Pennsylvania's Student Assistance Program: Frequently Asked Questions and Best Practice Responses

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Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Programs (PNSAS)

www.pnsas.org

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
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The mission of the Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services is to provide leadership for developing a safe and drug-free environment, and mental health and wellness in schools and communities across the commonwealth. Barriers to learning will be removed and student academic achievement will be enhanced through collaborative prevention, intervention, and postvention services.

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ACRONYM LIST

AEDY: Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth
BEC: Basic Education Circular
BH: Behavioral Health
CASSP: Child and Adolescent Service System Program
CTC: Career and Technical Center
D&A: Drug and Alcohol
DDAP: Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
DHS: Department of Human Services
FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
IST: Instructional Support Teams
JQRS: Joint Quarterly Reporting System
LOA: Letter of Agreement
MH: Mental Health
MH/ID: Mental Health /Intellectual Disabilities
MH/IDD: Mental Health /Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
MTSS: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
OMHSAS: Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
PASAP: Pennsylvania Association of Student Assistance Professionals
PASTP: Pennsylvania Approved SAP Training Provider
PBIS: Positive Behavior Intervention and Support
PCCD: Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency
PDE: Pennsylvania Department of Education
PDE 4092: PDE's SAP reporting form
PNSAS: Pennsylvania Network for Student Assistance Services
PPRA: Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment
RtII: Response to Instruction and Intervention
SAP: Student Assistance Program
SCA: Single County Authority
SOC: Pennsylvania Systems of Care

STATE RELATED LAWS

1. Are all school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools required to have a Student Assistance Program (SAP)?

Yes, all school entities are required to have SAP for grades K-12. Pursuant to the PA School Code of 1949 Sections 1547, 1732-A, and 1749-A, 24 PS §§ 15-1547, 17-1732-A, 17-1749-A, and 22 Pa. Code §§ 12.16, 12.42, a "school entity" is defined as a local public education provider (i.e., public school, charter school, cyber charter school, career and technical center or intermediate unit).

2. Are Pre-Kindergarten programs required to have SAP?

No. A school entity is not required to provide SAP services to Pre-Kindergarten (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. What happens if a school entity does not have an 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 is in violation of section 1547 of the School Code and 22 Pa. Code 12.42. If PDE or PNSAS is notified that a school entity is not making SAP available to all K-12 students, 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.

4. 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. SAP services are to be made available to all students.

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

Yes. In accordance with 24 P.S. § 1901-1906 C, "placement in an AEDY program should be considered only after all other options for improving behavior have been exhausted. This includes the use of the school's Student Assistance Program (SAP)." More information is available in the Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) Basic Education Circular on the PDE website.

6. Is SAP required if the school has other team-based initiatives (e.g., MTSS, PBIS, IST, etc.) in place?

Yes, 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 school and/or community-based interventions when they are experiencing a barrier to learning.

However, there are no regulations prohibiting an SAP team from being integrated and/or aligned with other team-based initiatives, such as MTSS, PBIS, IST, etc., provided SAP requirements continue to be met. If your school or school entity is interested in working toward integration and/or alignment of SAP with another initiative, please contact your regional SAP Regional Coordinator for assistance.

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

7. At a minimum, who should be members of an SAP team?

SAP team members should be representatives from any or all of the following groups: district or school level administrator, teacher, school counselor, school 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's mental health and drug and alcohol systems may serve as liaisons to SAP teams.

8. What training is required to serve on an SAP team?

All team members are required to successfully complete SAP K-12 training conducted by a Pennsylvania Approved SAP Training Provider (PASTP). See Training FAQs below for more information.

9. What is the role of school administration on an SAP team?

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

10. Is best practice for a school entity to have a designated central office administrator responsible for overseeing SAP K-12?

Yes, best practice is to have a designated central office administrator whose responsibility is district-wide K-12 coordination of SAP.

11. Can a school have more than one SAP team?

Yes, due to caseload, building size and student population, some schools have more than one SAP team. There is nothing that prohibits a school from having more than one team provided there are adequate team members and time to process referrals. Best practice guidelines indicate that each team needs to have an adequate number of members and the needed time to process referrals.

