

# **Chapter VI**

## **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES**



**Individuals Group**

**School-wide**

**Family Services**

**Community**

**Assessing Outcomes of School Social Work Practice**



## Chapter VI: SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

**Objective:** To identify best practice intervention strategies utilized by school social workers to remove barriers that prevent students from receiving optimal benefit from educational opportunities.

### INDIVIDUAL SERVICES

## Attendance

### INTRODUCTION

Students must be in attendance at school in order to learn. School social workers are well-suited to address truancy issues because they are skilled in working with families and other agency systems.

### RATIONALE

Truancy has been found to be an early warning sign of delinquent activity, social isolation and school failure and risky behaviors such as substance use and sexual activity (Kim & Streeter, 2006).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

In Minnesota students between the ages of 7 and 16 must attend school. “A child is considered a ‘habitual truant’ if she or he is under the age of 16 years and is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days or for one or more class periods on seven school days. Children ages 16 and 17 will be considered truant if they have not lawfully withdrawn from school with their parents’ permission” (See Minn. Stat. 120A.22 subd 5A; Minn. Stat. 260C.007, subd. 19). County attorneys interpret statutes on education in different ways, so specific enforcement varies from one county to another. School social workers need to understand attendance and truancy procedures for the county and school district where they work.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Chronic student absenteeism may be caused by schools that are not responsive to the educational or cultural needs of students or that are not sufficiently safe or challenging (Kim & Streeter, 2006). Truancy may be caused by family problems, lack of value placed on education and high mobility rates. It may also be caused by economic reasons, such as needing to work or baby-sit for siblings. Student issues such as low school achievement, drug and/or alcohol abuse and low motivation also contribute to truancy (Baker et al, 2001).

As with other student concerns, intervention must follow a systematic assessment to identify the problems that are interfering with student attendance and the development of a plan to address those issues (Kim & Streeter, 2006). Punitive programs do not appear successful, in and of themselves, but a collaboration of community and legal agencies that provide predictable consequences, parent involvement, rewards student’s attendance and provides needed social services to students and families, has shown success (Baker et al, 2001; Dupper, 2003). Intervention must be multi-modal, addressing school issues that alienate

students, family conditions that discourage attendance and student issues that get in the way of school participation (Kim & Streeter, 2006).

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MN Statute 120A.22 subd 5A

MN Statute 260C.007, subd. 19

## LITERATURE REFERENCES MODELS AND WEBSITES

### **Dakota County Truancy Prevention and Intervention Initiative**

<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/HealthFamily/Parenting/SchoolTruancy/Pages/default.aspx>

**Truancy Intervention Program** <http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/Attorney/TIPOverview.htm>

**Truancy Fact Sheet** <http://www.education.com/reference/article/truancy-fact-sheet/>

### **New Approaches to Truancy Prevention in Urban Schools**

<http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-2/truancy.html>

## Behavior Intervention Plans

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers often are integrally involved in developing Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs). BIPs are documented specific plans that describe interventions developed to address goals for social, emotional, and behavioral development in the IEP process.

### RATIONALE

Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) and BIPs were first mandated in IDEA 1997 and reauthorized in 2004 to provide safeguards for students with behavioral disabilities (Thomas et al., 2006). The purpose is to assess behavior problems and determine the purpose that these inappropriate behaviors serve in meeting needs, so as to identify more acceptable behaviors the student can use instead. By identifying the purpose of problematic behaviors, the multidisciplinary team can provide direct and indirect services to the student that enhance his or her chances of success.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

BIPs can be used whenever a student's behavior causes difficulties in the school setting as part of the holistic assessment. Performing an FBA and developing a BIP are mandated by IDEA whenever a student is identified as having emotional/behavioral disabilities that might lead to a suspension or expulsion from school.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

BIPs are developed by the multidisciplinary IEP team following a careful, functional behavioral assessment that determines the antecedents, specific descriptions of problem behaviors, consequences or rewards of the behaviors, and the possible functions the behaviors serve for the student. BIPs have clearly developed goals and objectives that are described in measurable terms and describe desirable behaviors that might substitute for the undesirable behaviors targeted for change. The BIP should list strategies to increase positive behavior and decrease negative behavior (including planned discipline, if any) as well as strategies for generalizing the behavior changes. The BIP also lists the ways the behavior plan will be monitored, including the frequency and timing of data collection regarding the behavior in question and the way information will be communicated to parents and others. Progress in meeting goals is used to monitor the plan, and if sufficient progress is not made, the BIP should be changed to reflect new information (Clark, 1998; Thomas et al., 2006).

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Positive Behavior Intervention Plan. Retrieved February 11, 2007, from <http://www.sesa.org/sesa/agency/programs/ED/PBSWeb/PositiveBehaviorPlan.html>

## Behavior Modification

### INTRODUCTION

Behavior modification has been shown to be effective in treating many school-based problems.

### RATIONALE

Behavior modification has been shown to be effective in changing children's behavior (Thomas & Corcoran, 2003) and is commonly used in school settings to help students succeed. Based on social learning theories, behavior modification assumes that behavior is learned through the process of reinforcement and rewards. Behavior change is encouraged by altering the student's environment to reward appropriate behavior (Sheafor & Horesji, 2006).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Behavior modification is best used for helping students decrease problematic behaviors and replace them with pro-social, adaptive behaviors. It is often used in helping students become aware of undesirable behaviors and to self-monitor (Tracy & Usaj, 2007). Behavior management has been found to be effective in helping manage symptoms of ADHD (Teasely, 2006).

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

A careful assessment of student needs and identification of goals precedes any ongoing work with the student. Behavior modification involves carefully identifying antecedents to problem behaviors, specifying target behaviors in measurable terms, setting clear and reachable goals and providing appropriate rewards and consequences (Teasely, 2006). Techniques used might be verbal rewards, behavior charts, token economies, removing reinforcing consequences through time outs, extinguishing inappropriate behavior by ignoring behaviors, differentially rewarding alternate behaviors, shaping behavior by reinforcing behaviors that approximate the desired behaviors (Teasely, 2006) and cueing the student to use a self-monitoring technique (Tracy & Usaj, 2007).

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## Case Management

### INTRODUCTION

Case management is said to be one of the most common functions performed by social workers in a school setting (Dennison, 1998). Smith and Stowitschek (1998) state that the objective of providing social work case management in schools is to guarantee that students receive services, treatment and educational opportunities that the school setting can provide or facilitate. This involves linking the student (and sometimes their family) to a variety of services and/or providing therapeutic services on site and then evaluating the quality of services utilized.

This kind of case management should not be confused with the case management that is provided to a special needs student where there is an IEP and the due process surrounding that. However, occasionally school social workers provide this kind of case management as well.

### RATIONALE

Reports of positive outcomes when school social workers provide effective case management include a decrease in absenteeism, improvement in grades and a reduction in behavior problems (Stowitschek, Smith, & Armijo, 1998). Without this help, students and staff alike may experience confusion and lack of focus on effective intervention strategies in dealing with problems that interfere with school success.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Providing effective case management is unique to specific situations or issues that students face. Organizational skills are thought to be as important as direct services skills for school social workers and other mental health professionals. Debra Woody (2006) states that to be accepted and accommodated, practitioners must gain understanding of a range of systems and skills that allow them to be effective within educational systems.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Appropriate assessment by the school social worker is essential, followed by goal-setting, intervention planning and/or identifying community resources and evaluation. Rothman (1991) offers a model for case management in a school setting.

First, **outreach** is needed, so that school personnel, students and parents know about the availability of case management services. This may include outreach to community agencies so they may also refer students as needed.

Next, school social workers use multiple sources for **intake and assessment**, including student, teachers, family members and other school personnel. Also it may be appropriate to address psychosocial concerns (socioeconomic, behavioral, etc) and sometimes use clinical measures or scales.

**Goal-setting** – both short and long-term – are established next, taking personal or situational

limitations into consideration. These are accomplished with the student and parents and teachers, if possible.

**Interventions** are then applied, using the resources, services or programs available to meet the needs of the student. This may include linking students to services that provide academic and emotional support.

Finally, effective case management requires good **monitoring and reassessment** to see if the interventions used are making positive gains in the goals set, or to see if the goals possibly need to be adjusted to meet new needs.

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## WEBSITES

**NASW Standards for Social Work Case Management** [www.naswdc.org/practice/standards/sw\\_case\\_mgmt.asp](http://www.naswdc.org/practice/standards/sw_case_mgmt.asp).

## Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

### INTRODUCTION

Cognitive-behavioral interventions teach students strategies for managing thoughts and feelings that interfere with functioning. These interventions are based on the premise that thinking, behavior and emotions are inexorably linked; changes in one will lead to attending changes in the others. Social workers have the skills to provide cognitive-behavioral interventions in addressing student needs. There are a number of related techniques that fall under the rubric of cognitive-behavioral interventions and have been shown to be effective in treating many school-based problems.

### RATIONALE

For students with the cognitive ability to examine their thinking, cognitive-behavioral interventions strategies have been well documented as effective in helping individual students change (Dupper, 2002; Kendall, 1994; Tomb & Hunter, 2006; Tracy & Usaj, 2007). Based on the assumption that thoughts, emotions and behavior are linked together, cognitive-behavioral interventions seek to help students change their thinking about themselves or their problems in order to change the accompanying emotional states and behaviors.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Cognitive-behavioral interventions are often effective for students with the cognitive ability to examine their thinking. They have been used effectively to help children with conduct disorder (Springer & Lynch, 2006), ODD (Linseisen, 2006), anxiety disorders (Tomb & Hunter, 2006), social problem-solving (Dupper, 2003; Tracy & Usaj, 2007) and depression (Corcoran & Hanvey-Phillips, 2006).

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

A careful assessment of student needs and identification of goals precedes any ongoing work with the student. The use of Cognitive Behavior Technique should be flexible, sensitive and developmentally appropriate (Tomb & Hunter, 2006). After determining treatment goals, an individualized treatment plan is developed to address student needs. Cognitive behavioral techniques include self-instruction, modeling, rehearsal, coaching, feedback, cognitive restructuring, managing negative self-talk, systematic desensitization, relaxation training, reframing negative situations into a more positive light, visualizing success, thought-stopping, analyzing the rationality of thoughts, role-playing and behavioral reinforcement (Dupper, 2003; Tomb & Hunter, 2006; Toseland & Rivas, 2005; Tracy & Usaj, 2007).

Typically, students are taught skills through direct instruction, modeling and role play during individual or group sessions. Students are then given homework assignments to provide opportunities to apply the newly-learned skills in the classroom or in interaction with others. Then the homework is reviewed in subsequent sessions, feedback is given and the skills are refined. Student progress should be monitored throughout the treatment to assure that the intervention program is successful.

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## **WEBSITES**

**Skillstreaming** by Ellen McGinnis and Arnold Goldstein <http://www.skillstreaming.com/>

**Second Step** <http://www.secondstep.org/>

## Crisis Intervention

### INTRODUCTION

When the student is in crisis, the social worker generally limits the work with the student to immediate and pressing concerns.

### RATIONALE

Crisis work is brief, lasting only one or two sessions or until the immediate crisis has passed. Goals are generally limited to resolving the crisis and restoring a pre-crisis level of functioning.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

A crisis is a sudden, traumatizing life event such as an assault, rape or bereavement that overwhelms usual coping mechanisms.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

In addition to short-term work and limiting goals, the school social worker who is helping a student resolve a crisis situation would be more directive with the client than under other circumstances (Gilliland & James, 1993).

The first goal in helping a student through a crisis is to ensure that the student is safe from injury and further harm. Then the worker helps the student to become as objective in looking at the situation as possible and helps him or her to find ways to resolve the crisis. Linking the student to community resources and other social supports can also be helpful. Crisis intervention is strengths-oriented and the worker identifies typical coping strategies that the student can draw on to help resolve the crisis. While the primary goal is to restore the student to his or her level of functioning before the crisis, it may also be possible to help the student gain some insight into factors that may have contributed to the development of the crisis (Gilliland & James, 1993).

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## Individual Counseling

### INTRODUCTION

Social work with students is based on an ecological model in which students are viewed within the context of classroom, school, family and peers. Therefore, it is quite rare for social work intervention to address the student only, as it “would be ineffective to work with the child without working with the teacher who can influence the school environment, and the parents who can influence the home environment. It is important to begin with environmental changes, for . . . these can have the most rapid results. When changes in the child’s real environments take place, the social worker can assist the child to change correspondingly” (Constable & Walberg, 2006, p. 464). Individual work with students in a school setting, then, is only a part of the process of helping students change and will generally be accompanied by support and consultation provided to the teacher and family as well.

### RATIONALE

All social work practice follows a pattern of engagement, assessment, goal setting, determining appropriate interventions to accomplish the goals, monitoring the effectiveness of the intervention and termination. When school social workers provide counseling to individual students, they must do so within this context.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

A careful assessment of student needs and identification of goals precedes any ongoing work with the student. Sometimes, a complete assessment of a student is provided by IEP teams, physicians or therapists from other agencies, or by a social worker who has worked with the student in other settings. In these situations, the school social worker should become familiar with the recommendations of others, as well as assess student needs within the context of the school setting. In other situations, the school social worker might be a member of a school-based team conducting an assessment on the student. This thorough assessment leads to the development of goals and objectives that the worker and student would work on together. Treatment goals should be related to problems that occur in the school setting or that interfere with a student’s ability to learn. School social workers are charged with determining educational needs and the services necessary to meet those needs, using IDEA categories. Sometimes, however, diagnoses are available to the social worker as an additional aid in developing appropriate intervention strategies.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Once goals and objectives have been determined, interventions are selected to help the student accomplish his or her individually determined goals. When it is determined that a student can benefit from individual counseling, the school social worker would meet individually with the student according to a schedule determined to meet the goals. Interventions should reflect standard practices for treating the student’s problems. In other words, school social workers should use evidence-based practices, those interventions that have been carefully researched and found to be effective, whenever possible to help resolve student problems.

Ongoing monitoring of progress towards goals involves tracking markers of success. These markers may be counts of inappropriate behaviors to be changed (such as classroom outbursts or school detentions), the reduction of symptoms of mental illness (such as symptoms of obsessive-compulsive disorder or bipolar disorder), grades, school attendance, or rapid assessment instruments that can identify difficulties in the student's life (such as self-esteem and attitudes towards others). The school social worker should keep records of sessions with individual students that include records of contacts, services provided and documentation of progress. Records should not contain unnecessary information that is not relevant or might be misinterpreted (Cuevas, 2006).

The termination process should ideally be based on attainment of goals identified in the assessment phase, but it is often determined by situational factors such as the student's move to a new school. In either event, termination should be a planned process in which the student and school social worker reflect on progress toward goals and plan strategies to maintain the growth that has occurred during the individual counseling.

