

2008
Manual of the
Association of Student Assistance Professionals of Vermont

Qualifications of Student Assistance Counselor

- * Must have a minimum of a current Apprentice Substance Abuse Counselor Certificate, (ASAC) or be willing to become apprenticed within 90 days of hire. (Requiring weekly clinical supervision. A minimum of 40 hours of recertification hours are necessary every two years. And an adherence to the Code of Ethics regarding confidentiality.)
- * Minimum of a Bachelor's Degree in counseling, psychology, or social work or the equivalent in a related field and two years experience working with adolescents preferred.
- * Must have knowledge of the general fields of health, education, social welfare and alcohol and drug abuse.
- * Must have knowledge of available community treatment facilities and other supportive services.
- * Must have knowledge of short term counseling techniques.
- * Must have knowledge of various techniques concerning treatment, education and prevention of alcohol and drug abuse.
- * Must have experience in facilitating groups.
- * Has the ability to work independently and to exercise judgment in interpreting and implementing programs, policies and procedures.
- * Has the ability to identify the needs of troubled students and to gain their confidence and cooperation.
- * Has the ability to work effectively with students and to aid them in adjusting to their specific problems.
- * Has the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with students, parents, faculty, administrators, outside agencies, and the general public.
- * Has the ability to speak effectively in public and express ideas clearly and concisely, both orally and in writing.
- * Has the ability to plan and organize work and prepare adequate reports.

Equally important are:

- * Counselor flexibility.
- * Able to think on your feet in a crisis.
- * Ability to set limits.
- * Must be energetic, yet balanced.
- * Knowledge of school systems.
- * Ability to be assertive yet gentle.

The Student Assistance Program Goals and Objectives

The Student Assistance Program is a proactive rather than a reactive program designed to intervene with young individuals in need of support. It is based on the recognition that personal problems can debilitate a student's potential to achieve maximum performance in the learning environment and in life, and that professional intervention with students experiencing life disrupting problems is usually late and sporadic.

The original design was modeled after Employee Assistance programs that operate in industry. While remaining consistent with that concept the operating model has evolved to provide early intervention to students in a wide range of issues. These include substance abuse and chemical dependency, interpersonal skills, peer relationships, dysfunctional families, stress, and growth and adjustment. In addition, the program has become the vehicle whereby these issues are brought to various classrooms in an educational setting, and it has also emerged as the catalyst for structuring group counseling experiences for those students who have been identified as in need of this type of support.

Goals of the Student Assistance Program:

The operational goals of the Student Assistance Program are:

- To provide prevention and education services to all students, either in small groups, workshops or other formats.
- To provide an intervention service for those students who are identified as having substance abuse problems.
- To provide an intervention service for those students who are identified as having difficulties dealing with stress, dysfunctional families, peers, and personal and school related adjustments.
- To provide short term counseling for those students who are identified as being in need of such service.
- To screen students for referrals to outside agencies.
- To provide educational and training services to the school, community in areas of substance abuse issues, interpersonal skills, group counseling, and stress management.
- To train and counsel student clients in effective techniques for managing stress, substance abuse issues, dysfunctional families, and peer relationships.
- To assist students in developing a positive self-concept.
- To train and counsel student clients in interpersonal skills.
- To organize and implement peer groups; such as VTLSP, VCAT, OVX.

The Management Goals of the Student Assistance Program are:

- To organize and manage a communication and record keeping system which promotes and enhances a team approach to the operation of the program. This will impact on the referral, operation, and the follow-up phases of the program. Included in this team will be administrative and counseling staff.
- To organize and implement an effective internal referral system.
- To organize and implement an effective external referral system.
- To develop and maintain links with appropriate outside agencies which can assist in the delivery of program services.
- To organize a daily schedule which will promote the effective delivery of program services with a minimal impact on academic programs.

