

CARING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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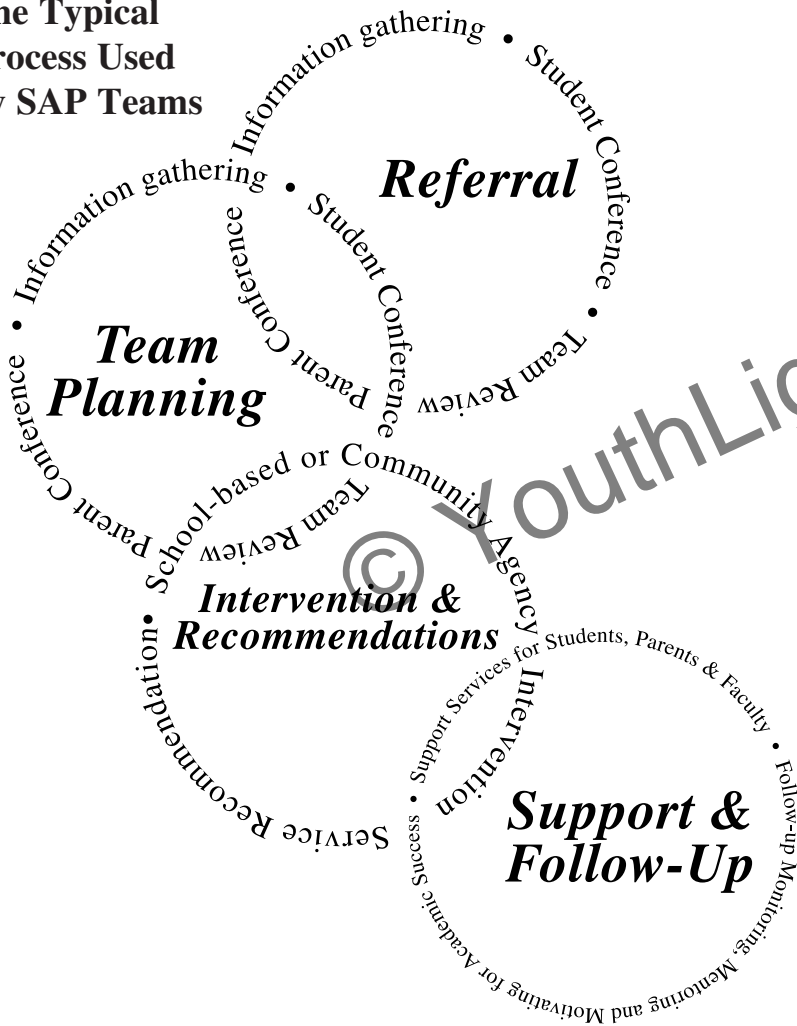
- Sharing the Plan: Basic Preparation and Leadership
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The Student Assistance Program (SAP) Process

The SAP model consists of four phases: referral; team planning including parental consent and involvement; intervention and recommendations; and follow-up (Fertman, Fichter, Schlesinger, Tarasevich, Wald and Zhang, 1999).

Figure 2:
The Typical Process Used by SAP Teams



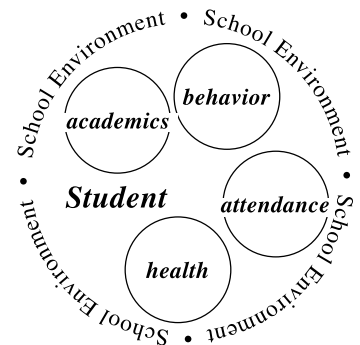
Referral

Students are referred to student assistance for a variety of reasons as a result of contact with teachers, counselors, administrators, coaches, club moderators, custodians, cafeteria

staff, office secretaries and bus drivers. All can and do refer students to the SAP; however, referrals from teachers are the most frequent. Parents, friends and students often refer others to SAP. When a program is successfully institutionalized, students do self-refer to SAP. We believe it is because the students see others getting help, making changes and improving.