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## Suicide Prevention

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers are often asked to screen students for depression and risk of suicide.

### RATIONALE

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among older adolescents (15-19). Approximately 8% of high school students attempt suicide. The risk is greatest for students who suffer from depression. Students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans-gendered are more than twice as likely to commit suicide than straight youth (Dupper, 2003).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

School social workers may be asked to screen a student thought to be at risk of suicide. Depression, personality changes, verbal or written suicide threats, expressions of hopelessness, lack of interest in the future, giving away prized possessions, previous suicide attempts, the presence of a weapon, alcohol or substance abuse and sleep disturbances have been found to be risk factors associated with suicide attempts (Roberts, 2006).

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

In assessing risk, the worker should ask the student directly if he or she is considering suicide, determine if the student has developed a plan to carry out the suicide, assess the degree to which the student has set the plan in motion and consider the lethality of the plan. It is best to err on the side of caution with such students and if there appears to be genuine risk of self-harm, the risk of self-harm overrides confidentiality. The worker should contact the student's parent or guardian and assist the family in obtaining an emergency psychiatric evaluation. A suicidal student should not be left alone, so if a worker must leave the student to make arrangements for an emergency evaluation or to contact parents, someone else should stay with the student (Sheafor & Horesji, 2006). Following a referral for psychiatric evaluation, the social worker should check back with the student and family to be certain that the danger of self-harm has passed.

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## WEBSITES

### **Children's Depression Inventory**

<http://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/products/100000636/childrens-depression-inventory-2-cdi-2.html>

**Beck Depression Inventory** <http://ww1.harcourtassessment.com/>

**Suicide Awareness Voices of Education** <http://www.save.org/>

**Yellow Ribbon International Suicide Prevention Program** <http://www.yellowribbon.org/>

## Classroom Presentations

### INTRODUCTION

Classroom presentations are a method in which a school social worker conducts social emotional learning sessions with an entire classroom of students. A classroom teacher may request the expertise of a school social worker for intervention with an entire class around social emotional issues of concern such as bullying or grief and loss. While this is not a primarily academic intervention, it assists the class in addressing the social emotional issues that interfere with academic achievement.

### RATIONALE

School social workers have specialized groupwork skills that prepare them to provide classroom presentations. Topics included in the scope of practice for a school social worker may include social emotional development, character education, bullying and racial or sexual harassment. Research shows that if a school addresses the social emotional needs of students, both classroom climates and academic outcomes are improved. Oftentimes, classroom lessons around social emotional topics will help build classroom community and teach prosocial behaviors to students. If a student experiences this sense of community and is attached to school, he or she may do better academically and will be less likely to drop out of school.

A classroom presentation is an excellent way for the school social worker and classroom teacher to engage in collaboration and model cooperation, sharing and problem-solving for students. Classroom presentations are a proactive way for the entire class to benefit from the services of a school social worker. If a school social worker engages in classroom presentations, he or she becomes more visible to students which may increase the likelihood that students may self-refer in times of need.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

A classroom presentation is an effective method to utilize when an issue that affects the entire class becomes apparent. It is appropriate to offer a classroom presentation when the teacher is open to teaming with the social worker in order to implement creative ways of addressing the issue. At times of a school crisis, a classroom presentation that shares pertinent information is often an effective way to decrease stress and rumors related to the event. Classroom presentations are also a high-quality way to present racial or sexual harassment policy to students.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Teaming between the school social worker and the classroom teacher is essential when utilizing classroom presentations. School social workers may prepare a classroom presentation, but it will be more effective when it is delivered by both professionals. Oftentimes, the classroom teacher has a strong relationship with the students and possesses the ability to carry on with the lesson throughout the school day. In order for the school social workers presentation to be more effective, the classroom teacher should utilize methods to reinforce the lesson throughout the school day.

In order to provide quality classroom presentations, school social workers must possess knowledge and familiarity with the program they are using and develop a level of expertise in the area. Social workers should assess the reason they have been asked to become involved and be aware of expectations of the teacher or administrator for outcomes of their presentations. An effective school social worker will review pertinent research and discover best practice methods to address the issue.

When providing a classroom presentation, it is of utmost importance to ensure the material is presented with consideration of the audience. The school social worker will make certain that material is presented at the correct developmental stages of the students.

## **REFERENCES**

Promoting Academic Achievement through Social and Emotional Learning Ragozzino, K., Resnik, H., O'Brien, M.U., and Weissberg, R. (2003). *Educational Horizons*, 81(4), 169-171.

## **EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS**

Second Step Step to Respect <http://www.secondstep.org/>

## **WEBSITES**

**The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning** [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

## Group Counseling

### INTRODUCTION

Group work is frequently utilized by school social workers as an effective way to build rapport with students, provide social skills instruction and offer support for students. Problems such as lack of peer relationships, substance abuse, grief and loss, trauma or mental health issues may be addressed through the facilitation of student groups. Group membership may end the isolation and lack of understanding that many students experience because they begin to interact with students with similar issues.

### RATIONALE

Groups are an effective way to assist isolated students in developing relationships with other students and allowing students to benefit from the support of peers. Facilitating social skills or therapeutic groups is both an efficient and cost-effective way for the school social worker to work with students in need.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

School social workers may provide a support group that is specific to a certain topic. Examples of specific topic often addressed in a support group include anger management, friendship, grief and loss, chemical dependency and family change. Often, student groups will focus on more general social skills. The school social worker will engage in direct teaching of social skills, providing students with an opportunity to practice skills and discuss strategies they may attempt to use in a variety of social situations.

When facilitating a group, the school social worker will need to decide if the group will be an ongoing, open-ended group or a time-limited group.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

In order to successfully facilitate a therapeutic group, the school social worker must have a thorough understanding of the group process and group stages. The facilitator should make efforts to select group members that will be compatible. Group ground rules for the functioning of the group should be discussed and agreed upon by all members of a group during the initial meetings. The school social worker should ensure that all members of the group understand its purpose and why they were chosen as a participant. Confidentiality must be discussed, understood and agreed upon by all members. If the group is designed to improve a specific skill, efforts should be made to assist the student to generalize skills learned to use in the larger school environment. One way to do this is to inform the classroom teacher of the group's purpose, within the limits of confidentiality. If school staff is aware of a group's purpose, they may be able to reinforce group lessons throughout the school day in the larger school environment. Informing the classroom teacher of the purpose and why the student is involved in the group is an effective way to solicit their support in excusing the student from class for group sessions.

## REFERENCES

Franklin, Cynthia, Harris, Mary Beth & Allen-Meares, Paula (2006) *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Social Skills Trainings  
School Survival Group  
Life Skills Training  
Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child  
Skillstreaming the Adolescent

## WEBSITES

**Life Skills Training** [www.lifeskillstraining.com](http://www.lifeskillstraining.com)

## **In-service Training**

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Standard 10 of the NASW Standards for School Social Work Services, school social workers shall develop and provide training and educational programs that address the goals and mission of the educational institution. Trainings and educational programs may include various activities, such as school social workers providing learning experiences for school district staff, parents, community members or social work colleagues.

### **RATIONALE**

School social workers have knowledge and expertise in identifying and addressing the barriers to learning. School social workers may utilize this expertise by sharing knowledge with the broader school community. If educators understand barriers to learning better, they are empowered to work collaboratively with school social workers to address student needs and foster academic progress. School social workers should explore opportunities to share their successful practices and methods utilized with school social work colleagues. Professional conferences and workshops targeting school social workers are a forum for this opportunity.

### **DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION**

This intervention may be an appropriate to utilize when the school social worker has expertise that can be shared with other licensed staff to meet a licensure renewal requirement. For example, in Minnesota staff licensed by the Board of Teaching is required to have clock hours in Understanding Warning Signs of Mental Health Disorders and Positive Behavioral Interventions. School social workers possess knowledge and expertise in these areas and are able to share this information with other school staff.

Staff development, led by the school social worker, may be a way to share information relevant to a building-wide need that has been identified by the administrator, building staff or students. For example, an in-service introducing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports may facilitate a school's effort to address behavioral concerns in an effective way.

School social workers possess knowledge about mandated reporting and county social services. Since all school staff are considered mandated reporters, it is pertinent that all receive accurate information about how and when to make a report of suspected abuse or neglect. School social workers are well poised to provide this information to staff school-wide.

### **KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS**

When providing in-service trainings to school staff, it is important that school social workers present information that will help educators develop a more in-depth understanding of the barriers to learning. Examples of barriers include children's mental health disorders, poverty, abuse or other traumatic life events. This type of in-service training is able to provide educators with examples of interventions or methods of communicating with parents and students so the effect of the barriers is diminished. Whether providing training for parents, educators, or social work colleagues, it is vitally important the school social workers attempt

to foster a sense of trust, respect and collaboration. When a building administrator actively supports and endorses the information shared by the school social worker, the training program will be more meaningful and utilized by others.

## REFERENCES

Franklin, Cynthia, Harris, Mary Beth, Allen-Meares, Paula, (2006) *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

NASW Standard for School Social Work Services

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

MSSWA Early Warning Signs of Mental Health Disorders  
MDE Module 1 & 2  
Social Emotional Learning  
PBIS

## WEBSITES

**Minnesota School Social Workers' Association** [www.msswa.org](http://www.msswa.org)

**Council for Exceptional Children** [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

**School Social Work Association of America** [www.sswaa.org](http://www.sswaa.org)

**National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports**  
[www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)

**The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning** [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

## Bullying Prevention

### INTRODUCTION

Most students experience an incident of bullying in school at least once. Bullying is thought to be the most prevalent form of violence suffered by children (Haynie et al., 2001). Most adults can still recall a type of bullying they endured and where and when it occurred. School social workers intervene with the bully by providing social skills education, provide support to the victims of bullying and assist schools in implementing school-wide and community anti-bullying interventions.

### RATIONALE

Although bullying can and does occur in other environments, the majority of bullying takes place in and around school buildings (Smith, Ananiadou, & Cowie, 2003). In today's schools, school social workers and most educators are aware of how bullying affects the social and emotional health of students and students' ability to focus on academic achievement. Personnel in schools have learned that bullying affects attendance at school, as students may refuse to go to school or are truant to avoid being bullied.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Often a specific incident that affects an entire classroom or an entire school will motivate school staff to investigate bullying interventions. Sometimes unhappy student victims and/or their unhappy parents will ask for help. A teacher and/or principal who notice growing behavior referrals for bullying may choose to initiate anti-bullying interventions.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Successful anti-bullying programs have the following key elements:

- School-wide program implementation
- Prevention interventions with all students
- Identification of ways to express emotions healthfully
- Education on replacement behaviors to bullying
- Work with victims of bullying
- Family and community involvement
- Building staff acceptance and "buy in" of the program
- Awareness that change in behavior will take time and persistence

Helpful tools and examples of anti-bullying interventions can be found in Chapter 42, Bullying, *The school services sourcebook: a guide for school-based professionals*, 2006.

### REFERENCES

Haynie, D.L., Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A.D., Saylor, K., Yu, K., & Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youth. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 32(1), 29-49.

Howe, Esther, Haymes, Elayne, Tenor, Tanya. (2006). Bullying: Best Practices for Prevention

and Intervention in Schools. *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. (pp. 461-467). New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, P.K., Ananiadou, K., & Cowie, H. (2003). Interventions to reduce school bullying. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 48, 591-599.

## LITERATURE REFERENCES

Franklin, Cynthia, Harris, Mary Beth, Allen-Meares, Paula. (Ed.s), (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

The no-blame approach

Method of shared concern

Mindmatters

A manual for schools and communities. California Department of Education.

## WEBSITES

**Avoid Violence: Try Mediation. Youth in Action, National Youth Network** <http://sadonline.com/campaign/mediation>

**ERIC/CASS Virtual Library on Bullying in School. ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling & Student Services** <http://www.ericdigests.org/2002-3/bullying.htm>

**Dr. Rigby's Bullying Pages** <http://www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/intro.html>

**Olweus Bullying Prevention:** <http://www.modelprograms.samhsa.gov/pdfs/model/Olweus%20Bully.pdf>

## Conflict Resolution

### INTRODUCTION

The Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center states that conflict resolution is about teaching people new ways to work through and resolve disputes that do not involve violence. In the school setting and in our communities, school social workers teach children the ‘life skill’ that conflicts and disagreements are a normal, natural part of life, but that they can learn ways to handle these conflicts in non-violent and respectful ways.

### RATIONALE

Although conflict is a normal and natural part of life, there are healthy or unhealthy ways to handle it. In some situations, children experience bullying and teasing and pointless confrontations that can result in the victims’ lack of self-esteem, academic performance, and refusal or fear in coming to school. One national survey found that 33% of high school students had been in a physical fight within the past year (CDC 2004). Therefore, children need to be taught in a comprehensive program that teaches everyone the skills to respond to conflict in a constructive manner. By providing children with the knowledge and skills that they need to resolve conflict peacefully, school social workers can help create safer environments and reduce the numbers of suspensions, expulsions, disciplinary referrals, classroom disruptions and playground fights (School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs – A California Resource Guide).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Since conflict is a universal issue, is it optimal that all students have an opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge on how to resolve issues peacefully. The Minnesota Student Survey helps schools see the extent of their bullying or conflict issues as well.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

A review of the national research reveals the following characteristics that help to make a school-based conflict resolution program successful:

- A comprehensive approach, involving curriculum, peer mediation, and parent involvement components
- Introduction in early grades and implementation through grade 12
- Long-term commitment to maintaining the program
- Strong leadership and disciplinary policies
- Ongoing training and staff development, including teachers, administrators, community representatives, and other school staff and parents/families
- A culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate approach
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and improvement

(School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs – a California Resource Guide)

According to Crawford and Bodine (1996), some of the specific skills taught in most conflict resolution programs include these steps:

- Setting ground rules – agreeing to work together and set rules such as no name-calling,

blaming or yelling

- Listening – let each person describe his/her point of view without interruption. The point is to understand what a person wants and why they want it
- Finding common interests – establish facts that both can agree on and determine what is important to each person
- Brainstorming possible solutions to the problem – list options without judging or feeling they must be carried out, and try to think of solutions where everyone gains something.
- Discussing each person's point of view of the proposed solution – negotiate to reach a compromise that is acceptable to everyone involved
- Reaching an agreement – each person should state his or her interpretation of the agreement and write it down, checking back later to see if it is working

## REFERENCES

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2003. MMWR Surveillance Summaries 2004

School-Based Conflict Resolution Programs – A California Resource Guide

Minnesota Student Survey

Crawford, D., Bodine R. Conflict resolution: a guide to implementing programs in schools, youth-serving organizations, and community and juvenile justice, 1996 Oct. NCJ 160935

## WEBSITES

**Center for Disease Control** <http://www.cdc.gov/>

**The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center** [www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/conflict.asp](http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/conflict.asp)

# Crisis Intervention

## INTRODUCTION

School crises can include incidents of violence or terrorist threats/acts in the school community or a school building resulting in student trauma, injury and/or death. School crises can be the result of natural disasters affecting entire school populations. We all have had exposure to catastrophic events at schools nationwide because these crises have appeared in newspapers and have been broadcast in the media.