12. How often should an SAP team meet?

SAP teams should have sufficient time each week to engage in the full range of SAP activities. These can include common team meetings, planning time for case management, and identified interventions.

Best practice is for SAP teams to have a common meeting time of once per week or cycle to discuss students. Specific time allocations for team meetings will vary based on school entity needs but should be sufficient to discuss new and ongoing referrals. Ideally, this meeting time would occur during the contract day, and not be assigned during the teacher preparation periods.

13. How can SAP referral sources (e.g., parents/ guardians, students, and staff) be informed of the referral process and their role in making a referral?

The team may want to develop specific communication strategies about the SAP process, who is on your SAP team, and how parents/guardians, students, and staff can make a referral. This could include the following:

- SAP process included in brochures and communication provided to parents/guardians
- Presentations at parent teacher nights/ open houses
- Information tables at back to school and parent teacher nights
- Information included in the student handbooks, district website, school cable channel, email blasts
- SAP information and updates can be provided at in-services and staff meetings

14. How is technical assistance provided to SAP teams?

At any point in time, school entities and SAP teams may contact their SAP Regional Coordinator to request assistance. Also, each year PNSAS requests SAP team information via survey from each school. This provides the most up-to-date information on SAP team structure and functioning. Upon review, SAP Regional Coordinators can offer technical assistance based on any identified area of need. Additionally, county SAP coordination teams routinely review local team implementation and extend assistance when needed.

15. What is SAP team maintenance, and how often should it occur?

Team maintenance includes those activities and processes designed to support collaborative working relationships, effective team functioning, and personal wellness among members within the SAP team. Best practice is for the school entity to provide time for team maintenance at a minimum once a year. SAP agency liaisons should be included in maintenance activities. It is advisable for the facilitator to not be a member of the team. Examples of facilitators include a PNSAS regional coordinator, PASTP.

16. Can students who are receiving out of school services from a community-based provider be referred to SAP?

Yes. It is not redundant for those students to be referred in order for the SAP team to consider other school interventions that may be appropriate. It may also help increase connections between the school, family, and provider.

17. Can the SAP team offer support to a student who is returning from out of school placement?

Yes. It may be appropriate for the SAP team to assist in the student's transition back to school. Reentry should be addressed on an individualized basis to identify potential barriers to learning and appropriate supports.

18. Can the SAP team provide treatment?

No. SAP does not provide treatment and 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, assists the parent/guardian and the student with information so they may access services within the community. SAP team members do not diagnose, treat, or refer for treatment, but they may refer for a screening/assessment for treatment.

As part of the SAP process, an intervention plan is developed that includes strategies for removing the learning barriers and promoting the student's academic and personal success to include in-school services and activities. If the SAP liaison determines intervention is necessary following the screening, they make a recommendation for treatment. Some suggestions for services and activities can include:

Academic / school based supports:

- Academic supports (e.g., tutoring, speech/language supports, Title I, etc.)
- School team supports (e.g., MTSS)
- Group intervention (e.g., Skill building, support)
- Alternative school placement

Individualized interventions:

- One-to-one counseling with school counselor and/or school psychologist
- Services by/from school social worker
- One-to-one follow-up with team member or other school personnel
- Crisis intervention

19. Should the school entity bypass the SAP process and refer a student directly into school-based outpatient treatment?

Best practice is to follow the SAP process, which offers a systematic approach to identifying recommendations based on identified student needs. The process can help build communication and collaboration between the school, family, and community behavioral health partners. One of the roles of the SAP liaisons that sit on SAP teams is

to screen and/or assess referred students, if warranted, in order to offer recommendations to SAP team members and the student's family. These recommendations should promote family choice and informed decision-making by presenting options for supports and services, which may be based in the school or community.

