to do so.

**11. Is there anything in the law that prevents SAP team members from working with Special Education students?**

No. On the contrary, SAP teams are encouraged to work very closely with Special Education programs and SAP services are to be made available to all students.

**12. Should school entities have a SAP coordinator to make sure that services are provided according to the law?**

Yes, school entities should have designated SAP coordinators. It is recommended that coordination efforts be conducted by a member of the administration.

**13. Are schools mandated to provide support groups?**

No. However, support groups are tremendously beneficial and every effort should be made to provide groups for students in need.

**14. What type of assistance should the SAP team offer students who are returning from inpatient/other out of school placements?**

At the very least, the SAP case manager or school counselor should stay in touch with the inpatient or out-of-school placement provider during the duration of the placement, and whenever possible, be advised of that agency's recommendations for successful re-integration back into school. The SAP team should discuss the recommendations during a SAP team meeting to determine if it can address the needs or refer to other services/supports within the school/community. However, if reentry into the school entity occurs without prior notification, the team should still meet to address the needs of the student. With an appropriate release from the inpatient or out-of-school placement provider, information can be exchanged to help the student successfully transition to the home school. (Please note that for drug & alcohol treatment services, the release from the treatment provider must be signed by the student.)

The SAP case manager or school counselor may contact the parents and/or provider to determine ongoing needs.

Some suggestions would include, but are not limited to:

- Tutoring to help with lost school time
- In-school supports such as mentoring, peer support, or a similar type of program
- Aftercare, transition, other support groups
- One-on-one follow-up with school counselor

- If School Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) is implemented in the school and staff has received the proper training, they could offer check-in check-out, or check and connect. Both are programs that require training.

**15. What if a principal or school counselor ignores the SAP process and handles the SAP referral on his/her own, thereby circumventing the established protocol?**

Once a referral is made to SAP, the defined process must be followed. If in-school supports are needed and the school counselor or social worker is available, he/she may provide school-based counseling as part of the process. If an agency liaison has assessed the student and determined that outpatient treatment services are appropriate, then referral to the school-based outpatient treatment therapist would be appropriate (where available). The student assistance process should not be changed for individual students unless crisis situations arise.

**16. Must SAP teams submit annual SAP reporting data?**

Yes. Each school entity shall submit anonymous student referral data through the commonwealth SAP online Reporting System utilizing the PDE-4092 form. Teams are encouraged to enter data throughout the school year. The system is available to input data early in the school year through the end of the school year, at which time teams must select the button to “release” the data to PDE. To obtain information for the PDE-4092, SAP teams should assess each case periodically for effectiveness of individual interventions, recommendations, outcomes and goal attainment. The PDE-4092 data is reported via safe schools online at [www.safeschools.state.pa.us](http://www.safeschools.state.pa.us), and is due annually on June 30.

**17. Can the SAP team provide treatment?**

No. SAP is not a treatment program. SAP utilizes effective and accountable professional techniques to mobilize school resources to remove the barriers to learning and, where the problem is beyond the scope of the school, to assist the parent and the student with information so they may access services within the community. SAP teams members do not diagnose, treat or refer for treatment, but they may refer for a screening/assessment for treatment.

**18. Is there an interface between SAP and Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY)?**

Yes. The Basic Education Circular (BEC), Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth 24 P.S. § 1901-1906 C, states “Placement in an AEDY program may occur only when other established methods of discipline and intervention (such as student assistance) have been utilized and have failed, unless the seriousness of the student’s behavior warrants immediate placement. School districts are required to demonstrate that any student recommended for placement in an AEDY program has participated in the Student Assistance Program.” The entire AEDY BEC is available on the PA Department of Education website, click [here](#).

**19. What is the difference between SAP and Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII)? If our school uses RtII do we need SAP?**

SAP is mandated by section 1547 of the School Code and 22 Pa. Code 12.42. SAP provides identified students with support and referral to interventions for confidential help to safely and effectively deal with situations that may be causing a barrier to learning. Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) is a process that provides intervention and educational support to all students at increasing levels of intensity based on their needs.