## RATIONALE

Because we do not know what crisis event or when a crisis event may occur, schools must plan for crisis intervention. Schools with a crisis intervention plan may be able to minimize the scope of the disaster and have an effect on the survival of the individuals involved.

## KEY ELEMENTS

School-based crisis team: Members of the crisis team are usually the administrators, the school nurse, the school social worker and counselor, support and security personnel and others as appropriate to the school site.

School social workers are utilized in school-wide crisis intervention planning and implementation due to their mental health background and training in grief and loss.

Crisis intervention planning includes a plan of action for when the crisis begins; during the crisis and also what to do after the crisis is over, for example, a post incident plan for the victims.

Collaboration is necessary between schools and the community, including how and when to deal with the media and parents. Schools should make efforts to identify one staff member who will be the spokesperson regarding the crisis.

There may be a district crisis intervention plan in addition to a specific school building plan. The plan to be implemented must be in writing and practiced by the school crisis intervention team.

The crisis plan is distributed to all school staff and posted where appropriate.

## DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

The crisis intervention plan must clearly define who will decide a crisis does exist and begin implementation of the plan.

## REFERENCES

Brock, S.E., & Jimerson, S.R. (2004). School crisis interventions: Strategies for addressing the consequences of crisis events. In E.R. Gerler, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of school violence* (pp. 285-332). Binghamton, NY: Haworth.

Callahan, J. (2002). School-based crisis intervention for traumatic events. In R Constable, S. McDonald, & J. P. Flynn (Eds.) *School Social Work: Practice, Policy, and Research Perspectives* (5th Ed.) (pp. 481-500). Chicago: Lyceum Press.

## LITERATURE REFERENCES

Franklin, Cynthia, Harris, Mary Beth, Allen-Meares, Paula, (Ed.s), (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldman, L. (2005). *Raising our children to be resilient: A guide to helping children cope with trauma in today's world*. New York: Taylor & Francis.

## WEBSITES

**A Look at Children's Grief.** Two 1-hour modules. Children's Loss and Grief and Grief Resolution Techniques [http://www.adec.org/source/Orders/index.cfm?section=unknown&task=3&CATEGORY=CD&PRODUCT\\_TYPE=SALES&SKU=CDADOLSUWO&DESCRIPTION=CDs&FindSpec=&continue=1&SEARCH\\_TYPE=find&FindIn=](http://www.adec.org/source/Orders/index.cfm?section=unknown&task=3&CATEGORY=CD&PRODUCT_TYPE=SALES&SKU=CDADOLSUWO&DESCRIPTION=CDs&FindSpec=&continue=1&SEARCH_TYPE=find&FindIn=)

**Crisis Intervention Network** <http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/>

## MODELS

**Roberts' Seven Stage Crisis Intervention Model** [http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention\\_roberts.html](http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention_roberts.html)

**Crisis Counseling Model** [http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention\\_counseling.html](http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention_counseling.html)

**Assessment, Crisis Intervention, and Trauma Treatment: The Integrative ACT Intervention Model** [http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention\\_act.html](http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention_act.html)

**Four Steps to Effective Crisis Intervention** [http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention\\_foursteps.html](http://www.crisisinterventionnetwork.com/intervention_foursteps.html)

**Crisis Prevention Institute** <http://www.crisisprevention.com/>

## Discipline Policies

### INTRODUCTION

Student discipline policies exist to ensure that students are aware of and comply with the school district's expectations for student conduct. Schools identify what is defined as unacceptable behavior and the consequences for such behavior. School social workers assist in these school policies by providing assistance to students and school personnel to identify underlying factors in student behavior. They also help to intervene effectively with students and their families to provide services on site or make appropriate referrals outside of school to assist in the identified problem.

### RATIONALE

Schools recognize that all students are entitled to learn and develop in a setting which promotes respect of self, others and property. When student conduct interferes with this process, there needs to be a policy in place to deal with such issues.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Student discipline policies need to be in place in all schools and would be referred to in cases where student conduct interferes with their learning or the learning of others. Examples of unacceptable behavior are: violations against school property or the property of others; use of profane language; gambling; hazing; attendance problems; violent opposition to authority; use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs or the distribution of these; possessing weapons, ammunition, or explosives of any kind; possession of pornographic materials; sexual abuse or harassment; falsification of records; and, verbal or physical assaults on others.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

A student discipline policy needs to be created in accordance with applicable laws/statutes. Within the policy, the school board, superintendent, principal, school staff, including teachers and school social workers, and finally, parents and the students themselves, have areas of responsibility. Some of these include:

- School Board – holds all personnel responsible for the maintenance of order
- Superintendent – establishes guidelines and directives to carry out this policy and communicates with the school board
- Principal – is responsible to formulate building rules necessary to enforce this policy. The principal involves other professionals in the disposition of behavior referrals
- School social workers – can help in establishing school-wide violence prevention programs and also work with students and families as situations arise where their expertise can be applied
- Parents/Guardians – are held responsible for the behavior of their children as determined by law and community practices
- All school personnel – contribute to the atmosphere of mutual respect

Disciplinary action options vary but usually involve progressive discipline appropriate to the facts and circumstances of each situation. Some of those actions may include: conference

with parent (with principal or school social worker or other personnel) with assistance for student regarding making better choices, treatment for mental health or chemical dependency issues, etc. and a verbal warning regarding future infractions; removal from class; in-school suspension; loss of school privileges; detention; financial restitution; assignment to area learning center; transfer to another school; referral to police; out-of-school suspension; expulsion or exclusion under the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; or other discipline as deemed necessary by the school district.

School social workers are often involved in many of the above actions, helping the student to find the balance between authority and self-discipline as they mature.

## **REFERENCES**

Independent School District 761, Owatonna, MN. Student Discipline Policy

Legal references:

Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)

Minn. Stat. Ch. 125A (Students With Disabilities)

Minn. Stat. 121A.40 to 121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)

# Dropout Prevention

## INTRODUCTION

Keeping students in school through graduation is a major goal of public schools. When students begin to have attendance problems, schools often implement multilevel strategies that meet students' needs and prevent them from dropping out.

## RATIONALE

Consequences for a community when students attend irregularly or drop school completely include having a workforce that lacks the basic knowledge and job skills needed to fully participate in the labor market and contribute to the economy. This can result in increased costs of social services and higher rates of crime and poverty (Kim and Streeter, *The School Services Sourcebook*, 2006). Reduced funding for schools is another result. But certainly a compelling reason to address this issue is to prevent the great loss of human potential in terms of students' cognitive, social, and emotional growth, and their ability to be successful in the world.

## DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Interventions to reduce truancy and school refusal and alternative education programs would be implemented when students fail to attend school on a regular basis, and if alternative methods would result in higher levels of attendance and school success.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

For those students who begin to show attendance problems, a multilevel approach is most successful, that is, working as a team with administrators, teachers, school social workers, school nurses, families and students.

School strategies:

- Improve teacher-student relationships
- Engage student as active member of school community
- Social skills and self-esteem building strategies
- Provision of mental health services or coordinated in community as needed
- Use of alternative education methods
- Instructional technologies
- Violence prevention/conflict resolution

Family strategies:

- Good collaboration and communication between home and school
- Home visits to gain a more ecological view
- Holding workshops for parents for support and sharing strategies

Individual student strategies:

- Proper assessment of needs
- Increase student's self-esteem, social skills and self-confidence
- Proper therapy if mental health issue is involved
- Proper academic interventions if this is found to be a problem
- Work and school collaboration to meet individual needs

- Use of mentors
- Service learning
- Consider alternative school programming

An alternative school is defined by the U.S. Dept. of Education (2002, p. 55) as “a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school and provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education.” These schools usually offer more flexible schedules, smaller teacher to student ratios, a modified curriculum and are based on the belief that all children do not learn in the same way. Success lies in an innovative curriculum and teachers with supportive attitudes (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Best practices and characteristics of a successful alternative education program include:

- Low ratio of students to teacher
- A clear mission with rules enforced consistently and fairly
- A caring faculty who have high expectations for success
- A focus on individual learning styles and needs with emphasis on real-life learning
- Holistic services to meet needs of the whole child
- Student voices in decision-making (School Services Sourcebook, 2006).

## REFERENCES

Kim, J.S., & Streeter, C.L. (2006) Programs and practices for supporting school attendance and dropout prevention. In C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals* (pp. 397-404) New York: Oxford University Press.

McGee, J. (2001). *Reflections of an alternative school administrator*. Phi Delta Kappan, 82, 558-591.

U.S. Department of Education (2002). Characteristics of school districts in the United States: 2000-01, NCES 2002-351. Washington D.C: author.

Reimer, M.S. & Cash, T. (2003). *Alternative schools: Best practices for development and evaluation*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center/Network.

C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. (p. 417). New York: Oxford University Press.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES, AND PROGRAMS

Clarke County School District: Athens, GA

University of Hawaii: Honolulu, HI

King Count Superior Court: Seattle, WA

## WEBSITES

**The National Dropout Prevention Center** <http://www.dropoutprevention.org/>

**School Dropout Prevention Program** <http://www.ed.gov/programs/dropout/index.html>

**Mental Health in Schools Center - UCLA** <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/DropoutPrev/dropout.pdf>

## Peer Mediation

### INTRODUCTION

Peer mediation is a form of intervention in which peers mediate with each other to resolve a conflict. The mediation is driven by the students involved in the conflict, but monitored by an adult. School social workers are natural leaders in training students in peer mediation.

### RATIONALE

Peer mediation/conflict management is used as a way for peers to work through their own issues and conflicts in a respectful manner without an adult. Peer mediation often works better than an adult-driven mediation because the students can listen to each other and understand where the conflict began. It also offers students a voice in the problem, in their own words. The mediation is lead by students who are trained in the peer mediation process.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Peer mediation/conflict management is best utilized to resolve misunderstandings and rumors between peers. It can be used for a variety of other conflicts which are non-assaultive or if further action is not needed (police intervention, suspension, dismissal etc.). Peer mediation/conflict management could also be used when the suspended student returns to school and needs to apologize to the victim before returning to class.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Peer mediation/conflict management involves the following basic steps:

- One student talks at a time, without interruption, telling his or her side of the conflict
- The other student talks, without interruption, telling his or her side of the conflict
- The two students actively listen and repeat back each others interpretation of the conflict
- The students resolve the conflict by agreeing to what they could have done differently and by offering appropriate solutions
- The students will then state what they will do differently in the future
- Both students agree that the conflict is resolved by apologizing or by other restitution

The entire mediation is monitored and directed by a neutral peer who has been trained in mediation techniques.

### WEBSITES

**Teachers First** <http://www.teachersfirst.com/lessons/mediate/mediate1.cfm>

**Peer Mediation Program** [http://www.schoolmediationcenter.org/programs/peer\\_med.htm](http://www.schoolmediationcenter.org/programs/peer_med.htm)

**Peer Mediation** <http://www.studygs.net/peermed.htm>

## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

### INTRODUCTION

Most people know from personal experience that nothing succeeds like success and nothing defeats like defeat. Schools are implementing this concept by attempting to change and shape student behavior using positive behavioral intervention and supports (PBIS) in addition to other planned interventions. PBIS has the potential to prevent problem behavior while also bringing about improvements in the atmosphere in schools.

### RATIONALE

Some behaviors require negative consequences because of the risk to self or others that the behavior causes. But when positive behavior support interventions are used, changes in attitude and behavior of both the teacher and the student are likely to occur.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Positive behavior support interventions may be the choice when negative consequences have not impacted the problem behaviors and the staff has interest in a school-wide training experience. They can also be used before this point in combination with other disciplinary interventions.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

- Commitment to utilize a team-based approach with administrative support
- Classroom or school-wide programming increases effectiveness
- Family involvement increases effectiveness
- Training including replacement behaviors must be taught and practiced by all involved
- Discipline and the school behavior policy are not forgotten
- Specific phrases and interventions need to be available for all staff to use

### REFERENCES

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Child & Family Behavior Therapy*, 24(1-2), 23-50.

Lindsey, Brenda Coble, White, Margaret, Korr, Wynne S. Franklin, Cynthia, Harris, Mary Beth, Allen-Meares, Paula, (Ed.s), (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. (pp. 621-625). NY: Oxford University Press.

### EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

**Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports** <http://www.pbis.org/main.htm>

### WEBSITES

**EBD/PBIS Network**, Illinois Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities/Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports Network, Illinois State Board of Education [www.ebdnetwork-il.org](http://www.ebdnetwork-il.org)

**National Association of School Psychologists** <http://www.nasponline.org>

## Positive School Climate

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers are integral in promoting and maintaining a positive school climate by facilitating overall respect and trust amongst students and staff. The Center for Research on School Safety, School Climate and Classroom Management (2006) states that “a positive school climate exists when all students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted and secure in an environment where they can interact with caring people they trust.” By improving a school climate, culture and conditions, students’ learning also improves. Positive school climate includes the physical structure of a school building and the interactions between students and teachers (Marshall, 2003).

### RATIONALE

Research has shown that positive school climate has been associated with fewer behavioral and emotional problems for students (Kuperminc et al 1997) and can increase achievement levels and reduce maladaptive behavior (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). In addition, there is an increased job satisfaction for school personnel (Taylor and Tashakkori 1995). School social workers help promote a positive school climate by communicating with parents about their child(ren), meeting with staff and administration when there are concerns and fostering a climate of respect for all.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

The Center for Research on School Safety, School Climate and Classroom Management (2006) suggests the following possible interventions to improve school climate:

- Increased parent and community involvement
- Implementation of character education or the promotion of fundamental moral values in children
- Use of violence prevention and conflict resolution curricula
- Peer mediation
- Prevention of acts of bullying (Peterson & Skiba, 2001)
- Teachers and principals treat students fairly, equally, and with respect
- Provide a safe environment for staff and students (Harris & Lowery, 2002)
- Personalization through adopt-a kid-programs, honoring most improved students, and block scheduling (Shore, 1995).

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

According to the Center for Research on School Safety, School Climate and Classroom (2006) positive school climate includes:

- Respect
- Trust
- High morale
- Opportunity for input
- Continuous academic and social growth
- Cohesiveness

- School renewal
- Caring

The School Climate Survey contains seven dimensions of school climate:

- Achievement motivation
- Fairness
- Order and discipline
- Parent involvement
- Sharing of resources
- Student interpersonal relationships
- Student-teacher relationships

Joyce Epstein (1995) states that frequent and positive school-to home-communication helps parents feel more self-confident, more comfortable with the school and more likely to become involved. She points out the need for teachers and schools to increase their understanding and respect for student and family diversity. School staff can let parents know that they are valued and acknowledge their time constraints and familial obligations (Epstein 1995) thus establishing a positive relationship with families.