Objectives:

As a result of the services provided by the Student Assistance Program, students who participate in the program will be able:

- To deal more effectively with issues they confront related to substance abuse.
- To deal more effectively with issues they confront related to stress, dysfunctional families, peers, and personal and school related adjustments.
- To demonstrate improved interpersonal relationships with peers, families, and staff.
- To demonstrate an improved self-concept.
- To demonstrate improved academic performance.
- To demonstrate improved daily and class performance.
- To demonstrate a decreased number of disciplinary referrals.

As a result of the services provided by the Student Assistance Program, staff members will be able:

- To effectively be informed about the current status of a student client as it relates to the program. These updates will be timely while not compromising the confidentiality of the client counselor relationship.
- Refer students to the program in a manner that is time effective.
- To access the program for related classroom development of appropriate classroom presentations.
- To access the program for training in the organization and implementation of group counseling programs.
- To access the program for information on outside support agencies as they relate to the program.

Program Design:

It is essential that the program consultants remain highly visible and available to students, faculty, and staff. In conjunction, it should be emphasized that the program encourages intervention and timely action to resolve problems so students can regain personal equilibrium and resume satisfactory performances in or out of the educational setting as the case may be.

The purpose of the program design that is detailed below is to deliver the goals and objectives of the program in an effective manner. Program services are divided into four separate areas.

Prevention Services:

The bulk of the SAP work should be preventive in nature, with a focus on the population that is not using, to help facilitate the normative aspect of not using. Research has shown that the majority of students do not use substances in high school and the SAP's role is to enhance that number. All SAP's are trained in providing prevention programs within their schools. These might be (but are not limited to); Wellness Day's, facilitating prevention groups, providing classroom trainings and in some cases to co-teach Alcohol, Tobacco or other Drug Research Based Curriculums. Not only does the SAP focus on the students but faculty, parents and community members are included in this prevention model. The SAP works closely with his/her Prevention Consultant and local coalition; should one exist.

Intervention Services:

Early intervention continues to be a critical aspect of the Student Assistance Program. The referral process is a key component of this phase of the program. This phase of the program while not "high powered" in its intent is an important phase of the total program. The delivery of this service comes mainly in the form of "drop-ins" or "rap sessions". This is a low keyed type of delivery which allows the program to address the following goals:

- Limited substance abuse counseling.
- Training in the areas of stress management, peer relationships, interpersonal skills, family relationships, and self-concepts.
- A referral source for a higher level of intervention.

Due to the low key nature of the service being provided records and communication with other support personnel is not critical. However, at the point where student-client demonstrates a need for a higher level of service a team decision should be made as to what type of long range program should be instituted for that student. This realization may be the result of additional information from a counselor, administrator, faculty member, parent, or the judgment of the Student Assistance Counselor.

Counseling Service:

The program has the ability to address the short-term counseling needs of a limited number of student; this should be educational in nature and not therapeutic. This is a formalized program with the following characteristics:

- * A limited number of students accessing the SAP. (5-6 students would probably be the maximum).
- * Referrals may come from the faculty, administration, counselors, students, peers, parents, or the SAP counselor. All referrals should be cleared through the Student Support Team. Entry into this phase of the program should be cleared through this group.
- * Verbal reports would be provided to the Student Support Team. Keep in mind that confidentiality laws exist and Federal law prohibits disclosure of the name of any student as an "alcohol or drug client", information may be disclosed only on a need to know basis. However, statistical information and generic information may be shared.
- * Outside referrals would be made when appropriate. This decision would be made by the Student Support Team with the recommendation of the SAP counselor.

This phase of the program would address the following goals:

- Intensive long-term substance abuse counseling if appropriate by an outside provider.
- Utilization of outside support agencies is used when appropriate and communication that protects the student is used effectively to monitor the progress of the student.
- Reentry to the school following treatment. An SAP maybe the designated counselor to work on specific issues, short term.

Group Counseling Service

Numerous studies support the effectiveness of peer counseling and support groups in dealing with certain types of problems. In addition, it is an effective method of delivering the program's services to a large number of students. The Group Counseling phase of the program would have the following characteristics:

- * The design of services delivered by the group would be a reflection of need as determined by the Student Support Team. Target areas could fall into the categories of stress management, substance abuse, students from single or divorced families, and behavioral issues.
- * The Student Support Team would approve of all group counseling activities.
- * Group counseling programs must have specific goals, objectives, meeting times and evaluation models to receive approval. Sessions and lesson plans may vary with the forms and interests of the group.
- * The SAP counselor is the resource for the implementation of these groups.

