History of
Secondary Student Assistance Programs
in Pennsylvania

EARLY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:

In 1984, the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Office of Drug and Alcohol Programs provided a grant to pilot Student Assistance Programs throughout the Commonwealth under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Four school districts that had previously developed prevention programs with assistance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education were selected as pilot districts: Neshaminy School District, East Penn School District, DuBois Area School District, and General McLane School District. The first SAP training sponsored by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was held in December 1984. The four districts were required to send core teams to the training consisting of one central office representative, one building administrator, three other team members (teachers, counselors, nurses, etc.), and one county drug and alcohol liaison. At the conclusion of the training, the four core teams returned to their districts and began implementing SAP in their schools.

Initial subjective data suggested that the SAP concept was worthy of expansion. Data consisted of feedback from school staff, students, community members, law enforcement, drug and alcohol agency staff, plus 1984-85 year-end statistics on the number of students who received services through the Student Assistance Program. In response to this success, funding was provided to expand the program to an additional twenty-one volunteer sites during the 1984-85 school year.

In 1985, the Statewide Student Assistance Program Advisory Committee was established to provide Department of Education staff with input on maintaining quality programming and efficient use of funding. The committee was restructured in 2003 and reconvened as the SAP Advisory Council. Consisting of twenty-six members, the Advisory Council represents schools, educational associations, districts, parents, agencies, and state departments. The Advisory Council's mission is to assist the Commonwealth in linking and promoting quality mental health and substance abuse services within the school and community to promote student achievement. This is accomplished by providing leadership in an advisory capacity and promoting accountability of

the student assistance program as well as serving as a work group to assist in program growth, expansion, and refinement.

During the 1985-86 school year, the Pennsylvania Masonic Foundation for the Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Children (now the Pennsylvania Masonic Foundation for Children) approached the Department of Education with an interest in becoming involved in the Student Assistance Program. Since that time, the Foundation has underwritten elementary and secondary SAP trainings, the Commonwealth SAP Training System, and supported local SAP efforts across the Commonwealth. In 1993, the PA Masonic Foundation for Children established the Carl W. Stenberg, Jr. SAP Post-Secondary Scholarship for students who have successfully completed the SAP process. To date, over forty students have received scholarships

In response to the increasing adolescent suicide rate, the PA Department of Public Welfare, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (OMHSAS), provided the for the expansion of the SAP to include intervention strategies for students at risk of suicide in 1986-87.

In 1988, the PA Departments of Education, Public Welfare, and Health formed the Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee for the purpose of collaborating to seek funding, improving Student Assistance training, and meeting the programming needs in Pennsylvania.

As core teams became increasingly functional, the publicly funded county drug and alcohol and mental health agencies which received SAP referred students for assessment found themselves financially strained as a result of the increased caseload. In addition, county agencies had been sending representatives to SAP training to develop relationships with the teams and provide the linkages for referring students to the various agencies. This procedure assisted in facilitating the relationship between the agencies and the schools, but at the same time it created a large number of referrals for agencies that were not equipped to deal with the influx of new clients.

In response to this demand, the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Public Welfare initiated a funding process in 1986-87 to assist those counties in which core teams were functioning. The amount allocated to each county was based on the number of teams and the number of students being served. By 1990-91, the funding was expanded to all counties.

In order to provide consistent and quality training to all SAP team members, the Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee established a system of Commonwealth Approved Training Providers in 1986. At that time, applications were accepted for agencies to become Commonwealth Approved SAP Training Providers. Standards for SAP Training were issued in May 1987. The training system expanded in 1996 and again in 1999 and several new

training providers were approved. The training system was again reopened in 2004.

In October and November 1996, thirteen regional forums were conducted by the Statewide SAP Advisory Committee. Stakeholders were asked to determine what, SAP teams needed from the state in order to function effectively. Nearly one-thousand participants attended these forums and provided important and useful information regarding the operation of SAP in their schools. Participants included superintendents, principals, counselors, teachers, school nurses, school psychologists, parents, students, and community representatives. All feedback was compiled and presented to officials at the PA Departments of Education, Public Welfare, and Health.

One of the major issues raised at the forums was the need to update the Commonwealth SAP Training System. As a response, a subcommittee of the Statewide SAP Advisory Committee assumed the task of updating the training system guidelines in 1997. As the subcommittee began its work, it became evident that training needed to be transformed into one based on standards and competencies. Previously, SAP Training certificates were issued to individuals for completing "seat-time" requirements.