20. Are school entities required to evaluate SAP?

PNSAS does not have any specific requirements for school entities to evaluate SAP. However, there are a range of resources on the PNSAS website to aid SAP teams in assessing their fidelity to best practice guidelines, team functioning, and the school community's perceptions of SAP. Some of these resources include the Implementation Checklist for New SAP Teams, Best Practice Guidelines for Fidelity, SAP Satisfaction Survey, and SAP Members Survey for Improvement of Team Functioning. School SAP teams may contact their PNSAS Regional Coordinator at any time with questions about these documents and how to use them.

Additionally, Act 44 of 2018 mandated the appointment of a School Safety and Security Coordinator within each school entity to coordinate school safety and security assessments. As part of these assessments, school entities must conduct "a student assistance and behavioral health support assessment" which includes "the availability of student assistance programs and behavioral health professionals to provide assistance to the school entity." The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) School Safety and Security Committee developed assessment criteria that closely align with the PNSAS guidelines mentioned above.

21. What data is required to be submitted by SAP teams?

Each school entity must submit non-identified referral data through the SAP online reporting system. The specific data points are found on the PDE 4092 Reporting Form.

The PDE 4092 data is reported via the Pennsylvania Safe Schools Online Application and is due annually no later than June 30.

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.

PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

22. 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 may contact the school entity to start the SAP process for their child and gather additional data. The parent/guardian and/or the SAP team may recommend that a student receive in-school supports tailored to meet their needs. If the data indicates that the student may be experiencing a mental health and/or drug and alcohol concern, the team may refer for a screening/assessment by a community drug and alcohol or mental health liaison.

23. May school entities utilize behavior checklists (student information forms) without parent/guardian permission?

Yes. Data collected in the normal course of instructional activity does not require parent/guardian permission. This varies among school entities, so refer to your SAP team policy for guidance.

24. Is written parental consent required for SAP?

Yes. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) requires that the student's and parent/guardian's rights be recognized and respected, especially in instances of surveys, analysis, or evaluations. PPRA requires written parent/guardian 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."

25. Is student permission required for SAP?

No. If the student is not agreeable to the process, it may be necessary for a team member to explain the benefits of participation. Students may not be familiar with the SAP team or SAP process and may benefit from some discussion or explanation to help them understand how SAP can help. However, laws related to student permission may be different for SAP liaison services, if warranted.

26. 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 an SAP liaison or provider agency if recommended by the SAP team?

No. A separate written parent/guardian permission for the screening/assessment is required. One of the functions of the SAP team is to foster involvement by parents and guardians throughout the SAP process. Written parent/guardian permission should be obtained for the following areas:

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); and/or

B. When the SAP team recommends a Mental Health (MH) and/or a Drug and Alcohol screening/assessment. While the school can collaborate with the agency, the agency is required to gain permission for this screening/assessment.

If any in-school supports, such as an educational support group, are recommended, passive consent is required.

27. What should happen if a student is referred to SAP and a parent/guardian does not consent to the SAP process?

Best practice is to ensure that the parent/guardian is knowledgeable of the SAP process, which can help build communication and collaboration between the school and family. The SAP team should keep lines of communication open and maintain a log of all calls/actions including the date and times the parents/guardians have been called. The school may suggest different supports that are available to the parent/guardian and student. The rights of parent/guardian under PPRA must be observed. The SAP team should make a written record of a refusal and check back with the referral source 30 days after the original referral.

28. Do both of a student's parents/guardians have to sign for the SAP process to proceed?

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

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

A parent/guardian SAP consent is valid for the duration of the SAP Process, including the time needed to complete the referral and action plan process. If a student is referred again later in the school year, verify if the consent is still valid by referencing your school entity's policy.

30. Is a student permitted to sign their own SAP consent?

Regardless of the student's age, the SAP team must follow the school entity's policy for parent/guardian consent. Consideration for student permission should be consistent with school entity policy and should reflect individual circumstances of the student (e.g., emancipated youth).

31. How do I obtain written permission for SAP for a student who is homeless?

When a child is considered homeless and is not living with a parent(s)/guardian, the school entity is required to develop a procedure for obtaining parental permission. Additional information regarding homeless and displaced families is available on the PDE website.