**POLICY/RECORDS**

**20. Do school entities need to have written policy and procedures for their Student Assistance Program? How often should it be reviewed and updated?**

School entities should have written policy/procedures that address their SAPs, including duties of the SAP team members and the SAP process within the school entity.

The collection, maintenance and dissemination of student records, including SAP records, should be addressed by the school entity's records policy, which must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. For example, a parent's right to student records is governed by both federal and state law (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99; 22 Pa. Code § 12.31).

SAP policy/procedures must conform to applicable state and federal laws and regulations and should be reviewed frequently (at least every two years or when a relevant law has been amended). SAP team members should receive a written copy and all staff should receive professional development related to SAP. Parents and students should also be aware of the SAP process and policy.

**21. Can a post-secondary school (college, university, military) request and have access to SAP records?**

The school entity must make this decision after referring to its records policy. If SAP records are provided and the student is under the age of 18, parent permission must be first obtained. If a student is over 18 and not a Special Education student, parent permission is not required, and the student must sign permission to release the records.

**22. Can the student being referred to the SAP process have access to his or her own SAP records?**

If the student is under 18, parental permission is required for the student to access their own SAP records. If the student is over 18 and not a Special Education student, parent permission is not required for the student to access their own SAP records.

**23. Are school entities obligated to release the name(s) of the person who referred the student to SAP?**

Releasing the name of the referral source is not a routine practice in the SAP process. However, if requested, parents do have the right to review their child's SAP record. The school entity should adhere to its records policy as it relates to access to records.

**24. What is a legitimate educational interest?**

A school entity must inform parents how it defines legitimate educational interest in its annual notification. Generally, a school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his/her professional responsibilities for the school entity. Legitimate educational interest does not include simply having a curiosity about the academic record or disciplinary proceedings with regard to a student. Thus, all records of students should not be available to all school entity faculty or staff. Please refer to your school entity's records policy related to this area.

**25. Are SAP teams permitted to share records with other SAP teams within the school entity (i.e. elementary to middle school, middle school to high school)?**

Yes. For continuity and ongoing support, teams are encouraged to share records with the next building especially since transitions are difficult for many students. The goal is to maintain consistent support so the student is successful in the new building or has SAP connections if needed.

Sharing information is definitely needed if the team is actively working with the student at the end of the school year. To avoid the student regressing unnecessarily, interventions can be implemented early on in the year. There are many variations on how this is addressed within each school entity. The building teams can decide how/what information would be helpful to share, but the discussion needs to occur. Keep in mind: you want to provide SAP K-12 support and follow-up, so develop your plan for this to be accomplished as students move to different buildings.

Of course, the school entity's records policy should be adhered to at all times.

**26. Are SAP teams permitted to share records with other school districts?**

The school entity must make this decision after referring to its records policy; however, SAP files should be included in the list of educational records on the transfer of educational records form. The parent/guardian signs this form and it is sent to the original school to obtain academic and other educational records. When the new school entity receives the files, the SAP files should only be shared with SAP personnel.

**27. Is there any type of release needed when a part-time Career and Technology Center (CTC) refers a student back to his/her sending school and plans to share information with the school?**

The part-time CTC can send and receive SAP referral forms without obtaining extra documentation. It is advisable to communicate with the home school to assist with this transition. Prior to the return, a CTC SAP team member could attend a meeting at the home school to plan for the move.

**28. What routinely should be kept in a student's SAP educational record?**

When in doubt about what should be placed in a student's SAP record, consider the following suggestions (this list is not all inclusive):

- Referral form with reason for referral (should only include objective, observable behaviors, not opinion and hearsay)
- Date and SAP team action
- Date and outcome of parental contacts
- Student information forms (behavioral observation forms)
- Written parent permission form
- Documentation of parent refusal
- Documentation of follow-up contact with parents
- Date and SAP team action following parent permission
- If applicable, the name of agency and the date the screening or assessment was completed. Do not include dates of Drug & Alcohol Level of Care Assessments in the record without a release signed by the student from the assessment provider.
- If applicable, agency and/or district release of information forms
- Follow-up action taken by SAP team
- Copy of SAP Student Reporting form (PDE 4092)

\*It is recommended not to include any written copies of reports from treatment agencies with the SAP record.