To accomplish this new direction, the subcommittee developed the Training Standards and Competencies for SAP Core Team Professionals that required training participants to demonstrate a number of school site-based competencies before they would be issued a training certificate. Training Standards and Core Competencies for the Commonwealth SAP Training System were first issued in 1998, and subsequently revised and reissued in December 2003.

DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING

In 1986, the Department of Education began collecting information on an annual basis from public and nonpublic schools regarding the students who received services through the Student Assistance Program. The process included data collection, scanning and compilation of all forms received from SAP teams. This process was accomplished at the Department of Education until 1998. At that time, the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program Online Reporting System was developed allowing SAP teams to report their annual data electronically. The system was modified for the 2002-2003 school year to allow elementary teams to report their data.

ACT 211 OF 1990

In 1990, Act 211 was enacted which required "...the Secretary of Education, shall recommend to the General Assembly a plan to require and assist each school district to establish and maintain a program to provide appropriate

counseling and support services to students who experience problems related to the use of drugs, alcohol, and dangerous controlled substances." On April 19, 1991, the Secretary of Education named the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program (K-12) to fulfill the requirement to "...identify high risk students who are having problems due to alcohol or drug use, depression, or other mental health problems; and intervene and refer these students to appropriate community services."

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AWARD

In 1990, the Commonwealth Student Assistance Program received the American Medical Association (AMA) National Congress on Adolescent Health's Aware for Excellence in Intervention for Coordination of Adolescent Health Services within a State.

JUVENILE PROBATION PARTNERSHIP

Due to an increase in the number of dropouts, behavioral issues and drug use and abuse among its students, Allentown School District's Student Assistance Program realized that it needed to coordinate its services and programs outside the school district. The SAP team realized that some of the SAP-referred students were on probation and that both the school district and probation office were trying to accomplish the same goals for the same students in isolation. In 1990, the Lehigh County Juvenile Probation Department obtained a grant through the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) to initiate a school-based probation service program. One of the grant requirements was that the school-based probation officers must receive SAP training and participate as a member of the SAP team. Since 1992, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency's School-Based Probation Program has provided funding to fifty counties to implement, expand, or continue their projects.

SCHOOL GUIDELINES

The Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee issued guidelines in 1991 to provide school SAP teams with guidance on implementation and team operation. This document provided guidance on:

- Team Composition
- Common meeting time
- Inservice/faculty meeting time
- School Policies (drug and alcohol, suicide, mental health, etc.)
- Support Groups
- Team Maintenance
- Conflict Resolution Process

IMPLEMENTATION OF SAP COUNTY COORDINATION TEAMS

In 1991, the Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee also issued guidelines for the coordination of SAP services through local SAP county coordination teams. These teams brought together community service agencies and local schools to address issues that effected students in their county. The mission of the SAP County Coordination teams is to promote quality services to all school districts and communities. Local county coordination teams are responsible for providing leadership, planning, management and implementation of SAP services at the county or county joinder level. In December 2000, the Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee issued an updated version of the Guidelines based on local feedback for Coordination Teams to consider as they continue to develop and strengthen their mechanisms for coordinating SAP.

MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

In 1997, Mental Health Administrators were issued guidelines for the implementation of Student Assistance Program Services at the county/county joinder level. These guidelines identify roles and responsibilities for schools and the local mental health system involved in the operation of a successful student assistance program to promote effective practices at the local level.

SAP BASIC EDUCATION CIRCULAR

In 1997, a Basic Education Circular (BEC) was issued by the Department of Education to address Act 211 of 1990 (P.S. §15-1547 of the PA School Code). The BEC clarifies the mandates for instruction for every student in alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs prevention K- 12 every year; in-service for all instructors whose teaching responsibilities include courses on tobacco, alcohol and other drug prevention; and drug and alcohol counseling and support services (SAP)." The most recent issue of the BEC is available at: www.sap.state.pa.us.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT TRAINING

In order to enhance the core team's role in providing support to students and families, Commonwealth-Approved Parent Involvement Training was developed in 1998. The Department of Education made Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities funds available through intermediate units to offer the training to their local SAP teams. Intermediate units contracted with Commonwealth Approved SAP Training Providers to deliver the trainings locally throughout the Commonwealth.

