

National Masonic Foundation for Children  
MSAT Executive Summary  
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Student Assistance Programs (SAP) are the primary vehicles for schools in New York, Pennsylvania and across the nation for addressing students' behavioral health needs and concerns. The Student Assistance Team in a school links students to behavioral health care services, both in the schools and in the community. Student assistance Programs address the barriers to learning due to social, emotional, and mental health concerns. One such program is the Masonic Student Assistance Training (MSAT) program that was begun in Pennsylvania in 1984 and since its arrival in New York in 2001 has trained teams of teachers from over one hundred New York public schools. MSAT is designed to address school-based concerns of academic, attendance, health and behavior in students. Our Student Assistance Teams are specifically trained to deal with substance use and abuse, depression, suicide, and school violence.

The following is an executive summary of the latest and most comprehensive evaluation of Student Assistance Programs. The research was conducted by Dr. Carl Fertman, University of Pittsburgh, and published in cooperation with the US Department of Health and Human Services in November 2003. The entire study can be found at the website: <http://www.nasap.org/research.html>. In this current study a number of significant conclusions can be documented.

**The Level of Need of America's Youth**

1. One out of four of America's youth are extremely vulnerable and another 1 out of 4 are moderately vulnerable to the negative consequences of engaging in multiple high risk social and health behaviors.
2. Concern and problems concerning today's families and youth are often too intimidating for families and young people to solve on their own.
3. Eight out of ten American youth that are in need of behavioral health services may not receive those services. (US Surgeon General 2001)

**The Role and Purpose of Student Assistance Programs**

1. Student assistance Programs confront the barriers to learning faced by students engaging in multiple high-risk social and behavioral problems.
2. Student Assistance Programs link children and families to the behavioral health care system, providing the mechanism for schools, communities, families, and youth to work together to remove the barriers to learning
3. Consistently, 9 out of 10 of the students referred were linked to a school program and service with most accessing the recommended service.

**Student Assistance Programs Make a Difference!**

1. Overall, the proportion of students having their needs met through a Student assistance Program far exceeds the nationally reported findings for youth in need of behavioral health care who, for the most part, do not receive them. (US Surgeon General 2001)
2. Students referred to student Assistance programs show improved attendance, a decrease in discipline problems, and positive academic promotion and graduation after SSAP referral and intervention.
  - v 2 out of three referred students improved and stabilized attendance.
  - v Approximately 7 out of 10 referred students were either promoted or graduated from high school
  - v 2 out of 3 showed reduction in suspensions and positive behavior changes
3. There is a strong relationship between decreased student drug use and the presence of a Student Assistance team in a school. (Scott, Surface, Friedli, & Barlow, 1999)
4. A majority of the students that are linked to community services by Student Assistance teams for assessment access some, if not all, of the recommended services

We can emphatically report that Student Assistance Programs positively contribute to student academic success and achievement. Student Assistance Programs greatly enhance the relationship between young people and behavioral health care providers. Finally Student assistance programs help to create healthy youth and a healthy future for America.

**References:**

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