POLICY/RECORDS

32. Do school entities need written policy and procedures for their Student Assistance Program? How often should those policies and procedures be reviewed and updated?

School entities should have written policy/procedures that address SAP, 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/guardian'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 regularly (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/guardians and students should also be made aware of the SAP process and policy.

33. Can a post-secondary school (e.g., 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/guardian permission must be first obtained. If a student is over 18 and not a special education student, parent/guardian permission is not required, and the student must sign permission to release the records.

34. Can the student being referred to the SAP process have access to their own SAP records?

If the student is under 18, parent/guardian 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/guardian permission is not required for the student to access their own SAP records.

35. Are school entities obligated to release the name of individuals who referred students to SAP?

Releasing the name of the referral source is not a routine practice in the SAP process. However, if requested, parents/guardians 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.

36. What is a legitimate educational interest?

A school entity must inform parents/guardians 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 their professional responsibilities for the school entity. Legitimate educational interest does not include simply having a curiosity about a student's academic record or disciplinary proceedings. 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.

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

The school entity's records policy should be adhered at all times. However, 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 of sharing records is to maintain consistent support so the student is successful in the new building.

Sharing information is particularly important for continuity of supports if the team is actively working with the student at the end of the school year. There are many variations on how this is addressed within each school entity. Teaming between building SAP teams would be helpful to determine transition plans and effective communication.

38. Are SAP teams permitted to share records with other school entities?

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 team members.

39. Is a release needed when a part-time Career and Technology Center (CTC) refers a student back to their sending school and plans to share information with the school?

No. 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.

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

Please remember the SAP record is part of the student's educational record. Considerations for what should be maintained in a student's SAP record include, but is not limited to, the following:

<u>SAP Team</u>

- Referral form with reason for referral (should only include objective, observable behaviors, not opinion and hearsay)
- Student information forms (behavioral checklists)
- Student documentation utilized in planning, i.e., attendance records/discipline records
- SAP intervention plan developed with parent/guardian involvement
- Date and outcome of parent/guardian contacts
- Agency and/or school entity release of information forms, if applicable
- Following parent/guardian permission, documentation of SAP team meeting action plan with outcomes
- Follow-up actions taken by SAP team
- Copy of SAP PDE 4092

Parent/guardian

- Written parent/guardian permission form
- Documentation of parent/guardian refusal
- Documentation of follow-up contact with parents/guardians, including participation at meetings and involvement in intervention planning

Agency/liaison

- If applicable, the name of the MH and/or D&A agency
- Date that the MH screenings/assessments occurred and recommendations, if provided
- Date that the D&A screenings/assessments occurred and recommendations, if provided. Do not include dates without a release signed by the student from the assessment provider.
- Date that the BH screenings occurred and recommendations, if provided
- Do not include any written copies of reports from treatment agencies with the SAP record. This would also include screenings/assessments done by SAP liaisons.

41. If an SAP referral source (such as a teacher) completes the 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 observable behaviors, is the original SAP referral form still considered part of the educational record? Should it be kept or can it be destroyed?

School entities are not required to keep the initial form. Please refer to your school entity's records policy related to this area.

42. 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 should 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.

43. Can SAP school records be kept electronically?

Yes, SAP school records may be kept electronically under the following conditions:

- SAP teams comply with their school entity's electronic record retention/information policies.
- Student information is protected in accordance with FERPA at all times.
- Compiled data may be accessed only by those with a legitimate educational interest.

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

Yes, as long as the school entity adheres to conditions noted in question #43. It is also imperative once a behavior checklist is submitted electronically that it can only be accessed or sent to SAP team members. 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 and records policies.

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

As part of the educational records, SAP records fall under the school entity's policy.

TRAINING

46. What training is required for SAP team members?

All team members are required to successfully complete SAP K-12 training conducted by a PA Approved SAP Training Provider (PASTP). The comprehensive training for team members addresses all phases of the student assistance process consistent with state guidelines. This ensures the appropriateness of the recommended services, effective interagency collaboration, and compliance with state and federal laws protecting the privacy rights of parents/guardians and students. The PASTP provides PNSAS certificates to trainees after successful completion of the training.

