Frequently Asked Questions: Student Assistance Programs

Ohio School Wellness Initiative
Supporting Wellness for Students and Staff

What is a Student Assistance Program (SAP)?

- A Student Assistance Program (SAP) is a comprehensive, school-based framework designed to provide a variety of services, including (1) build awareness, (2) prevention, (3) early identification, (4) evidence-based intervention, (5) referral processes, and (6) guided support services across the multi-tiered spectrum for K-12 students.
- The focus of a SAP is on preventing and supporting students experiencing non-academic barriers to learning including mental health concerns, behavioral health concerns, substance abuse, and family and relationship concerns.

What is a Student Assistance Team (SAT)?

- A SAT is a set group of team members who are trained in Student Assistance Program (SAP) processes.
- A SAT receives referrals, gathers information, develops strategies to remove student barriers to learning, links students to interventions, and helps provide support and follow-up services.

How are caregivers involved in SAPs?

- Proactively connect with caregivers early and throughout the process.
- Caregivers provide written permission for their child to begin SAP process (exceptions exist for immediate risk of harm to self/others or minor substance use concern in adolescents age 12 and older [Code of Federal Regulations 42]) and for the SAT to gather additional information about the child.
- Caregivers are encouraged to participate in their child's SAP meetings.

Who can make a referral to the SAP?

- Referrals can be made by teachers, caregivers, peers, and community members, or students may refer themselves to SAP.

What happens after a referral is made?

- The SAT will review the referral and determine how to proceed.
- If support is needed, caregiver permission will be obtained.
- After permission is obtained, screening for services will be completed to confirm the concern/reason for referral and determine student's level of need, and a student support meeting will be scheduled.

What is the purpose of a Student Support meeting?

- Meetings are used to plan support for individual students' concerns.
- Student support meetings should include a discussion of the student's strengths and assets, concern identification, concern analysis, plan development, and plans for follow-up actions and evaluation.

Can SAP be aligned with other school initiatives?
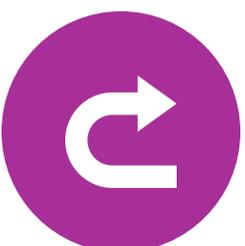
- Yes, it is recommended that schools consider the alignment of their SAP with a Whole Child framework, multi-tiered systems of support such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, wraparound services, school-based health care, social-emotional learning standards, trauma-informed practices, and the Ohio Improvement Process.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR SCHOOL-BASED
MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS