Glen Ridge High School Student Assistance Program

A Student Assistance Program is a comprehensive school-based program for students (K-12) designed to identify issues affecting a student’s mental health and possible impact upon their academic performance.

SAP's provide a safe place in which students are free to express their feelings and concerns as they develop positive relationships with peers and adults and acquire knowledge, skills and attitude development leading to student success in the school setting. Receiving services from the program is completely confidential. Involvement in the program is usually voluntary; however, it may be mandated by policies which prevent students from learning and being successful in school.

The Student Assistance Programs has been established at GRHS to identify and help students who may be experiencing personal, school or family problems. Its broad brush philosophy acknowledges that students who are displaying troubled behavior should be referred to the student assistance program, regardless of whether the trouble may indicate any involvement or association with alcohol or other drug related concerns.

This program provides education, prevention, early identification, intervention, referral, and support groups for students. The goal is to foster risk reduction and positive asset development and work to provide a safe, alcohol and drug free environment.

Student Assistance Programs promote protective factors and increase:

- Students’ academic achievement and good grades
- Students’ positive attitude towards school
- Students’ likelihood of staying in school
- Students’ attendance in school
- Students’ sense of self-worth
- Students’ ability to communicate and express feelings appropriately
- Students’ positive relationships
- Staff involvement in student issues and concerns
- Parent and community support for students and schools.

Program Philosophy

The philosophy of the Glen Ridge school district is one of caring and concern for students. In partnership with the home and community, it is the core mission to provide students with the educational opportunities and academic experiences that enable them to maximize their potential through a college preparatory based curriculum. We seek to maintain an environment that fosters self-esteem and respect for individual differences. We also seek to develop concern for an understanding of issues affecting the world, while addressing the unique needs of each student in a
changing society. The administration, faculty and staff recognize that there are challenges involved with the many issues and decisions today's adolescents face.

The SAC will additionally be responsible as the case manager and coordinator of the following state mandated committees:

- HIB Specialist
- I&RS Coordinator
- Section 504/ADA case manager

**Referral Process**

**Parent Referral:** Parents who are concerned because of social or emotional issues that may be affecting their child are encouraged to contact the SAC office.

**Student Self-Referral:** A student, who is concerned about his or her own problems or those of someone else, may contact the SAC directly.

**Staff Referral:** Teachers and other school staff have been alerted to signs and symptoms of possible indications of crisis and they are encouraged to seek assistance through this program.

**Use of Technology**

- Use technology to effectively disseminate information and analyze results
- Inform the community regarding updates in the student assistance program
- Document and track intervention and referral services (RTI)
- Document and monitor Section 504/ADA accommodation plans
- Internet resources and software that are related to school counseling
- Maintain confidentiality of student information

**Student Assistance Program Goals:**

A strikingly large percentage of school-aged children in the United States are in crisis. Drug and alcohol abuse, violence, bullying, depression, suicide, stress and anxiety disorders, gambling, eating disorders, gang involvement, and other social/emotional issues threaten the wellbeing of all students, their families, and society as a whole. As the problems have escalated in recent years, so have the demands on schools throughout the country to address them. Legislators and government officials, boards of education, school administrators, teachers, parents, and students themselves, understand that school success is predicated on a safe and healthy learning environment, and that learning objectives are frequently undermined by psycho-social, emotional, and behavioral problems.

The creation of the Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC) position in many school districts throughout New Jersey has been the most effective strategy to identify, address, and monitor individual students as well as coordinate and oversee district prevention/intervention efforts. The SAC is best suited to address student substance abuse, mental health and behavioral problems for the following reasons: they uniquely possess the specific training to identify and address these behaviors; they provide confidential services in more effective one-on-one settings without conflicting with the law or creating conflicts of interests for other faculty members; and, they can save school districts money and
substantial resources by allowing other faculty members to focus on the responsibilities consistent with their skills, interests, and official job descriptions.

- **Unique and Specialized Training**

A comprehensive review surveying a wide body of research from 1994 – 2008 shows that individual interventions with children ages 12 – 19 years old are more effective than any other type of interventions, including factual knowledge, classroom-based programs, media efforts, and even family-based therapy, particularly in terms of reducing alcohol use.

With a trained intervention specialist, this information can be obtained quickly and effectively in counseling sessions, where the counselor is qualified and trusted by the student.

The New Jersey Department of Education has established specific criteria required for individuals to become certified Student Assistance Coordinators. These criteria ensure that the SAC is qualified to provide substance abuse/mental health prevention, intervention, counseling and related services. On-going professional development ensures that SACs remain up-to-date on current research, trends, techniques, and community resources.

The New Jersey State Legislature has correctly identified the extent of non-academic challenges facing students today. For example, they have recognized that a significant number of young people are already involved in the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and that many children and adolescents are at a high risk of developing alcohol and other substance abuse problems. As a result, legislation was created that mandates schools to provide both education and intervention with students experiencing substance abuse and other social/emotional issues (18A:40A-8). Each school district must determine the methods for addressing these issues.