**29. If a SAP referral source (such as a teacher) completes a SAP referral form and includes opinionated comments on the student rather than observable behaviors and the SAP team asks the referral source to send a revised referral form listing observables behaviors, is the original SAP referral form still considered part of the educational record? Should it be kept or can it be destroyed?**

It is not required that school entities keep the initial form, but it's better practice to have a complete record. In other words, the original referral should be part of the record and that the person who provided the referral be asked to rewrite it to include only observable behaviors. Also, the school should also include in the student's file that the "opinionated comments" were rejected or not considered and that a revised referral form was provided.

**30. Should SAP records for students currently enrolled in school be kept in the student’s main permanent file instead of separately?**

Due to the confidential nature of the SAP record, it is advisable to maintain the SAP record separate from the main permanent file. SAP records are part of the student’s educational file; however, they can be maintained in a separate secure location with restricted access. They should be kept in a secure location, such as in a locked filing cabinet or a permanent secure database. Maintenance, access, and dissemination of the records should be done in accordance with the school entity’s records policy.

**31. Can SAP school records be kept electronically?**

Yes, if the following is maintained:

- SAP teams must comply with their school entity’s electronic media and student record retention/information policies.
- Student information must be protected as per FERPA at all times.
- Compiled data must be accessed by only those with a legitimate educational interest.

Also remember that, once in cyberspace information can’t be disposed of in the way paper can.

**32. Can behavior checklists (student information forms) be collected electronically?**

Yes, as long as the school entity adheres to conditions noted in question #31. It is also imperative once a behavior checklist is submitted electronically that it can only be accessed or sent to SAP personnel. It is vital to ensure that technology procedural safeguards are in place to secure email transmission and storage. If necessary, refer to the school entity’s technology plan.

**33. How long do SAP records need to be kept and how should they be destroyed?**

SAP records, since they are part of the student’s file, fall under whatever the school entity’s policy states about purging student records. The school entity’s records policy should indicate when SAP records should be reviewed and retained or eliminated.

**TRAINING**

**34. What training is required for SAP team members?**

All team members are required to successfully complete SAP K-12 training conducted by a commonwealth approved SAP training provider. This is professional training for team members in all phases of the student assistance process, which is consistent with state guidelines and conducted by a training provider approved by the commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee. This ensures the appropriateness of the recommended services, effective interagency collaboration, and compliance with state and federal laws protecting the privacy rights of parents and students.

Student assistance team members are trained to identify problems, determine whether or not the representing problems lie within the responsibility of the school, and make recommendations to assist the student and the parent.

The rigorous training required for team members, which results in a certificate from the commonwealth approved training provider, ensures the board of school directors, school administrators, parents, students and the public that team members have received up-to-date professional training. Training is consistent with accountable standards and appropriate professional procedures. Commonwealth approved SAP training providers issue certificates to trainees after completion of the training and on-site competency assignments.

**35. How often should SAP team members receive SAP training and what resources are available to update team members?**

Currently, there is neither a training certificate expiration date nor a retraining requirement. However, to remain up-to-date, a SAP member has to attend updates, networking days and be an active member of a team. If this has not occurred, retraining is necessary. Also, in situations where someone had basic SAP core team training prior to 1999 and has not been on a team for years, it is recommended that they be retrained before participating as a member.

Additionally, it is best practice for all SAP team members to attend SAP-related trainings on at-risk issues, interviewing students, legal issues, etc. To substantiate SAP training completion, team members are expected to maintain SAP training certificates and related training records.