47. Where does the funding come from for SAP training?

There is no direct funding from the PDE for SAP training. However, school entities and non-public schools can apply for and use local and state grants to support SAP training. Each Single County Authority (SCA) receives funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), and this may be able to be utilized for training.

48. How often should SAP team members receive SAP training?

Currently, there is neither a training certificate expiration date nor a retraining requirement. However, to remain current, an SAP team member is recommended to attend updates and networking days and be an active member of a team. If this has not occurred, retraining is highly recommended. Retraining also is recommended for individuals who received SAP team training prior to 2012 and have not actively participated on a team since that time.

49. What resources are available to update team members?

- SAP K-12 Bridge training modules can be accessed by contacting your Regional Coordinator. These modules could be used individually for team maintenance or refresher activities with teams (certificates will not be issued).
- SAP updates, networking days, and trainings are frequently sponsored by local SAP county coordination and/ or district council.
- SAP Connection publications along with other resources are located on the PNSAS website.
- Resources and webinars are offered through the PASAP membership.

50. What are the benefits of participating in SAP County Coordination/District Council?

Guidelines for Student Assistance Programs (SAP) Coordination Teams set forth five basic goals which support the benefit for schools in being a part of the meetings. These include:

- Promoting communication, coordination, and collaboration of SAP services among schools (public and nonpublic), agencies, community, parents, and students;
- Identifying needs and gaps in SAP and SAP-related services in the county/county joinder and develop a plan(s) to address these;
- Identifying effective programs and ongoing training needs in order to develop a county/county joinder response to requests for SAP team development (e.g., additional training, county updates, team maintenance, and research-based programs);
- Promoting communication, feedback and conflict resolution among the child serving systems in the county/county joinder; and
- Promoting joint planning and collaboration among child serving systems for resource development and effective service delivery.

51. Who is responsible for maintaining the PNSAS SAP K-12 certificate?

Individual participants are expected to maintain SAP training certificates and related training records.

52. May support/service staff attend SAP K-12 Training?

Yes. Support/service staff such as nurse assistants, office personnel, and ancillary staff may attend training.

53. What is SAP K-12 Bridge Training?

PNSAS offers a free integrated online SAP K-12 Bridge Training for elementary and secondary SAP team members trained prior to 2012. Successful completion of the four training modules and post-tests will provide participants with an SAP K-12 certificate that enables them to serve on elementary through high school SAP teams. Bridge training can be accessed by emailing your Regional Coordinator.

The training focuses on an up-to-date understanding of the Pennsylvania's SAP model and its effective implementation to assist at-risk students. Participants 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 schools.

54. May an individual trained prior to 2012 only in the SAP elementary model serve on a secondary team, and may someone trained only the SAP secondary model serve on an elementary team?

No. An individual trained prior to 2012 would need to complete the SAP K-12 Bridge Training to serve on any elementary or secondary team. Prior to 2012, the elementary and secondary SAP training designs were separate trainings. They have since been merged into an SAP K-12 training design.

55. May I take the Bridge Training if I was never SAP trained?

Yes. The bridge training can be offered for targeted audiences (examples below). However, the training will not certify an individual to serve on an SAP team.

- Single County Authorities and administrative staff
- County Mental Health Administrators and administrative staff
- Drug and Alcohol SAP Provider Agency Supervisors
- Mental Health SAP Provider Agency Supervisors
- School District Superintendents and Central Office administrative staff
- Ancillary school staff as deemed appropriate by school administration such as paraprofessional, clerical, student teacher, cafeteria workers etc.)
- Office Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS) field office staff
- Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP) Coordinators
- PA Systems of Care (SOC) staff
- Any personnel from a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) such as:
  - PA Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)
  - Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII)
  - Instructional Support Teams (IST)

56. May 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 BEC 24. P.S. §15.1547, requires that all SAP team members be individually trained by a PA Approved SAP Training Provider. SAP-trained individuals are not certified as trainers simply through attending an SAP training and are not approved by PNSAS to provide SAP K-12 training to other prospective team members.