**Confidentiality**

Students are by nature quite guarded regarding the disclosure of many issues (particularly drug/alcohol use) to adults. Many students worry about the conflict of interest in discussing personal issues with teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors when these are the very faculty members who grade them, discipline them, write their recommendation letters, and frequently communicate with their parents. Congress has recognized these obstacles, and created federal confidentiality regulations (42 CFR Part 2), providing student access to confidential treatment for alcohol and drug related issues. In the event that other issues surface, the SAC is best equipped to communicate the nature of the problem with both the student and their family, and develop an appropriate treatment plan, which might involve additional community resources when necessary.

**Intervention and Referral Services**

The Intervention and Referral Services procedure was developed by the Special Services Department and the Administration to ensure district compliance with New Jersey code mandates. According to these regulations, we are required to: “establish and implement procedures in each school building for the delivery in intervention and referral services for pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their classes and who have not been determined to be in need of special education programs and services...” [N.J.A.C. 6:26-2.1(A)]

**This procedure will benefit students in several ways:**
Attention will be given to the needs of the teacher, staff and parents requesting assistance.

The structured problem solving process used by the I&RS team; the follow up, monitoring and evaluation of activities set forth in the I&RS action plan; and the focus on short term, achievable behavioral goals provides a high likelihood of success in addressing individual needs.

At risk students will receive interventions designed to accommodate their individual learning or behavioral needs in the context of the general education setting.

Data collection and assessment activities for interventions are focused on the context in which the problem is occurring.

Decreases inappropriate CST evaluations and classifications by developing a supportive problem solving mechanism in the K-12 general education program.

The I&RS process provides a clear trail of data and other information on related issues and concerns if a CST referral or evaluation is needed.

**Section 504/ADA**

A student may be referred by him/herself, a parent, or any member of the school staff. The following steps shall be followed when a student has been referred by self and/or parent to the committee as possibly being eligible for 504 designation under the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973:

1. Upon receipt of a request from a parent/student, the request will be forwarded immediately to: the Glen Ridge School District 504 Coordinator.

2. The 504 Coordinator will respond to the request in writing within ten (10) working days providing the parent with an overview of the process, a copy of Parent and Student Rights under Section 504, and the formal Section 504 Identification Request Form.

3. When the formal, signed request has been returned by the parent to the District Coordinator, he/she will then initiate the process to evaluate the merits of the request. Data will be collected from a variety of sources to ensure a fair and equitable evaluation to determine if there are characteristics and problems which substantially limit a major life function (MLF) such as learning.

**Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying**

The Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying of a pupil. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for pupils to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a pupil’s ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its pupils in a safe and disciplined environment. Since pupils learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. The district must appoint a HIB Specialist.

The school Anti-Bullying Specialist shall:

b. Lead the investigation of incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in the school; and

c. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and addressing incidents of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in the school.

Many resources are available for parents as well. If you or your child needs additional support, please feel free to contact Heather Kobylinski hkobylinski@glenridge.org

**Timeline for Grades 7-12**

**Spring of 6th Grade Transition**
- Meet with 6th grade students at Ridgewood Avenue to discuss their transition to GRHS, join them for the Transition Breakfast A.B2 PS.A1

**“At Risk” Consultation**
- Meet with RAS school counselor, child study team, and administration regarding incoming “at risk” students A.B1

**September New Student group**
- Meet with students who are new to the district to discuss their transition and learn about RAS A.A3 New Parent Meet & Greet Presentation for parents of new students A.A3

**October Week of Respect**
- Plan school wide activities that review our bullying policies and create a positive school climate A.A3

**Red Ribbon Week**
- Plan school and community wide activities and awareness that emphasize healthy choices and positive social decision making strategies. A.A3

**June Move-up Day**
- Students follow schedule for the following year, meet teachers, and receive summer assignments A.A3

**Transition to 7th and 9th**
- Provide information for students who need additional supports as they move to the next grade level including 504s and ESS. A.A3

**Ongoing throughout school year**
- Individual Student & Parent Meetings: Consultation and collaboration with individual student & parent meetings to discuss academic and social/emotional issues as needed A.A1 PS.A1
- Group Counseling: Small group counsel throughout the year on an as needed basis for each grade level on a variety of topics including divorce, social skills and grief, PS.A1
- I&RS/504: Monthly meetings to develop strategies and accommodations for students with “at risk” situations A.B1
- ESS: Meetings as needed to discuss current progress and potential referrals for students in the ESS program A.B1
- HIB Anti Bullying Specialist: Meet with students, parents and teachers to investigate reports of harassment, intimidation and bullying. A.B1
- Referrals: Collaborate with and/or make referrals to community mental health agencies when additional support is needed. A.B1
• Parent & Student Workshops/Presentations: Work with administration to develop relevant helpful parent & student workshops A.B1 PS.AI

References
• Brauser, D., Vega, C.P. “Individual Interventions May Be More Effective Than Family-Based Therapy in Reducing Teen Alcohol Abuse." Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, January 2010.
• Association of Student Assistance Professionals NJ http://www.asapnj.org/home.html
• Section 504 NJ Department of Education
• Drug and Alcohol Education and PRevention NJ Department of Education
• HIB NJ Department of Education