One tool available to provide updated information consistent with current SAP K-12 training is the SAP K-12 bridge training modules, located on the SAP website at [www.pnsas.org](http://www.pnsas.org). These modules could be used for team maintenance or refresher activities with teams (certificates will not be issued). Also, many SAP county coordination/district councils sponsor yearly SAP updates/training.

**36. Can support/service staff attend SAP Training?**

Yes, support/service staff such as nurse assistants, office personnel, and school bus drivers may attend SAP Awareness Training for non-team members. Please note: see question #38.

**37. Can educators trained only in SAP Awareness or Leadership Training serve on a SAP team?**

No, they must attend the full SAP K-12 team training.

**38. What is the difference between SAP K-12 Training, SAP Leadership Training, SAP Awareness Training and Renewal Training?**

SAP K-12 Training is a competency-based training for new team members. *It is the only training that permits individuals to serve on SAP teams,* kindergarten through 12th grade.

SAP Leadership Training is provided to school and community leaders with an up-to-date understanding of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Student Assistance Program model and its effective implementation to assist at-risk students in our schools. The training will focus on issues of importance to school district administrators, building principals, assistant principals, school board members and other school staff in leadership roles as well as administrators of SAP-related drug and alcohol and mental health agencies. Participants will receive information on current best practices in SAP, the legal environment in which student assistance operates in Pennsylvania, and strategies for measuring, maintaining, improving, and supporting SAP in their schools.

SAP Awareness Training is to provide school staff that will not be serving as members of a SAP core team (i.e. bus drivers, support staff, etc.) with an understanding of the current Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's SAP model. The training will focus on student behavioral and performance indicators that warrant a referral to the student assistance core team. Participants will receive information on current best practices in SAP, the role of school staff who are not members of the core team, the referral process, and expected outcomes from a SAP referral.

SAP Renewal Training is designed for individuals who attended SAP training more than three years ago to enhance their roles and learn of new changes in SAP. This is often utilized as team maintenance training and can be customized to the individual school SAP team's needs.

**39. If an individual is trained in the secondary SAP model, are they permitted to serve on an elementary SAP team?**

No, not if trained prior to 2012, since there were separate elementary and secondary SAP training models. In 2012, the SAP training model was changed to include K-12 and those who are trained can serve on either an elementary or secondary team. An individual who was trained prior to 2012 and has completed the SAP K-12 Bridge training may also serve on either team.

**40. Can an individual go to the SAP training, come back to their school entity and provide training for others?**

No. The Pennsylvania SAP model, as outlined in Basic Education Circular (BEC) 24. P.S. §15.1547, requires that all SAP team members be individually trained by a commonwealth-approved SAP training provider. SAP-trained individuals are not certified as trainers simply through attending a SAP training and are not approved by the commonwealth to provide SAP K-12 training to other team members.

**41. Do you have to complete the Group Facilitator's Training before co-facilitating an educational support group with the Mental Health or Drug/Alcohol Liaison?**

Yes. In order to understand the purpose, function, and boundaries of educational support groups along with co-facilitation responsibilities, attending group facilitator's training is strongly advised. Check with your local commonwealth-approved trainer for availability as these are typically scheduled based on request/need.

**42. Does Pennsylvania have reciprocity with any other states for SAP core team participation?**

No. The Pennsylvania SAP K-12 training model is very specific to regulations and policies required in Pennsylvania. Fidelity is maintained through a comprehensive statewide training and monitoring system with collaborative oversight by representatives of the SAP Interagency Team. SAP team members may only serve on a SAP team upon successful completion of the PA SAP training.

**43. Can a graduate intern attend SAP training?**

Yes, graduate interns may attend SAP training as a representative of the school entity in which they are completing their internship. The graduate intern must maintain core team affiliation during his/her internship in order to complete the core competency requirement.

**44. Can an undergraduate student attend SAP training?**

No. Pre-service teachers are not permitted to receive SAP training in Pennsylvania. This applies to any undergraduate level program (all disciplines).