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**Creating a Positive School Climate:** <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/fas/pdf/3.pdf>

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

The School Climate Survey School Development Program - Yale

The NASSP School Climate Survey National Association of Secondary School Principals

Charles F. Kettering Ltd School Climate Profile

Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments Keefe & Kelley, 1990

Organizational Climate Index Hoy, Smith, Sweetland, 2002

## WEBSITES

**The Center for Research on School Safety, School Climate and Classroom Management**  
<http://education.gsu.edu/schoolsafety/>

## Preassessment Teams

### INTRODUCTION

In Minnesota, the legal definition of the teams' purpose is early identification of needs and prevention initiatives for student chemical use problems (Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs, Minnesota Statutes § 121A.25-27 Pre-assessment Teams and Advisory Committee). However, in many schools, the pre-assessment team deals with other issues. An example is a pre-assessment team that is a school student services team that provides a process to address student assistance needs and address behaviors of concern that are interfering with student learning, growth and development.

### RATIONALE

The team function is to select the most appropriate plan/referral for the student's problems. School social workers are the members of pre-assessment teams that address social and emotional needs and help the team recognize the strengths of every student.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

The pre-assessment team as described here is used to determine what further services a student needs and what level of response is suggested. School staff can provide the needed services or an outside community resource may be needed. When the problem is an academic one, the student may be referred to special education. When there is a need for case management by a case manager or case monitor, one will be assigned.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

According to the Minnesota Comprehensive Prevention Model for Schools, the four coordinating strategies are:

- Engaging school and community partners
- Assessment of need, setting goals
- Planning and implementation
- Evaluation

### REFERENCES

Minnesota Department of Education, Safe and Healthy Learners  
Ruth Ellen Luehr, MS, RN, FNASN  
Telephone 651 582 8403  
Fax 651 582 8499  
E-mail ruthellen.luehr@state.mn.us

Roger Svendsen, MN Institute for Public Health and Central CAPT

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction, 1994

### Minnesota Statutes:

121A.25-27 Pre-assessment Teams and Advisory Committee

121A.29 Reporting: chemical abuse

C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Minnesota Department of Education, Safe and Healthy Learners

Responsibilities of Concerned Educators

Sharing concerns with the student: Six Steps to 'See it, Say It'

Talking to Students about factors that interfere with learning: The Five A's

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announces the publication of a new issue of its Substance Abuse in Brief Fact Sheet addressing co-occurring substance abuse and mental disorders.

800-729-6686 or 240-221-4017 (Phone)

800-487-4889 (TDD hearing impaired)

877-767-8432 (toll free) Hablamos Español

Web: [www.ncadi.samhsa.gov](http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov)

The issue is also available online at [www.kap.samhsa.gov](http://www.kap.samhsa.gov)

## WEBSITES

**Minnesota Department of Education** <http://education.state.mn.us> See Learning Supports and Addressing behavior of concern via student assistance teams.

## Respect for Diversity

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers provide services to many cultural and ethnic groups within the school setting. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Standards for Professional Practice for School Social Workers state that “school social workers shall ensure that students and their families are provided services within the context of multicultural understanding and competence that enhance family’s support of students’ learning experience.” NASW Code of Ethics for all social workers states that social workers should follow the ethical standards of cultural competence and social diversity.

### RATIONALE

School social workers must have more than just a respect for diversity, but should strive for cultural competency. Due to the high rate of drop out, mental health concerns present in schools and retention, it is imperative that school social workers provide culturally relevant social work services and mental health interventions to this population of students. In order to perform effective practice, social workers should relate to all students and their families within their cultural context. Without a respect for diversity, student problems may increase due to a cultural misunderstanding.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Competent assessment practices should be the basis for which intervention decisions are made. Assessment of problems may include psycho-educational or mental health screening/evaluation in the areas of cognition, academic achievement, learning and sociobehavioral functioning using tools that are both norm-referenced as well as other tools that gather qualitative information. For example, student, family and staff interviews are equally important in gathering information. School staff **MUST** consider all assessment information within the social cultural context of the student and his or her family.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

“Cultural competence refers to a set of congruent practice skills, knowledge, behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system that enables the system to work effectively in cross cultural situations” (Lambros, K.M. & Barrio, C., 2006).

- When a student is referred for screening, evaluation or service, carefully review the referral reason and consider it within the cultural norms and expectations of the student, family, teacher, classroom environment and school.
- Remember that families may differ in term of their family composition, childrearing practices, response to disobedience and perception of disability/health, communication and interpersonal styles.
- Refine the ability to recognize the limits of your own multicultural competence.
- All educators should seek educational, consultative and training experiences to improve multicultural knowledge.

## REFERENCES

K.M. Lambros & C. Barrio (2006). Mental Health Interventions with Latino Students in multicultural school environments: A framework for assessing biases and developing cultural competence. In C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## LITERATURE REFERENCES

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Barrio, C. (2000). *The cultural relevance of community support programs*.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

**NASW Cultural Competence** [http://www.socialworkers.org/sections/credentials/cultural\\_comp.asp](http://www.socialworkers.org/sections/credentials/cultural_comp.asp)

Minnesota Department of Education Reducing Bias <http://www.education.state.mn.us/>

## WEBSITES

**PeaceWorks PEI** <http://www.isn.net/cliapei/peaceworks/index2.htm>

**The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems** [www.nccrest.org](http://www.nccrest.org)

## Response to Intervention

### INTRODUCTION

The University of California Los Angeles Center for Mental Health in Schools states that the Federal Government is “pushing” schools to use Response to Intervention (RTI) as a method to reduce inappropriate diagnoses for special education. The intent is to use “well designed and well implemented early intervention” in the regular classroom as a way to deal with student behavior. The goal is to also determine if more intensive assistance is required (UCLA Center, 2006). School social workers can play a key role in developing interventions for the regular education classroom teacher to use for students whose behavior warrants additional intervention. The school social worker can also assist in implementing and reviewing the intervention to determine its effectiveness.

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) supports “utilizing the specialized skills of school social workers in designing, implementing and evaluation interventions to determine which students might benefit from additional assessment possibly leading to the provision of special education and related services” (Resolution, 2006).

### RATIONALE

RTI addresses learning and behaviors in the classroom by assessing student responses. The data is then used to develop in-classroom strategies, then modifying the strategy and developing other interventions as needed until it is evident that a student’s problems cannot be resolved through classroom interventions alone. At that point, other special assistance outside the regular classroom may be utilized (UCLA Center).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Response To Intervention can be used in classrooms as a means to reduce inappropriate diagnoses for special education. RTI can also be used in classrooms to manage behavior and accommodate different learning styles. RTI is utilized to ensure success in the general education setting by providing appropriate, ongoing interventions to students.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

The RTI system includes “high quality interventions and behavioral supports, evidence-based interventions, and frequent assessment and monitoring of student performance and progress” (SSWAA resolution, 2006). School social workers may provide primary prevention strategies to all students in the general education classroom, such as defining behavioral expectations. They may also provide interventions to reduce the barriers to learning by addressing lack of adequate social skills, lack of parental support and reducing cross-cultural barriers. More intensive interventions may include goal orientated casework, short-term mental health counseling or functional behavioral assessment (SSWAA Resolution, 2006).

The UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools (2006), suggests the following keys for a successful RTI program:

- Ensure an optimal teaching environment, with personalized teaching - this includes

- motivation-orientated strategies to engage students in classroom instruction
- Use special assistance strategies stressing the least intervention needed to maintain a healthy classroom environment
- Develop “well-designed interventions” with the assistance of student support staff including school social workers
- Training for staff on how to implement successful interventions
- Allow enough time for implementation

The UCLA Center also suggests enhancing motivation by following these practices:

- Regular use of informal and formal conferences with students
- Use of a broad range of options from which learners can make choices about learning content, activities, and desired outcomes
- Use a broad range of options from which learners can make choices about their need for support and guidance
- Active decision-making by learners in evaluating their motivation and capability
- Establishment of program plans and mutual agreements about the relationship between learners and personnel
- Regular reevaluations and reformulation of plans

## REFERENCES

School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) Resolution on Response to Intervention (2006). [www.sswaa.org](http://www.sswaa.org)

UCLA Center: Mental Health in Schools, Program and Policy Analysis (2006). Addressing Barriers to Learning, 11(4).

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

**National Center for Learning Disabilities** <http://www.nclد.org/content/view/1002/389/>

**National Center of State Directors of Special Education** <http://www.nasdse.org/projects.cfm>

## WEBSITES

**School Social Work Association of America** [www.sswaa.org](http://www.sswaa.org)

**UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools** [www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu](http://www.smhp.psych.ucla.edu)

**Education Evolving** [http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Response\\_to\\_Intervention.pdf](http://www.educationevolving.org/pdf/Response_to_Intervention.pdf)

**Intervention Central** <http://www.interventioncentral.org/>

**National Center for Learning Disabilities** <http://www.nclد.org/content/view/1002/389/>

## Screening

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers can utilize a number of screening tools to better assess the needs of students. For example, screening for substance abuse, risk of suicide, mental health and other emotional and behavioral problems gives school staff a basis for underlying concerns. Since school social workers are educated in recognizing the early warning signs of mental illness, as well as ruling in or out a number of other concerns, they can be integral in the planning and implementation of interventions. Using a variety of screening tools also assists teachers and other staff to recognize the need for increased services and/or referring for a special education evaluation.

Susan De La Paz and Steve Graham state that when Congress enacted Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, in November, 1975, it requires that all children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education. Determining who has a disability and who is eligible for special services, however, is not an exact science. It is complicated by vague definitions and varying interpretations of how to identify specific disabling conditions (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1991).

### RATIONALE

Recent government figures indicate that 7 percent of children and youth from birth to 21 are identified as having a disability that requires special intervention (Hunt & Marshall, 1994). Providing screening to determine if the student has a disability or other possible health concern is one of the roles of a school social worker.

School social workers may also screen families in order to provide appropriate links to community resources, when needed.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

While practices differ greatly both across and within states (Adelman & Taylor, 1993), screening is an important part of the assessment process mandated by Public Law 94-142. Screening for the purpose of special diagnoses begins at birth and continues throughout the school years. In the first few years of life, most forms of screening center around developmental norms for physical, cognitive and language abilities. Many children with severe disabilities (Down's syndrome, autism, severe sensory impairments, or children with multiple disabilities, for example) are identified early in life by physicians and other health professionals. However, other children, such as those with learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, behavioral problems and so forth, may not be formally identified until they start school.

Screening procedures are an important part of the assessment process to identify children and youth who have disabilities. Such procedures must be used with care, however, as they provide only a preliminary sign that a child has a disability. Additional testing is required to affirm or disprove the presence of a disabling condition. If a disability is identified during follow-up assessment, the focus shifts to providing the student with an appropriate education, which could include a 504 Plan or Individual Education Program.

Screening is an important part of the prereferral process. School social workers are educated in providing appropriate screening for mental health issues, emotional behavioral disorders and other school-related problems. Completing a social developmental history is also a good tool to use get more information about the family.

Screening can also be used to implement interventions because it allows school staff to understand the possible underlying behavior of the individual student. Screening may also be completed by the school social worker during the preschool screening, as well as the mental health screening to meet Emotional Behavioral Disorder criteria and after a student is suspended for 10 days.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

It is important to understand that there is no standard or uniform battery of tests, checklists, or procedures to follow for the identification of most students with disabilities. While there is a basic structure to the identification process, there is considerable variability in how students may come to be identified, including the types of tests used in screening and the processes by which they are referred.

A common prereferral intervention approach includes a pre-assessment team which may include teachers, principal, nurse, school counselor, school psychologist, alcohol, tobacco and other drug counselor, liaison officer and the school social worker. The team works to provide appropriate interventions to use in the classroom to accommodate student needs better. If the interventions do not produce results, the school social worker may screen the student for possible emotional behavioral disorder, mental health concern or environmental factors.

## LITERATURE REFERENCES, MODELS AND WEBSITES

De La Paz, Susan, Graham, Steve (1995) Screening for Special Diagnoses. ERIC Digest.

## REFERENCES

Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (1993). *Learning problems and learning disabilities*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks.

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notes on preliminary findings. *The Elementary School Journal*, 92, 245-259.

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## MODELS

**Pediatric Checklist** <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opt/Checklist.pdf>

**Columbia Teen Screen** [www.teenscreen.org/](http://www.teenscreen.org/)

Please see mental health screening section and social developmental history example in appendix.

## WEBSITES

**Screening and early detection of mental health problems in children and adolescents**  
[www.SAMHSA.gov](http://www.SAMHSA.gov)

**Ericae: Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation:** <http://ericae.net/db/edo/ED389965.htm>

**President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report: A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families:** <http://www.ed.gov/inits/commissionsboards/whspecialeducation/reports/two.html>

## Social/Emotional Learning

### INTRODUCTION

Social and emotional education is school-based programming that focuses on positive youth development, health promotion, prevention of problems behaviors and student engagement of learning. School social workers play a key role in the social and emotional development of students by attending to their basic needs, developing social skills and fostering a caring and nurturing environment. According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2004), social and emotional learning (SEL) is “the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish positive relationships and handle challenging situations effectively. Research has shown that SEL is fundamental to children’s social and emotional development - their health, ethical development, citizenship, academic learning and motivation to achieve.

### RATIONALE

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) promotes students’ attachment to school. SEL also has a critical role in improving children’s academic performance and lifelong learning (Zins, 2004). Studies have shown that emotions can facilitate or hamper students’ learning and their ultimate success in school. Because social and emotional factors play such an important role, schools must attend to this aspect of the educational process for the benefit of all students (Zin, 2004). Researchers have also found that prosocial behavior in the classroom is linked with positive intellectual outcomes.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Social emotional skills can be infused into the regular academic curriculum (Zins, 2004). Teachers can be trained to promote social emotional skills during regular instruction. School social workers can assist teachers in the development of the skill training, or they can complete a whole classroom discussion/lesson about social emotional skills. School social workers may also pull specific students out of the classroom for small group or individual promotion of social emotional skills.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Successful programs include a person-centered focus, along with a supportive environment. SEL education involves teaching children to be self-aware, socially cognizant, able to make responsible decisions and competent in self-management and relationship management skills so as to foster their academic success (Zins, 2004).

