PENNSYLVANIA STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR NEW TEAMS

The intent of this document is to provide an overview of the essential components needed to insure the longevity and efficacy of the Student Assistance Program. These guidelines are considered best practice for the functioning of Student Assistance and are intended to provide direction and support to new teams in the school districts.

1.   The school will develop a core team including a central office representative (i.e. superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum and instruction, director of pupil services, etc.) and a building administrator (i.e. principal, assistant/vice principal) from each building where the SAP will be instituted. These two team slots are nonnegotiable, and the administrators must attend the entire training. Past experience has demonstrated that training and leadership has served to produce more successful teams.

- Administrators who are lost through attrition must be replaced on the SAP teams. New administrators serving on SAP teams must be SAP trained.

- There should be a minimum of 4 members of the SAP team, representative of all the groups that comprise school staff. Remaining team members (at least four per building) may be representatives from any or all of the following groups: teacher, counselor, psychologist, nurse, or other related professional staff.

- SAP Teams are to have connections to and set up linkages with services within the community. Representatives from the county behavioral health and drug and alcohol systems will be appointed as liaisons to core teams and will attend training with their teams. Should the school have difficulty in securing this service, the chief school administrator should contact the county drug and alcohol and/or behavioral health administrator.

2.   SAP Teams should have a minimum of 80 minutes per week/cycle available for team work.

- SAP teams should be provided a common meeting time of at least 40 minutes per week or cycle.

- Included in the 80 minutes is the planning time used for case management/intervention activities.

- It is strongly recommended that this meeting time occur during the contract day, and not be assigned during the teacher preparation periods.

3.   All team members must attend the entire training provided by a Pennsylvania Approved SAP training Provider (PASTP) to be eligible for a SAP certificate.

4.   The process for accessing SAP services and the steps utilized by the SAP team when a referral is received should be published and distributed to school staff, board members, students, parents, and the community.

5. The school will allocate at least seven hours of in-service/faculty meeting time throughout the first calendar year of program implementation.

- The in-service would be to inform faculty/support staff about the components of the Student Assistance Program and explain the procedures for making referrals to the core team.

- After the first year, topics related to SAP should become a part of yearly in-services.

- All new faculty/staff should receive, through the school's orientation program, an overview of SAP and an explanation of the procedures for making referrals to the core team.

- Information on SAP should be made available to all students and parents on a yearly basis.

6. The school will orient the school board on SAP prior to training and update them on SAP activities yearly.

7. The school will develop/revise their drug/alcohol and suicide/behavioral health policies to incorporate SAP.

   The PASTP will review district policies prior to training of new SAP teams. Both policies should be reviewed by administration at least once every two years and, if necessary, have revisions adopted by the board.

8. The school will develop guidelines on how parents will become involved in the SAP process.

9. The SAP Team will develop ways to work closely with other initiatives in the building to address the needs of students. (i.e. MTSS, PBIS, etc.)

10. The SAP Team, working with parents and agencies, is to provide supports for students receiving, or who have received, services from any child-serving agency. The school will establish educational support groups* for students dealing with a variety of issues that interfere with the academic mission of the school within one calendar year of completion of the initial SAP training.

- Students in out-patient services or those returning from treatment should receive school-based educational support services.

- Group facilitators must attend a group facilitator's training with an emphasis on child and adolescent issues prior to conducting groups.

- Group facilitator training must assist those running groups to separate educational support groups from therapy groups.

- All groups conducted in the school should be co-facilitated by at least one school person. A plan for coordinating services with drug/alcohol and behavioral health providers should be developed.

11. The school will provide time for team maintenance activities at least twice a year.

- Drug/alcohol and behavioral health agency liaisons should be included in maintenance activities.

12. The agency service provider and school will negotiate a written cooperative agreement with the local drug and alcohol and behavioral health agency service system that outlines the following: central referral procedures, consultation/education services, designated liaisons from the drug and alcohol and behavioral health systems, assessment services, emergency crisis assistance,

and provisions for treatment, including aftercare. Detailed Letters of Agreement between the schools and the county MH/ID and D&A offices should be written, outlining respective roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

- This letter of agreement will be written and signed by agency administrators/directors and school administrators.

- The agreement and/or any changes will be negotiated at a minimum of once per year.

- A copy of the letter of agreement must be sent to the school's County Mental Health/Intellectual Disability Administrator and Single County Authority.

- A copy of the letter of agreement will be shared with the SAP Team.

13. The school will utilize the conflict resolution process if problems occur between service provider agencies `and the school.

14. Each school should submit anonymous on-line referral data through the On-Line Reporting System (PDE 4092) at www.safeschools.pa.gov and other information as requested by the Commonwealth.

15. Agency service providers may provide Educational Support Groups in the school, which are defined as follows: The primary purpose of an educational support group is to provide a safe environment for members of the group to sharpen life-skills, discover new and appropriate behaviors and to increase self-awareness.

* Definition - Educational Support Group: The primary purpose of an educational support group is to provide a safe environment for group members to sharpen life-skills, discover new and appropriate behaviors, and to increase self-awareness.