**45. Can interns, long-term substitutes, or student teachers attend SAP meetings?**

No. Only SAP team members may attend meetings. To be a member of the SAP team and attend meetings, you must complete SAP training.

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**46. If a student has demonstrated emotional or behavioral concerns that have affected their learning, what can a parent/guardian do to get help for their child?**

The parent/guardian should contact the school entity to request access to the SAP process for their child. Along with the parent/guardian(s), the SAP team may recommend that a student receive in-school supports tailored to meet the needs of the student. If the student's needs go beyond the scope of the school, the team will recommend a screening/assessment by a community drug and alcohol or mental health liaison or other community services.

**47. Is written parental/guardian consent needed for the SAP process?**

Yes. It is mandatory for the SAP process to continue from data collection to meeting with the student. The Protection of Pupil Rights Act (PPRA) requires that the student's and parent's rights be recognized and respected, especially in instances of surveys, analysis, or evaluations. PPRA requires written parental permission when interviewing students regarding ".....mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family; sex behavior or attitudes; illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior...."

**48. Is student permission needed for SAP?**

No. While it is advantageous to have a student's approval to be involved in SAP, there is no requirement to do so. If the student is not agreeable to the process, preparatory work on awareness of the program with the student to initiate change will be helpful. Also, keep in mind, laws related to student permission may be different for agency services, if warranted.

**49. Can school districts utilize behavior checklists (student information forms) without parent/guardian permission?**

Yes, if this is your school entity's SAP process. Data collection conducted in the normal course of instructional activity does not require parental/guardian permission, unless your SAP team process indicates that you will obtain such permission.

**50. When a parent/guardian gives written permission for the SAP process, does that permission also cover the mental health and/or drug and alcohol screening/assessment conducted by a SAP liaison or provider agency if recommended by the SAP team?**

No. The SAP team has to obtain a separate written parental permission for the screening/assessment. One of the functions of the SAP team is to foster parental/guardian involvement throughout the SAP process. Written parent/guardian permission should be obtained for the following three areas of the SAP process:

- A. Initial onset of the SAP process (this can be before or after student information forms are collected as long as it is before student interview);
- B. When the SAP team suggests a MH and/or D&A screening/assessment; and/or
- C. If any in-school supports, such as an educational support group, are recommended.

**51. What if a student is referred to SAP and a parent/guardian refuses to allow their child to be involved in the Student Assistance Program?**

The SAP team would make a written record of the refusal. Best practice would then be to check back with the referral source 30 days after the original referral. The SAP team should keep lines of communication open and maintain a log of all calls/actions including the date and times the parents have been called. The school may suggest different supports that are available to the parent and child. The rights of parents/guardians under PPRA must be observed.

**52. Do both parents have to sign for SAP services to proceed?**

The SAP team must adhere to the school entity's policy regarding parental consent and/or custody agreements.

**53. How long are written parent/guardian consents for the SAP process valid?**

SAP consents are only valid for the current school year that the consent was obtained. If the student is referred more than once during the school year, it is advisable to obtain a new consent.

There could be exceptions to this, such as the following:

- A. The consent form indicates a termination date; and/or
- B. The student turns 18 or becomes emancipated.

**54. Can an 18 year-old unemancipated student provide written consent for the SAP process?**

The SAP team should follow the established school entity policy for parental consent once a student is 18. That policy would apply to SAP consent as well. In many school entities, even after the student has turned 18 years old, parent consent continues to be required for any school document/function.

**AGENCY**

**55. Can individuals representing county and/or community-based liaison agencies serve on a SAP team?**

Yes. The Pennsylvania SAP model incorporates liaisons for drug and alcohol and mental health services. Annual written letters of agreement between the liaison agency and the school entity authorize the liaison's involvement on the SAP team. Be cautious if a new agency offers to provide SAP services that already are being provided. You do not want to duplicate services or circumvent the established protocol. Questions related to liaison services should be directed to your county drug/alcohol and/or mental health administrator. Also, you can contact your PNSAS regional coordinator for assistance.