What is the Student Assistance Program?

It is a program that places a certified drug and alcohol counselor serving your community in the school two days per week. The Student Assistance Program counselor provides alcohol and drug education, support for those students directly affected by substance abuse, assesses the need for treatment, is a direct link to the treatment providers in the area and is a part of the schools' report and referral team.

What specific activities does the Student Assistance Program Counselor help to implement?

1. Receives referrals from teachers, school personnel, parents and students.
Assesses the specific concerns and refers to the most appropriate service.
2. Conducts positive self-development groups. These are alcohol and drug education groups with an emphasis on developing better decision-making skills.
3. Consults with the entire faculty about specific substance abuse issues and implements the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug curriculum and substance abuse policy.

What are some of the specific issues the Student Assistance Program counselor deals with at school?

All conversations are kept confidential except in cases where the student is going to harm themselves, someone else, or has been sexually or physically abused. (Vermont State Statute requires all counselors to be mandated reporters.) Safety of the student is of utmost concern and we will always notify parents/guardians if necessary.

1. Personal substance abuse.
2. Substance abuse among friends.
3. Substance abuse among family members.
4. Personal substance abuse concerns.
5. Divorce in the family.
6. Death of a parent, relative, friend or pet.
7. Domestic violence, safety issues.
8. Sexual abuse.
9. Eating/diet issues.
10. Suicide/loss.
11. Low self-esteem.
12. Excessive pressure by others for academic performance.
13. Lack of other adult to confide in about personal concerns (i.e. friends, homework, future).
14. Relationships.

Schools Commitment to the Student Assistance Program

Each participating school agrees to accept the following responsibilities when hiring a Student Assistance Program counselor:

- Office space with a telephone, a locked desk, and a filing cabinet for the student assistance counselor.
- A written policy statement describing the program, this is to be distributed to students and parents prior to the school year.
- A mandatory faculty meeting explaining the program within the first month of the new school year.
- The school agrees to provide information regarding attendance and grades of participating students for purposes of evaluation.
- The school agrees to release students from class to participate in rotating group counseling sessions.
- The school agrees to comply with confidentiality requirements of the program. (see below)
- The school agrees to provide a written contract to the counselor/agency before employment begins with said terms agreed upon and signed by both parties.
- The school understands the need for continued clinical supervision for the Student Assistance Program counselor and either allots time or provides a stipend for services.
- Individual counseling sessions are scheduled during student's free periods if at all possible, however due to the Student Assistance Program part-time status sessions may occasionally be during class time. The Student Assistance program counselor works with faculty in assuring accountability of missed time from class.

Confidentiality

A. The General Rule Prohibiting Disclosure

Except under certain specific conditions, the regulations prohibit the disclosure or other information concerning any patient in a federally-assisted alcohol or drug abuse program. 42 CFR Part 2, Ss2.12, 2.13(a). this prohibition on unauthorized disclosure applies whether or not the person seeking information already has the information, has other means of obtaining it, enjoys official status, has obtained a subpoena or warrant, or is authorized by state law. S2.13(b), S2.20. Any state provision that would permit or require a disclosure prohibited by the federal rules is invalid. However, states may require greater confidentiality than the federal regulations. S2.20

If a program receives a request for a disclosure of an individual's records that is not permitted by the regulations, it must refuse to make the disclosure, and must be sure to do so in a way that does not reveal that the individual has ever been diagnosed or treated for alcohol or drug abuse. An appropriate response is: "federal law prohibits me from disclosing that information." The program can give inquiring parties copies of the regulations and explain that they restrict disclosure of alcohol and drug abuse patient records, as long as the program does not affirmatively identify a particular individual as a patient whose records are confidential. However, if the individual who is the subject of the inquiry is not and never has been a patient, the program can reveal that fact. S2.13 (c)(2). (Many programs choose not to give a different response when the subject of the inquiry has never been a client/patient, particular when they are responding to an agency that makes frequent requests for information. Such programs believe that a pattern of responding to requests for information by saying either "That individual is not a patient/client" or Federal law prohibits an answer" will quickly make clear to the inquiring agency that the latter answer means "yes.")