EVALUATION OF SAP

In 1998, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, though the Governors portion of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities state grant, funded an initiative to evaluate Student Assistance Programs (SAP) in Pennsylvania. This evaluation investigated six areas of student assistance programs and developed a framework to guide future evaluations. The six areas were:

1. SAP referral processes
2. Parent consent practices
3. Intervention services
4. Contract provider assessments
5. School-based probation officers' SAP involvement
6. SAP improvement and satisfaction

In September 2000, the evaluators issued the "Pennsylvania SAP Components and Indicators Handbook" highlighting the results of the SAP Evaluation Project. Nine essential components for an effective student assistance program are defined in the handbook:

1. Policy and Procedures
2. Communications
3. Referral Mechanisms
4. Parent Participation
5. Team Planning
6. Intervention and Recommendations
7. Follow-Up and Support
8. Training
9. Outcome Indicators and Evaluation

RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS' TRAINING

In 2000-2001, the Department of Education made Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities funds available through intermediate units to offer Risk and Protective Factors' (resiliency) Training to their local SAP teams. Intermediate units contracted with Commonwealth Approved SAP Training Providers to deliver the trainings locally and focused on incorporating risk and protective factors into the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program model.

History of
Elementary Student Assistance Programs
in Pennsylvania

In 1988, after implementing secondary SAP for four years, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provided a pilot training for the Elementary Student Assistance Program (ESAP). Five school districts that had developed secondary Student Assistance Programs were selected as pilot districts. Those districts were Neshaminy School District, Bensalem Township School District, Lancaster School District, Pittsburgh School District, and Oswayo Valley School District. The first elementary SAP training sponsored by the Commonwealth was held in October and December 1988. Each of the five districts sent a core team to the training session consisting of one central office representative, one building administrator, three other team members (teachers, counselors, nurses), and county drug and alcohol ad hoc member/consultant. At the conclusion of the training, the four core teams returned to their districts and began to implement ESAP in their schools.

Initial evaluative data (Monteith and Manning, 1990) suggested that the ESAP concept was worthy of expanding throughout the state. Data consisted of anecdotal information from school staff and year-end statistics on the number of students that received services through ESAP.

Concurrently, the Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education was working on a project that identified students that needed additional services but were not appropriate for Special Education. This program was called the Instructional Support Team (IST) Program. Because both ESAP and IST identified many of the same students in need of additional services and the identification process using a core team model was identical, the Commonwealth determined that these two initiatives would be combined and implemented as one program.

Therefore, in 1990, the Department of Education instituted the Instructional Support Team (IST) process with Elementary SAP becoming one of the five components of the program. The core team model consisted of the school administrator, guidance counselor, Instructional Support Team teacher, the classroom teacher, and the student's parent(s). All school districts were required to implement the IST process by 1995.

Department of Education staff conducted trainings in the five components of IST: collaborative consultation, curriculum-based assessment, instructional adaptation, behavior management, and elementary student assistance. The IST process consisted of assessment, goal setting, strategy selection, implementation, and evaluation. Assessment of the referred child's observable behaviors, academic performance, and life skills would be made. Since the parent(s) took an active role as part of the team, they could also help the team understand any stressors that might be affecting the child. The Department developed a Training of Trainers (TOT) system so that by 1993, all intermediate units became the Elementary SAP trainers.

Since the implementation of IST was completed in 1995-96, PDE became less involved with the direct technical assistance to intermediate units after 1996. Early in 1998, the Department of Education conducted a survey of all Elementary Student Assistance Program intermediate unit trainers. Interview visits were scheduled with all lead trainers during the late winter and early spring of 1998. Interviews were conducted with all twenty-nine intermediate units. Lead trainers and training team members were interviewed about the 1996-97 and 1997-98 trainings including information on numbers of participants, agendas, and materials utilized. In addition, the trainers were asked about their current technical assistance needs. In response to the survey results, the Department determined the need for a seamless training system K-12.

In 1999, the Department of Education offered grants to intermediate units to work with a secondary SAP training provider to incorporate the secondary SAP Training Standards and Competencies into their elementary training models. Twenty-three intermediate units participated in the pilots.

In 2003, the Commonwealth SAP Interagency Committee formed the Elementary SAP Task Force. The directive from the SAP Interagency Committee to the Task Force was to develop an Elementary Student Assistance Program that would produce a seamless K-12 model for the Commonwealth. The Task Force identified the following goals:

• review the documentation from the 1999 pilots
• revise the SAP Basic Education Circular to reflect SAP K-12
• develop an elementary model/process
• develop a program evaluation
• identify the training system and address training issues
• develop a system for providing technical assistance to teams and training
  providers
• explore funding issues

In Spring 2004, the Task Force administered an Elementary SAP needs assessment to identify the behavioral health needs and barriers that exist at the elementary school level.