**56. Can other agency personnel such as school-based probation officers, children and youth case managers, and school resource officers serve on SAP teams?**

Yes. If an individual representing one of these entities is trained in the PA SAP model and works closely with the school district, he or she can serve on the SAP team through written letters of agreement. If one of these individuals has not completed SAP training, he or she is not permitted to be a part of the SAP team, but can be invited to sit in on specific cases that are also on the individual's caseload.

**57. Should an outpatient therapist, providing treatment in the school building, sit on the SAP team?**

No. It is important, however, that a communication mechanism be developed so that with appropriate releases "need to know" educational information is relayed back to the SAP team. This needs to occur so the team can monitor the intervention plan and provide follow-up.

**58. Does Act 147 of 2004, which amended the PA Mental Health Procedures Act (Minors Consent Act), affect SAP in schools?**

No. Act 147 of 2004 does not affect referral and participation in SAP because SAP is not a treatment program. The focus of SAP is on identification of barriers to learning and referral for assessment if needed. However, liaisons and SAP professionals should be versed in this law in order to help schools, parents, and students navigate the mental health treatment process.

**59. What is the difference between a SAP screening and SAP assessment?**

**SAP screening** - A face-to-face interview between the referred student and SAP liaison. This interview is conducted at the school setting during regular school hours, unless otherwise indicated. The purpose of the interview is to gather information from the student related to school-based data as well as other identified areas of concern impacting student behavior. The screening determines the level of concern, and develops an action plan to include additional services, if necessary. This screening could also determine if a clinical assessment is needed for further evaluation.

**SAP assessment** - A face-to-face interview with the student and/or family conducted by a Drug/Alcohol or Mental Health professional. Typically, this assessment occurs in an agency, but in some counties may be conducted in the school setting. The purpose of the assessment is to determine the need for and/or level of care of treatment. The assessment may include, but not limited to, the following areas: psychosocial history; drug/alcohol and mental health history; medical, educational, recreational, family, sexual, and/or legal history; other agency/system involvement.

Contact your county administrators for drug and alcohol or mental health as each may have different expectations for the role of the SAP liaison in a school setting.

**60. Do SAP Liaisons have to provide services to all public elementary, secondary, charter, cyber charter schools, and all non-public schools if they have a SAP team?**

Funding for basic SAP services is available to all public secondary schools. The Department of Human Services provides funding to the County MH/ID programs for mental health services and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs provides funding to the SCA's for drug and alcohol services. Services for public elementary, charter, cyber-charter, and non-public schools depend on the availability of funds. Therefore, collaboration with the County MH/ID or County Drug & Alcohol Program is strongly recommended to ascertain the availability of liaison resources and other funding options (i.e. grants) to assist with program implementation for sites other than secondary schools.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

**61. Where does the funding come from for SAP teams and training?**

There is no direct funding from the PA Department of Education for SAP. However, school entities and non-public schools can apply for and use local and state grants to support SAP.

Each county/county joiner receives funds from the PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs to provide drug and alcohol liaison services to schools and from the PA Department of Human Services to provide mental health liaison services to schools.

**62. If we have a School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (SWPBIS) core team, do we have to have a SAP team?**

SAP is mandatory, whereas SWPBIS is not. Though a SAP team is required, there are no regulations as to whether these teams can be combined as long as they continue to meet the requirements of SAP. If you would like to combine the efforts of the teams required of both initiatives, please contact your regional SAP coordinator for assistance in making this happen.

**63. Should school entities participate in SAP County Coordination?**

Yes. School entities should participate in SAP county coordination team meetings. The mission of SAP coordination teams is to provide the leadership, planning and coordination necessary to implement effective SAP services at the county or county joiner level. Focus will be placed on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Student Assistance design, which is to assist school personnel to identify issues, including alcohol, drugs and others, which pose a barrier to a student's learning and school success.

**Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Interagency Committee**

**PA Departments of Education, Drug and Alcohol Programs, and Human Services**

[www.pnsas.org](http://www.pnsas.org)