According to Zins (2004) essential characteristics of effective SEL programming:

- Carefully planned, theory and research-based interventions
- Teaches SEL skills for application to daily life
- Addresses affective and social dimensions of learning
- Leads to coordinated, integrated and unified programming linked to academic outcomes

SEL education promotes safe and caring learning environment, monitors intervention, provides leadership, institutional policies aligned with SEL goals, professional development, involves families and community partnerships and uses program evaluation for continuous improvement.

## REFERENCES

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

Zins, J.E., Bloodworth, M.R., Weissberg, R.P., Walberg, H.J., (2004). The Scientific Base Linking Social and Emotional Learning to School Success. *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: what does the research say?*

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

**Seattle Social Development Project** <http://depts.washington.edu/ssdp/>

**Resolving Conflict Creatively Program** <http://www.edutopia.org/php/orgs>

**Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies** <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/programs/PATHS.html>

**Child Development Project** <http://www.devstu.org/cdp/>

**Responsive Classroom** [www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/aboutrc.html](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/about/aboutrc.html)

## WEBSITES

**The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning** [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

**About our kids** <http://www.aboutourkids.org/aboutour/articles/social-emotional.html>

**Social Emotional Learning Resources** [http://www.nprinc.com/soc\\_emot/index.htm](http://www.nprinc.com/soc_emot/index.htm)

## Social Problem-Solving

### INTRODUCTION

Social problem-solving skills are defined as a set of specific attitudes, behaviors and skills directed toward solving a particular real-life problem in a social context (D’Zurilla, 1986). Elias and Clabby (1992) say that social problem-solving skills are skills that students “use to analyze, understand and prepare to respond to everyday problems, decisions and conflicts.” School social workers often help students in small group settings systematically learn social problem-solving skills.

### RATIONALE

Children need to know how to use a problem-solving strategy to effectively solve problems they encounter at school, home and community. Without this skill, maladaptive responses to problems may lead to negative peer or family relationships, unhealthy behaviors such as teen pregnancy and drug addiction and academic failure. Students with learning and behavior problems often need extra help in the area of social problem-solving (Nelson, Dykeman, Powell, and Petty, 1996). Learning these skills helps students improve their ability to cope with stress and more effectively handle interpersonal relationship difficulties. When students learn how to analyze situations better, they can then have more control over events and make better decisions.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Research shows that optimal results occur when problem-solving skills are taught school-wide and over a period of years where skills continue to be reinforced. School social workers can help assess the need for which students would benefit from extra small group work in social problem-solving techniques.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Social problem-solving skills can be worked into the curriculum or taught in small group settings. Peer mediation programs are also a popular forum for teaching students conflict resolution and problem-solving skills (Cangelosi, 2000). The basic format is:

- State the problem
- Gather information from self and others
- Think of possible solutions
- Evaluate each solution
- Choose the best, mutually acceptable solution
- Try out the solution
- Decide what to do next time

Through this process, students can also learn empathy skills and active listening. They would then have more skills to enjoy satisfying peer friendships, since good listening and caring are primary components in making and keeping friends. Some small group activities could include role play, building a feelings vocabulary, therapeutic games that increase social problem-solving skills, as well as encouraging outside of school activities such as extracurricular activities, drawing, listening to music, journaling and exercise.

## REFERENCES

D’Zurilla, T.J. (1986). *Problem-solving therapy: a social competence approach to clinical intervention*. New York: Springer.

Elias M.J. & Clabby, J.F. (1992). *Building social problem-solving skills: Guidelines from a school-based program*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Cangelosi, J.S. (2000). *Classroom management strategies: gaining and maintaining students’ cooperation* (4th ed.). New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES, AND PROGRAMS

Second Step  
Steps to Success  
LifeSkills

## WEBSITES

**American Psychological Association** [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)

## Substance Abuse Prevention

### INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse prevention efforts, which includes prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) use, have often been school-based, since schools have the greatest access to the majority of the nation's children and are well-known for providing education and collecting data from students about substance use and abuse (Burke, 2002). It is important for our students not only to be drug and alcohol free, but to learn the coping skills and problem-solving skills accompanied by good self-esteem, that will be beneficial in launching them into a healthy adult life.

### RATIONALE

The consequences of substance use are serious, costly and expensive, with immediate physiological influences while interfering with perception and rational judgment (McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 2004). Adolescents may be more involved with risk-taking behaviors while under the influence, as well as having higher incidences of fatal accidents and crime (US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2000). Also, heavy drinking and smoking can lead to diseases such as cancer, heart disease, liver-related and sexually transmitted diseases (Center for Disease Control, 2004). Finally, substance abuse has detrimental effects on the mental health of adolescents and has been associated with poor educational outcomes and academic failure (National Commission on Drug-Free Schools, 1990).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Education in substance abuse prevention and social skills are most effective when implemented school and community wide, beginning in the elementary school years. The American Academy of Pediatrics (1998) stated that the prevalence of substance use and abuse among school children is occurring among younger students. Earlier onset of substance abuse is significantly related to heavier use and more addictive symptoms in later years, as well as more difficult rehabilitation if a problem emerges (Jenson & Howard, 1991; Knowles, 2001).

The Minnesota Student Survey gives information about particular communities across the state and is helpful in designing a prevention program that fits the needs of one's own school district. Districts can institute their own ATOD and violence prevention program committees that include community members such as public health, law enforcement and human services for a broader view, as well as maximizing support and coordination of services within each community.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Many programs have been introduced to help children and adolescents refuse alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (programs can be found on the internet on the National Registry of Effective Prevention Programs), but one of the most effective to date is called Life Skills Training (LST). Research on the effectiveness of this program indicates a 50-87% reduction in the prevalence of ATOD (National Health Promotion Associates, 2002). This is designed for the complete

student population in a student to provider ratio of 25:1 to allow for discussion. The main objectives in the program include:

- providing students with skills to resist peer pressure, developing greater self-esteem and self-confidence
- helping students learn to cope with social anxiety
- increasing students' knowledge of the consequences of use
- enhancing students' cognitive and behavioral competency to reduce and prevent a variety of health risk behaviors (National Health Promotion Associates, 2002)

Overall goals of a successful program will include teaching prevention-related information, promoting anti-drug norms, teaching drug refusal skills and fostering the development of personal self-management skills and general social skills (National Health Promotion Associates, 2002).

It is helpful for the entire community to support substance abuse prevention and can do so in a variety of settings, including summer camps, after-school programs and community-based organizations (NHPA, 2002). Also, many schools often offer small group opportunities through their school social worker or other support staff, providing additional support and education for high-risk students.

In the National Institute on Drug Abuse website (see below), it is stated that the most important protective factors, as well as risks, come from within the family, but include factors that influence a child in other environments. Among protective factors identified by NIDA research are strong bonds and clear rules of conduct within a family, involvement of parents in a child's life, successful school performance, strong bonds with positive institutions such as school and religious organizations and a child's agreement with the social norm that drug use is not acceptable.

## REFERENCES

Burke, M.R. (2002). School-based substance abuse prevention: Political finger-pointing does not work, *Federal Probation*, 66(2), 66-72

McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, R.J. (2004). *At-risk youth: a comprehensive response*. Toronto, Canada: Brooks Cole.

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## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES, AND PROGRAMS

LifeSkills

Seattle Program (Hawkins)

SEARCH Institute

## WEBSITES

**National Institute on Drug Abuse** [www.nida.nih.gov/](http://www.nida.nih.gov/)

**American Public Health Association** [www.apha.org/](http://www.apha.org/)

**American Council for Drug Education** [www.acde.org](http://www.acde.org)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

# Violence Prevention and Risk Assessment

## INTRODUCTION

School social workers are integral in the development and implementation of programs that will combat the rates of violence and harassment in schools. Highly publicized school shootings have brought the issues of school violence to the forefront of efforts by schools, parents and communities to promote safety in schools. School social workers play an “increasingly important role in shaping and implementing policy, interventions, and procedures that make US schools safer” (Astor et al, 2006). Since children spend so many hours in school throughout their lives, “programs in the school setting have the potential to have a strong impact on their attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs about violence” (Astor, et al, 2006).

## RATIONALE

Staggering statistics demonstrate the need for violence prevention education in the schools. Research concludes that fourteen percent of high schools students carry weapons to school (Mattaini, 2006). Rates of harassment, bullying, threat, coercion, humiliation and intentional exclusion among children and youth are much higher than adults usually recognize (Mattaini, 2006). One-third of US high school students do not feel safe at schools (Mattaini, 2006). Since violence is a learned behavior, an approach to violence prevention which builds on a combination of community and systemic action along with a focus on family and individual resiliency is necessary (Culross, et. Al, 2006).

## DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

School social workers need tools to assess and monitor rates of school violence and of risk and protective factors that have probabilistic linkages to its occurrence (Mattaini, 2006). Determining which violence prevention program to use may be overwhelming. Therefore, Mattaini suggests drawing on data from the individual schools, determining needs and choosing a program based on the needs. However, he also counsels awareness of the resources available to implement the program. For example, assess the staffing requirements and financial requirements of successfully implementing the program (Mattaini, 2006).

Bowen (2006) suggests using the following steps to identify issues that will help overcome barriers that restrict prevention strategies:

- Conduct a status quo assessment
- Define desired results
- Identify key partners and allies
- Develop an action plan with each partner and ally
- Specify the role and responsibilities of the performance team
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation plan
- Develop plans to overcome potential implementation hurdles

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Violence prevention programs are more successful when schools complete a risk assessment to determine their level of intervention.

Astor et al (2006), recommend the following key points when developing a successful violence prevention program:

- Comprehensive, intensive, ecological, and require “buy in” from school and community
- Raise the awareness and responsibility of students, teachers, and parents regarding the types of violence in their schools
- Create clear guidelines and rules for all members of the school community
- Target the various social systems in the school and clearly communicate to the entire school community what procedures should be followed before, during and after violent events
- Focus on getting the school staff, students, and parents involved in the programs.
- Often fit easily into the normal flow and mission of the school setting
- Use faculty, staff, and parents in the school setting to plan, implement, and sustain the program
- Increase monitoring and supervision in non classroom areas
- Include ongoing monitoring and mapping, which provide information that schools can use to tailor a program to their specific needs and increase its chance of success

Mattaini (2006) indicates that cultures that are effective in reducing violence are characterized by four interlocking components:

- Recognizing contributions and successes
- Acting with respect
- Sharing power to build community
- Making peace

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## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Community Builders Metzler et al. 2001

Get.a.voice™ Project

I can Problem Solve

PeaceBuilders® Flannery et al. 2003

Good Behavior Game Embry 2002

Bullying Prevention Program [www.clemson.edu/olweus](http://www.clemson.edu/olweus) Multicomponent bullying reduction and prevention program for grades 1-9

Child Development Project Ecological approach to intervention that involves teachers, parents and students working to influence school community <http://www.devstu.org>

FAST Track- Families and Schools Together long-term comprehensive intervention that encompasses multiple facets of children's social contexts. <http://www.fasstrackproject.org>

US Secret Service national threat assessment guide <http://www.ustreas.gov/usss/ntac.shtml>

Early Warning Guide <http://www.naea-reston.org/pdf/guide.pdf>

Student level assessment and screening procedures Sprague, J., & Walker, H. (2000).

School Success Profile <http://www.schoolsuccessprofile.org/>

## WEBSITES

**Prevention Institute** <http://www.Preventioninstitute.org/>

**Center for Disease Control National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Prevention:** <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/bestpractices.htm>

**Department of Education Safe and Drug Free Schools:** <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html?src=mr>

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development** <http://www.prevention.psu.edu>

## Trauma Informed Schools

### INTRODUCTION

Exposure to trauma and toxic stress impacts a young person's learning, behavior, brain development and ability to develop relationships with others. School social workers play a critical role in a school's ability to respond to the signs and symptoms of trauma constructive ways. Utilizing a trauma informed framework, allows SSWs to coach school staff to re-frame thinking that negative behaviors are based solely on student choice to viewing students as wanting to do well, but lacking the skills to get needs met or having developed misunderstood patterns of behaviors in response to challenges in their life. A trauma informed response to behaviors include re-teaching expectations, recognizing that behavior is communication and providing students with unconditional regard for them as a person, even when their behavior is difficult. Social work methods, such as self determination, strengths perspective, rapport building are methods the SSWs utilize to mitigate the effects of toxic stress.

### REFERENCES

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota: [www.pcamn.org](http://www.pcamn.org)

The mission of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network is to raise the standard of care and increase access to services for traumatized children, their families and communities throughout the United States. This website includes a PDF entitled "Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators". <http://www.nctsn.org/>

The Trauma & Learning Policy Initiative is full of valuable resources on building Trauma Sensitive Schools: <http://traumasensitiveschools.org/>

AMBIT: The aim of **AMBIT Network** is to make high quality care more accessible for traumatized children and families in Minnesota and beyond. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/ambit/>

## Conferences

Most schools have a special time set aside once or twice a year when the parent of the students are invited into the school for a meeting with the teacher about how their child is doing in school. Parents of students in special education are invited to meet with school personnel generally twice a year. School social workers often play an important role in helping parents attend and feel positive about these meetings.

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers help bridge the gap between the home and the school through their frequent contact with the student's parents. They can help parent know what to expect when attending meetings at school and can help them understand and be prepared for the process used to conduct these meetings. School social workers can also meet with school personnel to help create a welcoming climate for diverse parents. Additionally, school social workers can facilitate efforts to reach out to the families with children in the schools they serve.

### RATIONALE

The literature documents the importance of parent involvement in the education of their children and adolescents and shows that students who have families which are committed to their education do better academically and behaviorally (Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Wang, Wildman & Calhoun, 1996; Fisher, 2003). Parents often face barriers in attending school conferences and meetings to discuss their child. Problems such as transportation, scheduling, need for translation or a past negative experience with the school system may serve as major disincentives. School social workers can help mediate these problems by arranging for transportation, advocating for a meeting time when parents can attend, locating translators and meeting with the parents ahead of time so that they understand how important they are to the process of their child's education. School social workers can also work with school personnel to make sure that the school environment is welcoming for parents by having someone who can greet them warmly when they come into school and offer a beverage if they have to wait.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Efforts to connect positively with parents should be ongoing.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Epstein and Janson (2004) suggest the following are steps to encourage and support parents' involvement in school conferences and meeting:

- Ask the school administrator to let families know how important it is to attend these events
- Ask the school administrator encourage the faculty to reach out to parents
- Publicize these conference and meetings throughout the year in flyers and newsletters
- Set goals for parent attendance at conferences and meetings and monitor progress on the goals

In addition to the above suggestions school social workers can talk with teachers about strategies for successful parent-teacher conferences. For example, it is always nice to start by first asking parents what questions or concerns they have about school and their child. This shows the parents that their concerns are important enough to be given priority. School social workers can also talk with teachers about the value of identifying and sharing a student's strengths before describing behaviors that may be a concern. All students have strengths and it can be relationship building when parents learn that the teacher recognizes their child's strengths.