Staff must be trained to recognize learning barriers early. A referral to SAP is not an indictment or a disciplinary consequence in most schools; it is a chance to catch a problem early and generate some plans to help the student get back on track. Training can help teachers and others involved in SAP to recognize that the school environment encompass the academic, behavioral, attendance and health changes that an educator may observe in a student while in school or at school-sponsored functions (see figure 3). These domains provide a wealth of objective information to the SAP team about the student.

Figure 3:
School Environment



Common behaviors for which students are referred to SAP are shown in Table 1. The importance of identifying these behaviors is highlighted throughout the fact-finding process, as multiple professionals begin to see a pattern, or clusters of behaviors that can indicate a change, or a need for more than academic help. These behaviors can indicate a mental health or drug and alcohol problem, or may be a call for some extra attention and support. Regardless, the team does not move forward without contacting and involving parents.

Table 1: Types of Behaviors Observed in Students Referred to SAP

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Academic Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop in grades • Poor test scores • Decrease in class participation • Failure to complete assignments • Cheating • Short attention span • Difficulty retaining information • Reading below grade level • Verbalized disinterest in academic performance • Easily frustrated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses fear, anxiety of _____ • Expresses anger toward parent • Dramatic / sudden change in behavior • Lying • Criticizes others / self • Inappropriate dress • Seeks constant reassurance • Constantly threatens or harasses |
| <p>Disruptive Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbally abusive • Fighting, Hits, pushes others • Sudden outburst of anger • Obscene language, gestures • Blames others • Distractible • Easily influenced by others • Repeated violation of rules | <p>Physical Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noticeable change in weight • Sleeping in class • Unsteady on feet • Disoriented • Complains of nausea (student reported) • Glassy bloodshot eyes • Unexplained physical injuries • Poor motor skills • Frequent cold-like symptoms • Smells of alcohol/marijuana • Slurred speech • Self abuse • Poor hygiene • Frequently expresses concern with personal health • Fatigue |
| <p>Illicit Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying weapon, beeper, cell phone • Involvement in theft (official report) • Vandalism • Carries large amounts of money • Selling drugs | <p>Co-Curricular Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of eligibility • Missed practice |
| <p>Atypical Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older/younger social group • Expresses openly alcohol and other drug use • Expresses desire to punish or gain revenge via harmful or deadly means • Wears drug/alcohol related clothing • Unwilling to change attire for PE • Inappropriate sexual verbalization • Expresses involvement in the occult • Expresses involvement in hate groups • Disliked by peers • Withdrawn / is a loner • Difficulty making decisions • Expresses hopelessness, worthlessness, helplessness | <p>Home/School/Family Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal to go home • Hangs around school for no apparent reason • Runaway • Absence of caregiver (student-reported) • Other family stresses |
| | <p>Crisis Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses desire to die (student reported) • Expresses desire to join someone who has died • Suicide threat, gesture • Recent death of family member or close friend (student reported) |

Appendix A:

Model Crisis Management Plan Checklist

- Notification of Superintendent
- Notification of Prevention Specialist
- Notification of Building Principal(s)
- Building Principal(s) implement phone chain (when appropriate)
- Building Principal(s) notifies SAP Team Members and other identified Team Members
- SAP/CMP Meeting (including other identified staff)
- Select a contact person for the family (Reminder: Ask what the family wants/needs prior to doing or saying anything.)
- Any siblings of the victim(s) in the School District?
Grade _____ Building _____
- Select individual(s) to notify the contact person's of the local agencies
- Notify/contact Police Department/Fire Department (if appropriate)
- Faculty/Staff Meeting (if time permits)
- Ask what the faculty/staff needs/wants
- Parent/Guardian letter to be sent home to all students in attendance that day (signs/symptoms to watch for). *Note:* Letter will be different depending on the situation.
- Include maintenance, cafeteria, bus drivers, school crossing guards
- Food/Coffee/Lunch (Make sure that the personnel involved are taken care of). Determine if situation warrants asking cafeteria for juice, etc. for students.
- After school Faculty meeting & CMT debriefing meeting
- Master list of students dismissed from school
- Family follow-up
- Other (include place to meet with identified students/staff)

*This checklist is a modified version of the checklist included in Dreshman, J.L. and Crabb, C. (1999). "Catastrophe and Trauma One School District's Experience." The Healing Magazine.