

OTTAWA SCHOOL-BASED SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM MODEL

The school-based substance abuse program for high schools, as recommended by the Substance Abuse and Youth in School Coalition, is a collaborative model involving schools and school boards, addiction agencies, teachers, student support professionals, students and parents. Other community partners, including the police and public health, may also be involved. Key elements of the program are as follows:

School Team: a core team, led by the principal, is created at each school to work with the addiction agency. The addiction counsellor assigned to the school will become a key member of the team, which includes representatives from the school's student services/guidance department, administrators, and the board's professional staff. The school's School Resource Officer and Public Health Nurse may also liaise with this team. As a first step, the addiction counsellor provides training to school team members to help them identify and refer students who require substance abuse intervention.

School Staff: in addition to the training provided to the core team, the school-based addiction counsellor also provides in-service to the entire school staff to make them more aware of substance abuse issues and inform them about the program. This is an important step in building a supportive school culture. The counsellor also serves as a trusted, accessible information resource to staff regarding youth substance abuse issues.

Community: in consultation with the principal, presentations may be made by the school team and school-based addiction counsellor to the school council and parent/school community partners to help them understand the program and its benefits for the school community.

Students: the program will provide about 14 hours of support by a professional substance abuse counsellor per high school. (Provisions will be made to help students access services in the summer). Although the majority of a counsellor's time is expected to be required for individual counselling, including communication with parents, the counsellor may also make presentations to the general student population and support other prevention or education activities as appropriate. About 75 per cent of the counsellor's time is spent physically at the school, while the balance is required for case-related follow-up work at the agency office.

Parents and Family: the school-based counsellors keep in contact with parents and may provide service to parents at the school. In addition, they may refer parents of students engaged in addiction counselling to education and support programs offered by the agencies.

Prevention and Outreach: the school-based counsellors may also participate in education sessions for parents and partner with a family of schools to provide presentations to younger students in the "feeder " grades (six to eight).

Data Collection and Information-Sharing: student engagement numbers and outcomes are tracked by the addiction counsellor and the school. All privacy policies are respected, and only anonymous information is reported. Through their respective agencies, counsellors also share information on best practices and trends across the community.

For more information:

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