At times, when parents are not able to attend conferences and meetings at school, a school social worker can work with faculty to come up with more accessible locations. Akron, Ohio moved parent-teacher conferences to a local shopping mall because of low attendance. Interestingly, the move resulted in higher turnout (Curriculum Review, 2004). Another more common form of reaching out when parents cannot come into school is for school social workers to set up and accompany teachers on home visits to meet with the parents. This approach can be helpful for several reasons. School social workers are familiar with the practice of making home visits which can help the faculty member feel more comfortable leaving the school to go out to a home. Parents may appreciate the special time and effort taken to reach out to them and are often more comfortable in their own environment.

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## Consultation

Family consultation in school social work practice is a process whereby schools, social workers and family members share their respective expertise about a student and his or her situation. The purpose of the consultation is to collaboratively develop a plan to help the student experience more success in school.

### INTRODUCTION

Research shows that students generally do better in school when their families are involved (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). One vital function of school social work services is consultation with family members of students who are having or who are likely to have difficulty in school. Consultation is an “indirect service delivery model” for working with students’ families (Albers & Kratochwill, 2006, p.971). It is also a collaborative problem-solving process where the consultant (the school social worker) and the consultee (the family members) each contribute valuable information (Gianesin, 2007). It is important to recognize that families bring a wealth of information about their family members to the consultation process. They are in a good position to know when one of the children or adolescents in the family may have a problem or is having a problem at school. For example, a child who is teased at school may resist getting ready and leaving for school in the morning. The family will generally be aware of this problem long before the school personnel know about it. In situations like this, family members can work with the school social worker to find a solution to the problem.

Consultation is preventative when people in a student’s life communicate proactively about difficulties that the student may be facing and together they can develop a system of support for that student to reduce stress. For example, family members may also contact the school social worker when their child experiences some type of trauma such as a death of a loved one or a divorce. Together through the consultation process the school social worker and the family can come up with ways to help the student deal with painful feelings at school and at home.

School social workers can use multiple methods (school newsletter, flyers sent home with students, link on school web page, presentation at Parent Teacher Association meetings) to let the families in the school know that they are available for consultation so that parents or guardians can feel free to pick up the phone and call or just drop in to visit when they have concerns about how their child is doing in school.

### RATIONALE

The literature provides ample evidence regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process (Albers & Kratochwill, 2006, p.971). In addition consultation “is considered to be a cost-effective model of service delivery” because it is often more efficient to assist people who will remain in the student’s life to acquire the needed knowledge, skills and resources (Albers & Kratochwill, 2006, p.971).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

There are times when a more direct intervention than consultation is required. For example, in the case of a student who is talking about suicide, it is best if the school social worker can talk

directly with the student to assess the risk level. In follow-up sessions with the family, the social worker will likely employ a consultative process, providing the family with important information about warning signs and action steps. The school social worker may also consult with the family using a solution-focused (DeJong & Berg, 2002) approach regarding events that led up to the talk of suicide to develop a proactive plan to improve the situation.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Establishing a good relationship is an essential first step in any consultation. This requires mutual respect, an openness to explore issues related to a problem and potential solutions. Giannesin (2007) identified the following six steps:

1. building the relationship
2. agreeing upon the purpose of the consultation and the expected outcome (goals)
3. identifying a problem as specifically as possible
4. exploring alternative courses of action
5. developing a plan for intervention
6. evaluating the plan and the intervention

Sabatino (2002) also points out that consultation is based on a voluntary relationship where “the objective is to solve a work-related problem of the consultee” so that the “consultee is better prepared to deal with similar problems in the future” (p. 211).

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## Family Support Programs

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers use their unique skills and systems knowledge to support a variety of activities that overcome the barriers to educational success of students. Family support programs are a method used by social workers and other school staff that have the capacity to increase the school success of all students through the engagement and welcoming of families into the school environment.

### RATIONALE

Is it widely accepted among educational professionals that parental involvement with school has been linked to academic success, good school attendance, and positive behavior and social skills (Alameda, 2003; Epstein, 1996; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; McNeal, 1999). Despite this, many family members are hesitant to become involved with their child's education. One reason for this hesitation may be that they had a negative personal experience with school during their childhood and adolescence. Parents or other family members may feel intimidated or judged by school personal. In addition, many family members of children with disabilities or other barriers to learning often receive multiple negative messages about their child from educators. This may lead to defensiveness and poor communication.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Family support programs are commonly used when parents appear to lack the skills, time or motivation to become involved in the school environment in traditional (volunteering in a classroom, attending parent-teacher conferences). Careful assessment of families' needs, families' strengths and community resources available should be considered when deciding the type of family support program a school may want to implement. Examples of family support program activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Parent support groups to connect parents with one another
- Food or clothing shelves available at a school
- Information and referral to community agencies that will support families
- Recreational or cultural events at school that allow families to have fun together
- Educational opportunities that may focus on parenting skills

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

In order to build successful partnerships with families there are several basic assumptions and beliefs that school social workers utilize in their work. School social workers believe that parents are the first and most important educator in their child's life and that parents love their child more and know their child better than any of the staff at school.

If school staff truly believes that a parent or guardian's presence at school is valued and necessary, parents will feel more welcomed and respected. This is key to building the trust that is needed for effective communication between parents and school staff.

Family support programs can be an effective way to increase parental involvement with

a school. School social workers can be a vital component of a successful family support program, linking home, school and community. A successful family support program may require that schools ask the question “How can the school support parents and families” rather than “How can parents help the school” (Franklin, 2006).

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NASW Standards for School Social Work Services

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Epstein Model of Parental Involvement <http://www.naperville203.org/parents-students/EpsteinModelPS.asp>

## WEBSITES

<http://www.edutopia.org/php/keyword.php?id=225>

<http://www.nwrel.org/cfc/publications/familyinvolvement.html>

## Grandparents

“Grandparent caregivers are real-life safety nets, keeping the children they love safe and their families together when birth parents are unable or unwilling to parent” (Minnesota Board on Aging, 2007).

### INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Minnesota Kinship Care Association reported that there were 33,975 children in the state who lived in households headed by grandparents. Many live with their grandparents because their parents are deceased or have a drug or alcohol addiction or a serious emotional, behavioral and/or physical problem (Pebley & Rudkin, 1999). Often, the children and the grandparents are both in need of support and community resources to deal with the stress and adjustment that comes with the new family configuration and the trauma of dealing with feelings about whatever incapacitated the parent. It is important for the grandparents and the children to receive the support and resources they need for the children to do well in school (All Family Resource Organization, 2007). School social workers are well-equipped to assist these families in connecting with the needed resources (Edwards & Daire, 2006).

### RATIONALE

Grandparents who assume the responsibility of raising their grandchildren generally do it to keep them safe and out of the foster care system and because they may be “the only family members willing to assume care of these children” (Edwards & Daire, 2006, p. 113). The All Family Resource Organization (2007) points out grandparents often underestimate the significant financial and emotional burdens involved in their new role as parents. Resuming primary parental responsibilities at a time in life when grandparents are looking forward to more freedom and free time can be very stressful and create a range of negative feelings. In fact, “assuming full-time parenting responsibilities for grandchildren is associated with increased psychological distress in grandparent caregivers” (Kelly, Yorker, Whitley & Sipe 2001, p.29). School social workers can help reduce stress and social isolation by connecting grandparents with others in a similar situation and by accessing needed resources such as respite care and after-school programs.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

School social worker should talk with their building administrators about regularly (at least quarterly) sending information home with students about resources and services available for grandparents who are the primary caregiver for their grandchildren. It would be important to obtain permission from the administrator to ask teachers to distribute resource information for grandparents who have custody of their grandchildren at parent-teacher conference.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Edwards and Daire (2006) identify the following key elements of successful programs for working with grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren:

- Use a strengths-based approach (grandparents have a lot to offer the child and the school in terms of insight and perspective)

- Let grandparents know about
  - resources that can provide respite
  - support groups that are available
  - community-based counseling
  - after-school services
  - medical and dental care
  - financial assistance
  - recreational activities such as sports and music program
  - summer camps
  - extra-curricular activities
  - assistance coordinating services
  - homework help

School social workers can meet with grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren to learn from them if there are areas in which they would like additional support. Once an area of need has been identified by the grandparents, the school social worker can provide contact information and can facilitate the process of accessing that resource. School social workers can also serve as school-based case managers for grandparents who may need assistance coordinating the multiple services their grandchild may require. It is also important for school social workers to consult with school personnel to make sure that all types of families, including those headed by grandparents, feel welcome and valued when interacting with the school.

A wonderful resource for grandparents who care for their grandchildren is *First Steps: Getting Started Raising Relatives' Children* by the Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association (2007). This resource manual offers information about common feelings grandparent caregivers have, documentation that they should keep, journaling tips, legal options, financial help, health insurance, affordable child care, understanding children's issues, children's mental health services, fetal alcohol syndrome and talking with children about their parents.

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## **EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS**

Multimodal intervention including case management and support groups for grandparents raising grandchildren. Kelley, S., Yorker, B., Whitley, D., & Sipe, T. (2001). A multimodal intervention for grandparents raising grandchildren: Results of an exploratory study. *Child Welfare League of America*, 80(1), 27-50.

## **WEBSITES**

Minnesota Board on Aging  
Toll-free: 1-800-882-6262  
E-mail: [mba@state.mn.us](mailto:mba@state.mn.us)  
<http://www.mnaging.org/>

AARP – Grandparent Information Center  
Toll-free: 1-800-434-3410  
An extensive range of services, including a listing of local support groups, newsletters, and useful publications. <http://www.aarp.org>

Minnesota Children with Special Health Needs (MCSHN), MN Department of Health. Toll-free:

1-800-728-5420 <http://www.health.state.mn.us>

Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)  
Toll-free: 1-800-537-2237

A US Government website on Grandparents Raising Children. It has many resources regarding financial program and research <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Grandparents.shtml>

First Steps: A Resource Guide with Information and Services for Grandparents and Others Who Raise Relatives' Children <http://www.mkca.org/NewFiles/firststeps.pdf>

AARP Minnesota news: Grandparents rise to the challenge of raising grand children  
[http://www.aarp.org/states/mn/mn-news/grandparents\\_rise\\_to\\_the\\_challenge\\_of\\_raising\\_gran.html?print=yes](http://www.aarp.org/states/mn/mn-news/grandparents_rise_to_the_challenge_of_raising_gran.html?print=yes)

CCDF is a significant source of federal support to improve the affordability, supply, and quality of child care in the United States. CCDF assists low-income families, including families receiving or transitioning from temporary public assistance, in obtaining child care so they can work, or at State option, attend training or education. [http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/ccdf/rtc/rtc2002/rtc\\_general/2002\\_2003.htm](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ccb/ccdf/rtc/rtc2002/rtc_general/2002_2003.htm)

A Web log (Blog) where grandparents share ideas: <http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/>

Minnesota Board on Aging <http://www.mnaging.org/admin/grandparents.htm>

Minnesota Board on Aging senior link line for resources statewide information and assistance service of the Minnesota Board on Aging provided by six Minnesota Area Agencies on Aging. Phone toll-free 1-800-333-2433. <http://www.mnaging.org/advisor/SLL.htm>

Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association: <http://www.mkca.org/>

## Homework and Academic Assistance

### INTRODUCTION

Considerable research documents that children generally do better in school when their families are involved in positive ways with their education (Epstein, 1991; Henderson & Berla, 1994). School social workers can assist families in understanding what the research says about family involvement in the education of their children and how important they are to the process.

### RATIONALE

When parents are involved, students often “have better attendance records, drop out less often, have higher aspirations and more positive attitudes toward school and homework” (Bogenschneider & Johnson, 2004, p. 20). Helping children learn at home is the type of family involvement most likely to improve school success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). School social workers function as home-school conduits and can assist in establishing ways families can help students successfully complete their homework.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

All families should be encouraged to have a daily homework time set each night. However, Berger (2006) reports that for some families who work long hours outside of the home and who have limited language or math skills it may be almost impossible for them to help their school-age family members with homework. In these situations school social workers can help the family connect with after-school programs that they might not know about such as the Girl’s and Boy’s Club where after-school help with homework is available.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

School social workers should encourage families to:

- Set a specific time each night for homework
- Help explain and monitor the homework
- Praise the effort put into the homework

School social workers can also problem-solve with parents about difficulties they encounter around homework. For example, they can help set up and encourage a sustained communication system such as a notebook of assignments that goes back and forth daily from the school to the home. This type of a system allows the family to know what homework is due the next day on a routine basis and provides a way for the family to let the teacher know how the homework session went. School social workers can also put “tip sheets” about how to help school-age children with homework in school newsletters and can make handouts for teachers to distribute at school conferences.

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## WEBSITES

PATH (Pupils Ask Teachers Help) is a registered 501c3 non-profit organization which specializes in assisting students of any age with their homework-related questions. The organization offers 100% FREE internet based solutions to help parents and students with homework or other school related questions <http://www.pathwhelp.org/>

Effective Program Strategy: Hoops and Homework is a culturally specific, academically enriching, after school, child care program. Hoops and Homework provides homework supervision and tutoring, along with a variety of activities including: social, health and life skills, sports, Ojibwa language, traditional arts, dance, music and storytelling <http://www.nccic.org/tribal/effective/whiteearth/hoopshomework.html>

## Home Visits

### INTRODUCTION

Home visits are an important way to help the school connect with families. School social workers have been conducting home visits since the early 1900's to increase the teamwork between home and school and to address a range of problems that have an impact on students' ability to be successful in school (Shaffer, 2007). Home visits can foster communication, encourage family involvement and address problems that inhibit academic achievement (Sanders, 2000; Reglin, 2002).