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

No. However, to understand the purpose, function, and boundaries of educational support groups along with co-facilitation responsibilities, attending a training on group facilitation is strongly advised. Group facilitation involves training to run educational groups where the facilitator is tasked with working with students to learn, apply or master a skill through a process of shared ownership and participation. Check with your local PA Approved SAP Training Provider or Intermediate Unit for availability as these are typically scheduled based on request/need.

58. 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 PNSAS Interagency Committee.

59. What professionals can attend SAP K-12 Training and serve on an SAP team?

When selecting members of your SAP team, please consider members who have a legitimate educational interest and contractual agreement that includes confidentiality requirements. All SAP team members must have completed PA SAP K-12 training.

Category	Attend training	Serve on team
Court or county appointed personnel working closely with school system (e.g., Juvenile Probation officers, Children and Youth case workers)	Yes	Yes, per Letter of agreement (LOA)
Teachers/school administrators	Yes	Yes
Graduate Intern (e.g., school counselor, school psychologist, master's level school social worker)	Yes	Yes
Long-term substitutes (90 days or more)	Yes	Yes
Parents/guardians	Yes	No
SAP liaisons (county and/or community-based)	Yes	Yes, per Letter of Agreement
School-based outpatient treatment provider	Yes	No

Category	Attend training	Serve on team
School Safety Personnel (e.g., School Resource Officers (SRO), school security)	Yes	Yes, per Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or deemed appropriate by school administration
School Support Staff or Related service providers (e.g., psychologists, counselors, social workers, safety and security coordinator, nurses, nursing assistants, office personnel, paraprofessionals, and ancillary staff)	Yes	As deemed appropriate by school administration
Student teachers (regardless of educational level)	Yes	As deemed appropriate by school administration
Undergraduate student/Interns	Yes	As deemed appropriate by school administration
Volunteers	Yes	No

AGENCY

60. Can individuals representing an agency other than the county and/or community-based SAP liaison agencies serve on an SAP team?

The Pennsylvania SAP model incorporates liaisons for drug and alcohol and mental health services, including screening and/or assessment. Annual written letters of agreement between the SAP liaison agency and the school entity authorize the liaison's involvement on the SAP team. It is important not to duplicate services or circumvent the established county and school entities protocols. Questions related to liaison services should be directed to the county drug and alcohol and/or mental health administrator. Also, you can contact your PNSAS Regional Coordinator for assistance.

61. How can an outpatient treatment provider communicate information to the SAP team?

A communication mechanism should be developed, with appropriate releases, between the outpatient treatment provider and SAP team to share educationally relevant information that may help inform appropriate action planning.

62. How does Act 65 of 2020, which amended the PA Mental Health Procedures Act (Minors Consent Act), affect SAP in schools?

Act 65 of 2020 does not affect referral and participation in SAP, because SAP is not a treatment program. However, SAP liaisons should be versed in this law to assist schools, parents/guardians, and students to navigate the mental health treatment process.

63. What is the difference between an SAP screening and SAP assessment?

An **SAP screening** can identify areas of concern and determine if further evaluation is necessary. A screening does NOT determine if treatment is needed nor what level of care might be needed.

An **SAP assessment** determines if treatment is needed and what level of care is needed.

Contact your county drug and alcohol or mental health administrators for specific expectations as to the role of the SAP Liaison in the school setting as this is determined by a Letter of Agreement.

64. How are SAP Liaisons services funded?

The PA Department of Human Services provides funding to the County Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities (MH/ID) programs for mental health services; the PA Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs provides funding to the Single County Authorities (SCA's) for drug and alcohol services. Collaboration with the county offices is

strongly recommended to ascertain the availability of liaison resources and other funding options.

Questions related to liaison services should be directed to your county drug and alcohol and/or mental health administrator. Also, you can contact your PNSAS Regional Coordinator for assistance.

INTEGRATION WITH THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAMS

The Act 18 of 2019 Guidance for School Entities: Questions and Answers on K-12 Threat Assessment Procedures and School-based Intervention Teams, published in December 2019, provides threat assessment guidance. The following questions relating to the integration of SAP and treatment teams were pulled directly from this document. Additional information can be found on the PCCD website .

