

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Introduction. In Pennsylvania, every middle and high school has a Student Assistance Program (SAP). A SAP team is comprised of school personnel and community agency staff. SAP team members are trained to identify and assist students who may be having problems in school due to difficult life events, mental health problems, and/or drug and alcohol problems. These students are then referred for counseling or other assistance with the permission of their parents. Parents are an important part of the team.

Procedure. Students are referred to the SAP team by teachers and other school personnel. Students and parents can also refer students whom they are concerned about. Students themselves can go directly to a SAP team member and ask for help.

Participation in the SAP process is voluntary and confidential. Parents will be contacted to sign a permission form. Once the permission form is signed, SAP members will begin working with the student to identify needs and obtain appropriate services.

In-school behaviors that may result in a SAP referral:

- Withdrawing from family and friends and/or school
- Changing friends
- Unexplained physical injuries
- Talking or writing about death and/or suicide
- Symptoms of depression, fatigue and/or listlessness
- Defying authority, both at home and at school
- Acting aggressively and/or outbursts of anger
- Lying
- Sudden drop in grades
- Increased number of absences and/or tardies
- Talking freely about drug use and/or drug and alcohol experimentation

Personal circumstances for which a parent might make a referral:

- Recent death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Family relocation
- Relationship problem
- Other traumatic event

After referral:

1. The SAP team will gather information about the student's school performance from school staff. A SAP team member will also talk to the parents in person or by phone about their observations and concerns.
2. Together, parents and the SAP team will develop a plan of action to help the student achieve success in school. The plan will build on the student's strengths and may involve activities and/or services in school or from a community agency.

The SAP team will continue to work with parent and the student to provide support. The team will also keep parents informed about the student's progress and success in school.