### RATIONALE

A home visit “provides a direct link between the school and the home; allows for observation and assessment of the home environment; makes services more accessible to some families; may minimize power imbalance in the helping relationship; allows for teaching and modeling of parenting skills in the natural environment” and is a way to engage families who lack the transportation and/or childcare necessary to attend school meetings or who are uncomfortable in the school setting (Allen & Tracy, 2004 as cited in Tracy & Usaj, 2007, p. 148). One study reported that more than 91% of 80 people surveyed agreed that home visits by school personnel were important to help better support their child's education and their involvement (Reglin, 2002). That same study found that respondents felt it would be especially effective if the teachers actually made the home visit; however, according to other research, that rarely happens (Milian, 2001). School social workers can facilitate the process of teachers making home visits by inviting teachers to go with them. Having a school social worker (who is familiar with making home visits and can model protocol) accompany teachers who are not accustomed to this form of connecting with families, may help the teacher feel more comfortable with this approach. Home visits have been said to “break down walls of misunderstanding” because school personnel are able to gain a fuller appreciation for the family's situation (Johnson, 2001, p. 6.).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

This intervention, home visits, should never be forced upon a family. Home visits should be used when:

- Families are new to a school
- Family members cannot come to school for meetings
- An assessment is being conducted on a student

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

- Communicate in a caring and respectful manner
- Prior to the visit learn about cultural customs that may be practiced by the family (for example, in some cultures it is not appropriate for a man and a woman to shake hands. However, do not assume that the family you are visiting practices that custom. It is important to ask about such things as how they prefer to be greeted)
- Contact the family by phone and/or in writing in advance asking for permission to make a home visit
- Clearly explain the purpose of the home visit (assessment, problem-solving, goal-

setting, etc)

- Give the family a choice of meeting at home, at school or some other location in the community where they might be more comfortable
- Inform the family approximately how much time the visit will take
- Use the home visit as a chance to identify strengths in the student and the family
- During the home visit identify with the family the barriers that prevent them from coming into the school and work together to eliminate the barriers
- During the home visit really listen to what the family has to say
- Use the home visit as an opportunity to let the family know that their insights and opinions are very important
- Find out what concerns and suggestions the family has regarding their child's education

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## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Multisystemic Therapy (uses a home-based model of service delivery to overcome barriers to service access and provide treatment where problems actually occur – in home, school, and community settings) <http://www.musc.edu/psychiatry/research/fsrc/mst.htm>

Parents as Teachers (uses home visits and a variety of other methods to provide parents with child development knowledge and parenting support) [www.patnc.org](http://www.patnc.org)

## Services to Homeless Families

School social workers are important advocates for students who are homeless as they have a working relationship with staff at community agencies and have experience serving as a liaison between students, parents, school personnel and community resources.

### INTRODUCTION

Homelessness has been described as “an extreme condition of poverty that has been a long-standing concern of the social work profession” (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006, p.37). It

is a serious problem in Minnesota especially for the large number of children and youth under the age of 18 who are homeless. According to Wilder Research (2005), nearly 6636 children who were with their parents, and 146 youth who were on their own, were homeless on a single night in October 2012 (<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/HomelessStudyTables2012/All-2012-Homeless-Counts-3-13.pdf>) when data across the state of Minnesota was collected. The Wilder study defined homelessness with the same criteria used in the McKinney Act (P.L. 100-77, sec 103(2) (1), 101 stat. 485 [1987]) which is as follows:

The term “homeless” or “homeless individual” includes an individual who

(1) lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and

(2) has a primary nighttime residence that is

- (a) a supervised, publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill),
- (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or
- (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

School social workers are knowledgeable about laws regarding access to education and community resources that can provide much needed services for homeless children and youth. With this expertise, school social workers provide valuable services to children and youth who are homeless. School social workers also advocate locally and state-wide for resources to provide an adequate level of support for youth and their families to prevent homelessness (Holloway, 2002).

### RATIONALE

Youth under the age of 18 who are homeless face circumstances that generally have a detrimental impact on their academic success. For example, Wilder Research (2012) found that more than half of the homeless youth in Minnesota reported being physically or sexually mistreated. Nation-wide, homeless youth experience more problems with health, nutrition, hunger, behavior and emotions than youth with stable housing (Yamaguchi & Strawser, 1997). Problems associated with homelessness make attending and doing well in school very difficult. As a result, homeless youth score lower on standardized reading and math assessments, are more likely to have poor attendance and drop out of school at higher rates than those who have homes (Rafferty & Shinn, 1991). In Minnesota, homeless youth are also disproportionately over-represented in special education (Wilder Research, 2005).

The US Congress recognized the physical, emotional, social and academic challenges faced by homeless youth with the reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act with the 2001 passage of the No Child Left Behind Act. This legislation provides funding to states for homeless children and requires that each state appoint a Coordinator for Education of the Homeless and that each local educational agency provide a liaison to serve as a point-person and coordinate services for homeless youth. School social workers are often asked to serve as the liaison because “the role and functions of the homeless liaisons are so consonant with the role and function of social work” (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006, p.41). School social workers are well-prepared for work with homeless populations because much of their professional education focuses on the ability to work across systems and intervene at the individual, agency, community and policy levels.

## **DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION**

School social workers should be on a first-name basis with staff at local shelters and should have a system of communication established so that they will be contacted immediately when a new child or youth enters the shelter. School social workers also need to monitor attendance of students who miss school and check on students with attendance problems to determine what services would be helpful. In addition, school social workers can work at the community and policy level to make their voice heard about the need for affordable housing and support services for students who are homeless.

## **KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS**

Key elements of successful programs for youth and children who are homeless include school-community partnerships and reducing barriers to education (Gonzalez, 1991). A major barrier is the lack of awareness among school district personnel and homeless families about the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights protected under this Act (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). According to the McKinney-Vento Act, families of youth who are homeless must be informed of available assistance and the local liaison contact information. This information has to be communicated in a manner that the parents can understand. Under McKinney-Vento Act homeless youth have the right to be:

- immediately enrolled in school
- included in with the general school population and not segregated or stigmatized by school personnel
- allowed to stay in their current school for the remainder of the school year
- transported to and from school
- provided meals through school meal programs

Yamaguchi and Strawser (1997) delineate services that should be offered to students who are homeless. These services include school personnel who:

- act as a liaison with the shelters
- identify students at shelters
- welcome students referred by the shelters to the school
- assist with enrollment
- work with parents on needs
- provide clothing and school supplies
- arrange for one-on-one tutoring
- arrange transportation

- provide academic assessment
- provide counseling and emotional support
- provide breakfast and lunch
- offer staff training to be sensitive to the needs of the student and ways to be supportive

The Wilder Research (2005) study found that “out of all services used by youth, those considered most helpful were food stamps (26%), transportation assistance (22%), other social services (19%), medical benefits (18%), and outreach services (18%)” (p.9). It is important to develop strategic partnerships. For example, a partnership between a non-profit organization and the Denver Department of Human Services showed positive results (Van Leeuwen, 2004). The partnership provided housing, case management and psychiatric services for youth based on a continuum of care. By 2003 the partnership “helped more than 400 young people transition off the streets at a cost of approximately one-tenth that of incarceration or residential treatment” (Van Leeuwen, 2004, p.466).

Other programs have also shown promise. For example, the SAFE project was developed to prevent teen homelessness; it offered master’s level phone-line consultation for parents, support groups and workshops for parents and youth, a resource library, and community presentations on promoting healthy family functioning (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). Outcome data showed a significant increase in parent’s perception of their ability to interact with their child. A majority (91%) of the youth in the SAFE project either graduated from school or received a GED. This is significant when you consider that each high school graduate saves the United States \$127,000 in costs associated with reduced probability of being involved in crime, or needing Medicaid, public housing, food stamps, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); high school graduates and people with GED certificates also pay more taxes than those who do not complete high school (Levin, Belfield, Muennig, & Rouse, 2007).

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## **EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS**

Several Best Practice Models on the National Alliance to End Homelessness website <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/browse/?type=31&topic=Youth>

Project Upstart <http://studentservices.dadeschools.net/upstart/index.htm>

Project Access <http://www.u-46.org/cdps/cditem.cfm?nid=14>

## **WEBSITES**

**McKinney-Vento Act** <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html>

**Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless** <http://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org/>

**National Coalition for the Homeless** <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>

**US Housing and Urban Development** <http://www.hud.gov/>

## Services to Immigrant Families

“Over the past several decades, tens of thousand of immigrants have arrived in Minnesota. They have come from all over the world, and settled throughout the state. They’ve come for the same reason that attracted immigrants in the past: opportunity and they experience the same difficulties of adjusting to life in a new country—language barriers, culture shock, a sense of loss and isolations.” The Minneapolis Foundation, 2007

### INTRODUCTION

It is important for schools to be skilled at “welcoming new Americans and building upon their many strengths” (Quinn, 2007, p.117). School social workers are often “among the first to become aware of language needs of students or cultural or racial concerns of the parents” and are knowledgeable about the challenges, programs, legal protection and resources offered children and their families who have moved to the United States (Nettles, 2007, p. 254).

### RATIONALE

Quinn (2007) points out that “The 2000 Census confirmed...that the United States is undergoing the largest wave of immigration in the nation’s history. Many schools are struggling to catch up with this reality, including the fact that more of their students are English as a second language learners, many of the students parents may not be literate in their native languages, and some students arrive in middle school with no prior formal education. At the institutional level, schools have such challenges as under-prepared teachers and staff who do not speak the languages of the recent arrivals” (p.117). Many people who have recently moved to the United States find it difficult to become involved with the school because of language barriers, feelings of discrimination (Sohn & Wang 2006), lack of time due to having to work two low-paying jobs to support their families, lack of daycare, post traumatic stress from experiences in their country of origin or their passage into the United States, or fears regarding undocumented status. Further, they may come from a culture where teachers were expected to take care of education and parental involvement with the school was not the norm (Adult Learner Resource Center, 2003). School social workers can serve as a point of connection for these families and can assist school personnel in creating conditions that foster family involvement. They can also advocate for the schools they serve to implement the ideas presented below in the Key Elements of Successful Programs section.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Every school, whether they serve families that have recently immigrated or taken refuge in the United States or not, could use the interventions mentioned above to strengthen home-school collaboration because “the most significant role that school consultants can play as change agents for equity is to assist parents in bringing their voices into discussions about the education of their children and to encourage school personnel to welcome these voices” (Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001 as cited in Lott & Rogers, 2005, p. 11).

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

The Minneapolis Foundation suggests the following approaches for working with families that

have moved to the United States:

- Avoid relying on children as family interpreters
- Be mindful of body language
- Be aware that family decision making patterns can vary from patriarch to collaborative with an extended clan
- Be sensitive to and accepting of religious differences

The Adult Learner Resource Center (2003) suggests the following strategies for working with people with school-age children who are new in the country:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere in the school with pictures and artifacts that represent the families in the attendance area
- Provide translated student handbooks
- Follow up written materials that are sent home with a phone call or visit to see if there are any questions
- Offer orientation sessions
- Give out “welcome videos” done in the family’s first language
- Set up a mentor program for new families
- Draw upon the strengths of bilingual families and solicit their ideas about how to improve services for families where English is not the first language
- Partner with other programs and agencies such as family literacy programs
- Provide in-service and training for school personnel on cultural considerations
- Vary the day and time of activities
- Offer on-site ESL classes

Additionally, schools can hire people from the local refugee or immigrant community “who speak the language and understand the culture of their neighbors” (Quinn, 2007, p. 117). Schools can also distribute copies of the student welcome letters and school newsletters in the family’s primary language and they can reach out to the newly arrived Americans by hosting regular welcoming and informational sessions (with translators) in community centers where the local families tend to gather (Bye, 2007). Schools could have a parent lounge/resource room where parents could gather and “relate to peers, socialize with compatriots, learn from counterparts,” have a cup of coffee or tea and pick up books and literature on social services in the community (Shurr, 1993, p. 4).

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## **EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS**

Coral Way Elementary School: A Success Story in Bilingualism and Biliteracy <http://www.ncela.org>

[gwu.edu/pubs/discover/03coral.htm](http://gwu.edu/pubs/discover/03coral.htm)

Effective Programs for Latino Students in Elementary and Middle Schools <http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/pubs/hdp/2/>

In Hispanic Education, U.S. Department of Education/Hispanic Dropout Project, or Hispanic Students: Three Elementary School Programs <http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/pubs/hdp/advances/f96no2.htm>

School Reform and Student Diversity: Case Studies of Exemplary Practices for LEP Students <http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/pubs/schoolreform/>

## WEBSITES

**Involving immigrant and refugee families in their children's schools: Barriers, challenges and successful strategies** (Adult Learner Resource Center, 2003) [http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/involving\\_families.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/bilingual/pdfs/involving_families.pdf)

**Serving English language learners in Minnesota** (Schools web resources for schools and districts) <http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/groups/englishlang/documents/report/002155.pdf>

**AFT Toolkit for Teachers Reaching Out to Hispanic Parents of English Language Learners** (toolkit and background information on Hispanic families, helping parents contribute to the literacy development of their children, also has videos and worksheet for parents) <http://www.colorincolorado.org/afttoolkit.pdf>

**Minnesota Department of Education English Language Learners staff contact information** <http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/groups/englishlang/documents/publication/007995.pdf>

**Minnesota Department of Education ELL Education Guideline: Parent Involvement** (Provides information on Section 1118 Parent Involvement from the No Child Left Behind Federal Law). <http://children.state.mn.us/mdeprod/groups/EnglishLang/documents/Manual/008181.pdf>

## Child Protection Services

### INTRODUCTION

All communities have formal and informal standards for acceptable ways for parents or guardians to raise and discipline children. There are different rules in different parts of the United States and in different parts of the world. Some parents and guardians do not agree with the legal standards and see Child Protection Services (CPS) as a way for the majority culture to tell them how to raise their children.

### RATIONALE

Parents and guardians need to know that it is their responsibility to discipline their children and teach them right from wrong, but discipline cannot involve injury to children.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

A report is required whenever abuse is suspected. When a report is made, the county CPS has the responsibility to determine if abuse has occurred and implement a plan. Contact CPS when you have a concern.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

In Minnesota, CPS are provided by the county and the goal is to prevent maltreatment of a child that results in harm or injury including:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional abuse and neglect

As professionals or professionals' delegates engaged in the process of education, all school staff is mandated to report suspected child abuse. By law, reporters remain anonymous. Some schools assign this responsibility to the school social worker. The county may have a maltreatment form that includes the information the county needs to know. If the child is perceived to be in immediate danger, law enforcement must be called. If the danger is not perceived to be immediate, the referral is made right away to the county CPS. If the school employs the alleged perpetrator and the child is a student in the school, the Minnesota Department of Education must be contacted.

CPS county social workers assess the risk to the child based on the reported information and other information they may have about the child and family. If the risk factors meet the state requirements for investigation, CPS will investigate.

## REFERENCES

Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota  
Statewide Office  
1821 University Ave, Suite 202-S  
St. Paul, MN 55104  
651 523 0099 phone  
651 523 0380 fax  
800 621 6322 toll free

Northern Minnesota Office  
9057 Sunset Strip  
Pequot Lakes, MN 56472  
218 821 6429 phone  
218 543 6342 fax  
800 970 6429 toll free

Southern Minnesota Office  
1117 East Main Street  
Albert Lea, MN 56007  
507 377 7665 phone  
507 377 3101 fax  
800 813 8713 toll free

Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Welfare Report for April 2004

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

The Abuse Prevention Project <http://pacer.org>

Student Maltreatment  
[mde.student-maltreatment@state.mn.us](mailto:mde.student-maltreatment@state.mn.us)  
1500 Highway 36 West  
Roseville, MN 55113  
Safe Child <http://www.safechild.org/index.htm>

## WEBSITES

**Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota** [www.pcamn.org](http://www.pcamn.org)

## Child Welfare

### INTRODUCTION

Child welfare services from the county may be offered when families' care of their children does not meet the minimal community standards and children are negatively impacted. Areas of concern for school social workers could be attendance, academic achievement, before and after school care, death or illness of a family member, lack of heat and/or water in the home, lack of hygiene, homelessness or extremely overcrowded living conditions, dental health, mental health, medical health, domestic violence, substance abuse and/or a need for counseling, mentoring, clothing and food.