65. How should threat assessment protocols interface with existing SAP referral protocols?

The Student Assistance Program (SAP), established under section 1547 of the PA Public School Code, SAP is designed to assist school personnel in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student's success. Pennsylvania requires all school entities (school districts, charter schools, and cyber charter schools) to have SAP programs for all grades (elementary and secondary).

In addition to SAP, Pennsylvania state law requires that school entities prepare written plans for implementing comprehensive K-12 program of student services in the areas of counseling, psychological services, health services, social work services, and other student supports.

A student may be referred to the Student Assistance Program for follow-up and support pending the outcome of the threat assessment. This may be particularly important to do in lower level threats determined not to be an imminent threat to school/others.

If the student has been referred to the Student Assistance Program in the past, or if there is an open referral in which the SAP team is actively gathering data related to potential barriers to learning, the SAP team should consider what relevant data may be able to be utilized by those with legitimate educational interest that are involved in threat assessment procedures.

66. What individuals should serve on both an SAP Team and Threat Assessment Team?

Individual districts/school buildings should determine how to most effectively engage in a teaming structure that allows for optimal usage of school personnel. Mental health professionals in the school setting should be dual members, as should staff with specific training in both SAP and threat assessments. This could include the nurse, school administrators, school safety and security coordinator, and district/building administrators.

Given the overlap in membership of SAP and Threat Assessment Teams, cross-training is recommended. Specifically, it is recommended that school staff members serving on

SAP teams are trained in and familiar with the threat assessment protocols. Similarly, it is recommended that members of the Threat Assessment Team have been SAP trained.

67. If comprehensive supports and/or student services are limited or unavailable at a school entity, what should SAP and Threat Assessment Teams consider as they identify necessary supports and interventions for a student?

Threat Assessment and SAP Teams operating in school entities and/or communities in which there are limited comprehensive supports and/or student services should respond consistent with how they would handle mental or behavioral health concerns in any other case. The list of community resources that could be engaged by these teams should include a greater variety of services and supports, including diversion programs through juvenile probation, community service opportunities, etc., assuming they are not already part of the referral network for that school entity.

It is important to reiterate that the need for referrals and supports must be determined on a case-by-case basis and will depend upon the nature and motivations behind the threat. Teams should consider adopting a trauma-informed approach to their work and consider ways to ensure the best interests of youth, families, and the school community are considered.

Schools should consider a comprehensive approach that addresses student social, emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs at the universal, secondary, and tertiary levels. Schools should map their resources to determine the types of in school supports that are available in their district/buildings and within the community as delivered by community partners, including SAP liaisons, behavioral health providers, crisis services, and other youth-focused services and supports. Identify the individual student's needs and make appropriate referrals to those services where available. If unavailable, brainstorm ways to provide those services either through development of services or contracting with outside entities.

The School Health Assessment and Evaluation System provides an example of a school district profile which can be a useful way to start identifying school versus community partnerships, needs, and resource mapping. The Mental Health Technology and Transfer Center Network has published a National School Mental Health Curriculum: Guidance and Best Practices for States, Districts and Schools has resources to assist districts in engaging in school and community mapping around the role of school based mental health professionals and engaging in school based mental health alignment within the MTSS process.

68. What information/records and documentation should each Threat Assessment Team maintain related to students who are initially reported to the Threat Assessment Team and eventually referred to the SAP Team?

Threat Assessment Teams should maintain records and document reports and responses consistent with the way other mental health issues, assessments and interventions, or referrals are documented.

The SAP Team should continue to maintain appropriate records according to the school district's existing protocol. All individuals with a legitimate educational interest can review SAP records in a threat situation. The school solicitor may need to determine if additional documentation is required for a student who was referred to SAP by the Threat Assessment Team. Additionally, SAP team members that are also members of the Threat Assessment Team should adhere confidentiality guidelines with regard to information sharing about the threat situation.