Legal Action Center: A Guide to the Federal Law and Regulations. New York: Legal Action Center, 1995, p.7.

Legal Action Center: Legal Issues for School-Based Programs. New York: Legal Action Center, 1996.

Student Assistance Program Checklist

(Some of the necessary requirements for a strong program)

_____ Meet coaches, custodians, bus drivers, support staff, the Athletic Director, cooks and alternative program personnel.

_____ Attend in-service. Meet faculty, go over referral process, substance abuse policy, confidentiality regulations, suicide protocol.

_____ Meet all students, by grades or in small groups, i.e. homerooms, teacher's advisories (T.A.'s), small classes.

_____ Attend school board meeting.

_____ Attend parent groups.

_____ Attend extra curricula events, drama, music, sporting event.

_____ Contact outside agencies, & develop a provider list.

_____ Spend time in faculty lounge.

_____ Attend faculty meetings regularly.

_____ News bulletin, newsletter to teachers with facts, upcoming program events etc.

_____ Keep a current list of monthly statistics and distribute to appropriate personnel, principal, superintendent, in-house supervisor.

_____ Post a sign-up sheet on office door, and a current daily agenda of your whereabouts. Also post in office a monthly calendar.

_____ Review substance abuse policy and become familiar with procedures in handbook for suicide protocol, substance abuse violations, and DCF reporting.

_____ Meet regularly with a team, Instructional Support Teams, Student Support Teams.

_____ Meet regularly with administration.

_____ Meet with superintendent.

_____ If possible conduct parent groups.

The Importance of Clinical Supervision for your Student Assistance Counselor

Has anyone ever asked you why your Student Assistance program Counselor receives supervision? Or perhaps you are going home with a "mind full" of students and do not know what to do about it- then supervision is your answer. In this a very demanding job of Student Assistance Counseling where the crises are many and the time to breathe is scarce. We need all the help we can get. Supervision is a must, not an option!

- Supervision is an intensive learning experience providing counselors feedback on, and assessment of, their clinical skills.
- The quality of supervision directly impacts job satisfaction, turnover, burnout, and ultimately service delivery.
- Emotional support is provided, clinical responsibilities shared.
- Professional development is enhanced.
- A forum for personal growth is provided.
- Aids counselors in dealing with emotionally latent content of counseling.
- Provides an internal monitoring and evaluation mechanism-a barometer to measure oneself and an agency.
- Aids in staffing/managerial functions: hiring, evaluating, promoting, and disciplining.
- You have an ethical and legal responsibility to your students to get weekly supervision.
- Regular evaluation is a key part of the process of supervision.

A Comprehensive Model for Prevention. Does your community have all these?

1. Information Dissemination

- Brochures
- Media blurbs: radio, television, newspapers
- Speaking engagements
- Health fairs
- Information hotlines

2. Education

- Classroom and, or small group presentations
- Parenting classes
- Peer helper programs
- Children of Substance abusers groups
- Alcohol and Drug prevention groups

3. Alternatives

- Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug free dances and parties
- Youth/adult leadership activities
- Community service activities
- Community drop-in centers
- Outward-Bound type programs
- Recreation activities

4. Problem Identification & Referral

- Employee Assistance programs
- Student Assistance programs
- Driving while intoxicated education programs

5. Community-Based process

- Community and volunteer training
- Systematic planning
- Coordinating and collaborating with other agencies
- Accessing services and funding
- Community team-building

6. Environmental

- Promoting the establishment or review of alcohol, tobacco and drug use policies in school.
- Providing technical assistance to communities to maximize local enforcement procedures.
- Governing availability and distribution of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Modifying alcohol and tobacco advertising practices and product pricing strategies.