### RATIONALE

School social workers can connect families to culturally appropriate community resources that can help with the above problems or meet with families to help them develop strategies to improve the above situations. Often these issues occur in families who live in poverty and providing food, clothing and shelter are taking all of the energy and time the parents have.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Families do not like help imposed on them without their agreement to the services. Services must always consider the cultural values of the family.

### REFERENCES

Minnesota Department of Human Services Child Welfare Report for April 2004

## Juvenile Justice

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers have contact with officers of the court and probation officers when juveniles from their school are involved in the juvenile justice system.

### RATIONALE

School social workers are sometimes called to juvenile court to give information about attendance when truancy is an issue.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

When a juvenile age 10 to 17 at the time of the offense is apprehended, the case is referred to the juvenile court and is considered a rehabilitative or justice-related case. The juvenile court may be in the juvenile's county of residence or the county where the offense occurred. Law enforcement officials refer the case to a probation officer or to a county attorney, depending on the county's intake procedure. After intake, if enough evidence exists to prosecute the case, the county attorney files a petition with the juvenile court asking it to make a finding of delinquency. This starts the formal court processing of the case. The court then sets a date for the arraignment, when the youth appears before the court for the first time to answer the charges. If the youth admits to the charges, the court can impose the disposition — the conclusion of a juvenile case by the court and the subsequent consequence — at that time or order a predisposition investigation and set a date for the disposition hearing. If the youth denies the charges, a trial date is set.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

In Minnesota, the juvenile justice system differs from the adult criminal justice system in several ways, including some of the terminology used. For example, an adult is arrested by police, charged with a crime, found guilty by a court, sentenced to an adult correctional facility and incarcerated for a specified period of time. A juvenile is apprehended by police, petitioned for an offense, found to have committed an offense by a court and receives a disposition to be placed in a juvenile correctional facility.

Most juvenile court trials are bench trials, where the judge is the sole fact-finder. After the case is heard and if the petition offense is proven, the judge finds the youth to be delinquent and sets a date for the disposition hearing. If the petition is not proven, the judge dismisses the case. At the disposition hearing the judge decides the type of rehabilitation the juvenile will receive.

### REFERENCES

Office of Juvenile Justice Programs <http://www.ojp.state.mn.us/cj/system/flowjuv.html>

### WEBSITES

Office of Justice Programs Statistical Analysis Center <http://www.ojp.state.mn.us/cj/system/steps.html#juv>

## Effective Referrals

### INTRODUCTION

Providing effective referrals is a cornerstone of good school social work practice. When school social workers work with students and their families, they generally complete a social history as well as a current needs assessment. Whether the needs assessment is formal or informal, it helps the school social worker understand the stressors of the home environment that may be impacting the student. School social workers must have knowledge about community and school resources that can assist students and families when in need.

### RATIONALE

Students come to school with a number of stressors from the community, the family and the school setting. For example, homelessness, financial hardship, abuse, alcoholism and bullying are all stressors that will affect the academic progress of students. A school social worker may be able to help alleviate some of those stressors by providing an effective referral to a school-based or community resource.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Providing effective referrals is best utilized when a relationship and trust is developed between the school social workers and the family and student. When both parties are honest and open about acceptable ways to meet needs and if culturally appropriate resources are available, the referral will be successful. This intervention is best used when the needs are discussed and the student and/or family are open to the appropriate resources.

School social workers must also understand that, at times, families or students are not open to receiving help from others outside of their immediate family. Therefore, it is very important that the school social worker talk with the family/student to discuss possibilities and the willingness to accept help. Sometimes outside services are not accepted when first offered but may be an option at another time.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

- Determining the needs of the student and families is the key to beginning the process
- Talking to the family and/or student about how they view the problem
- Understanding the available resources within the school or in the community
- Offering appropriate suggestions to the family about possible referrals/resources
- Providing the families with names, phone numbers, addresses, e-mail, or websites of the resource
- Perhaps calling ahead to give the receiving resource background information if the family is willing and grants permission
- Follow up with the family and student to see if further assistance is needed

School social workers always view new students in relationship to their environments.

## EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

Local American Indian resources Local Hmong agencies

La Familia, CLUES, or other Local Latino serves African American Family Resources or other local agencies

United Way African family support services

## Collaboration with Community-based Services

### INTRODUCTION

School social workers are educated to function as the link between home, school and community to include mental health agencies, mentors, recreation centers, volunteers etc. Therefore, collaborating with communities is a natural job expectation. School Social workers work with the “whole child,” and collaborating with families and outside agencies that may provide services to the student is a common intervention. This sometimes called “wraparound service.”

### RATIONALE

Adelman and Taylor (2006) state that “comprehensive collaboration is seen as a promising direction for generating essential interventions.” School social workers work at the core of these interventions by collaborating with teachers, students, families and other outside professionals to develop appropriate interventions that will best serve the student. Successful community collaborations are also developed to strengthen the neighborhood around the school. If organizations, businesses and other agencies are tied to the school, parents and students will feel tied to the community.

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Collaborating with communities is best used as a supplemental service when students demonstrate additional needs that require outside assistance. When outside agencies are invited to make donations, refer volunteers, or provide service, schools are able to strengthen their ties to the neighborhood.

This intervention may be used to meet a need that the school is currently lacking such as school supplies, mentors and presentations on specific issues or staff development.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Key elements of successful collaboration include:

- Working closely with all the professionals involved with the family and student
- Reviewing periodically to insure that everyone is working toward the same goals
- Open communication between all professionals on the team (releases of information will be required)
- Involving parents in all steps of intervention to ensure consistency
- Understanding the limitations of the school program by seeking alternative interventions/ community resources when needed

### REFERENCES

Taylor, L. and Adelman, H. (2006). Want to work with schools? What is involved in successful linkages? In C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Resource Mapping

### INTRODUCTION

Resource mapping is a technique utilized by schools and school districts to assess their current resources which include staff, finances, buildings, community partners and work toward filling in the gaps. Mapping provides the “basis for developing a comprehensive, multifaceted and cohesive system” (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). It allows a school to brainstorm possible connections and collaborations within and outside of the school. School social workers are vital during this exercise because of their knowledge of community resources. School social workers also coordinate multiple services for students, therefore, coordinating and integrating existing resources for the school is a natural appointment.

### RATIONALE

Since schools and school districts are already stretched thin in regards to finances and available resources, resource mapping provides a low-cost and effective way to fill gaps in services over time (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Resource mapping can be used at any time by schools. By identifying needs as well as available resources, schools can begin to fill in gaps where needed.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Adelman and Taylor suggest detailing what the school already has and who provides the support. After the self-assessment, list what services and support are needed and decide if it is best met through available school resources. Following this, collaborate with other community agencies by advertising the needs and determining when additional resources are available in the community and how they may be accessed.

### REFERENCES

Adelman, H. & Taylor, L. (2006). Mapping a school’s resources to improve their use in preventing and ameliorating problems. In C. Franklin, M.B. Harris, & P. Allen-Meares (Eds.) (2006). *The school services sourcebook: A guide for school-based professionals*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### EXAMPLES OF MODELS, RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition <http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/mapping/>

### WEBSITES

**Center for Mental Health in schools** (resource mapping and management to address barriers to learning an intervention for systemic change) <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

**Asset Mapping Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory** <http://www.nwrel.org>

## Assessing Outcomes of School Social Work Practice

Measuring school social work outcomes involves identifying clear and measurable goals and finding tools and methods to track and measure progress toward those goals.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Association of Social Work Code of Ethic (1999) requires that all social workers “monitor and evaluate policies, the implementation of programs, and practice interventions,” and “critically examine and keep current with emerging knowledge relevant to social work and fully use evaluation and research evidence in their professional practice.” To ensure best practice social workers need to objectively assess if their intervention are helping, harming or having no impact therefore “evaluating outcomes is essential for problem solving” (Gambrill, 1997, p. 476).

### RATIONALE

Why measure outcomes?

It is important for school social workers to measure outcomes for several reasons:

- Ethical practice requires that we “use the most effective and efficient means of helping students overcome academic and socio-emotional barriers to participation in school” (Johnson-Reid, 2007, p. 226). How will you know and how can you show that your intervention was effective if you do not have a reliable (accurate over time) and valid (measures what it was intended to measure) way to measure change?
- Educational funding requires performance data that demonstrates that the money is being well spent. For example, the No Child Left Behind law resulted in schools being denied funding because of poor academic performance. School social workers must be able to clearly document how their services help students to be more successful in school.
- Accountability requires that we “justify the expenditure of public tax dollars on school social work services” especially when school program are being cut due to financial retrenchment (Dupper, 2007, p.213)

### DETERMINING WHEN TO USE THIS INTERVENTION

Outcomes of every intervention should be assessed and recorded. At least once a year, it is helpful to summarize the data on the number of interventions and the effectiveness of these interventions so that this information can be shared with administrators and the general public.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

How do I measure outcomes?

- An outcome is the change that is desired—The first step is to work with the student, the family, the teachers and any community partners to specifically identify the desired change. The following list provides a few examples of school social work outcomes:
  - Improved attendance
  - Increased parent involvement in student’s education

- Decreased acts of physical or verbal aggression
  - Increased rate of completing school work on time
  - Increased positive interactions with peers
  - Increased positive interactions with faculty and staff
  - Decrease in use of alcohol or drugs
  - Decrease in weapons violations
  - Increase the quality of school work
- **Measurement**—before you implement your intervention you need to get a baseline measurement so you can determine and demonstrate if a change occurs. The baseline measure is a specific measure of what is happening before you started using an intervention. For example, a baseline measure on attendance could be the number of days a student missed school on average over the past week, month or year. Table 1 gives suggestions for ways to obtain possible baseline measures for each of the outcomes listed above. Often it is best to measure specific observable behaviors. However, you can also measure changes in attitude or feelings by asking students, teachers and parents to rate them on a scale of one to ten with one being the negative end of the scale and ten being the positive end of the scale. For example, you could ask teachers to rate the level of positive interactions a student has with peers (Nelson, 1996). There are also standardized assessments such as the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1981) (available at <http://www.aseba.org/products/cbcl6-18.html>) that can be used to assess behavior change over the course of the year.
  - **Measurement**—after you implement your intervention you can periodically assess the progress on the outcome. For example, if a student is working on completing school work on time you could meet with the student at the end of each day or each week and chart the number of assignments that were completed on time. This, of course, means you would need to arrange a simple way for the teachers to let you know how many assignments the student completed on time such as a daily or weekly log that the student has signed by the teachers.
  - Seeing progress or lack of progress on a chart can be a powerful motivation for some students. Some school districts have a contact log that school social workers can use to record outcome data. For example, school social workers in the Rochester, Minnesota Public School System use a contact log similar to the following example.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) CONTACT SHEET				
Year(s)				
Learner's Full Name				
Parent(s)/Guardian(s)				
Telephone Home		Work		
Type of contact	T=telephone	L=letter	C=conference	H=home visit
Date	Contact Person	Type of Contact	Reason	Outcome

- Monitor and adjust—if after a certain period of time (a week or two) an intervention does not show any positive change in behavior then the intervention needs to be modified.

#### Who do I share outcomes with?

- Principals—are the most important person with whom to share your outcome data. Many schools have site-based management teams that help make decisions about funding and the principal can make sure that your outcome data is shared at those meetings.
- Lead social workers—if you have a lead school social worker in your district or cooperative it is important to share your outcome data with him or her because that person is in generally in the position of dealing with the administration and broader public.
- School Board—work with your building principal to get on the school board agenda to share your outcome data. School board members often are not aware of what school social workers do or how they contribute to the overall mission of the school district.
- Professional conferences—the Social Work Code of Ethics requires that social workers share knowledge with each other and an excellent way to do this is through social work conferences. The Minnesota School Social Workers Association has two conferences a year (see [http://socialservicenetwork.com/conferences\\_social\\_service\\_net.html](http://socialservicenetwork.com/conferences_social_service_net.html)) Also there is a Midwest school social work conference and the School Social Association of America hosts an annual conference (see <http://www.sswaa.org/news.html>).

Table 1 Outcomes and Measurement Indicators	
Improved attendance	Average number of days absent in previous month or year Percentage of time the student arrives on time for class Percentage of classes the student attended in previous month
Increased parent involvement in student's education	Number of times the parent attends school meetings Number of home visits Number of times parent works with student on homework for 10 minutes Number of times parent talks with school personnel Number of times parent initiates contact with school personnel Number of times parent volunteers at school Number of school activities parent attends

Table 1 Outcomes and Measurement Indicators	
Decreased acts of physical or verbal aggression	Number of times student is reported for acts of aggression Number of times student is sent to the office or support staff for aggression Number of times student is suspended for aggression Number of times the police are called because of student's aggression The self-reported number of times student was upset but did not resort to acts of aggression
Increased rate of completing school work on time	The percentage of time the student completes his or her reading (math, social studies, etc) assignments on time
Increased positive interactions with peers	The number of times the student initiates friendly interactions with peers during recess or lunch The number of times or the percentage of classes when the student works cooperatively with other during the school day The number of times the teacher observes the student doing something helpful or kind The number of extra curricular activities the student successfully remains in without problems interacting with others
Increased positive interactions with faculty and staff	The number of times the student stays after school to help the teacher The number of times the student greets the faculty or staff in a positive and appropriate manner The number of classes that the student interacts with the faculty and staff in a positive and appropriate manner The number of days a student has without being reported for disrespectful behavior toward school personnel The student's self-rating on a scale regarding how well he or she is relating to school personnel

Table 1 Outcomes and Measurement Indicators	
Decrease in use of alcohol or drugs	Lab tests on blood and urine Student self report of frequency and amount of alcohol or drug use can be obtained with the following assessments available at <a href="http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Social/Module4Screening/Module4.html">http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Social/Module4Screening/Module4.html</a> The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) (Allen, Litten, Fertig, & Babor , 1997) The CAGE assessment The T-ACE The TWEAK
Decrease in weapons violations	The number of times the student is reported for bringing weapons to school The number of times the student is reported for talking/emailing/text-messaging about bringing weapons to school
Increase the quality of school work	The percentage of correct answers in math assignments The number of errors in writing assignments

## REFERENCES

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