

## **“Help is Down the Hall”**

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### **Student Assistance Counselors**

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### **SAC Description**

The Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) maintains an important and effective place in the public schools. The SAC is uniquely positioned to provide both individual and school-wide services that directly impact on classroom instruction, behavior management, student safety, family support, and community relations.

Direct services include individual student assessment, counseling and referral, and student-specific input and collaboration with other faculty during Intervention and Referral Services, Child Study Team and “504” meetings, as well as individual case conferencing with teachers, parents, guidance counselors, child study team members, and administrators.

School-wide services include development and adherence of policies (and facilitation of in-service trainings) on state-mandated topics (substance abuse, suicide, physical/sexual abuse, and sexual harassment policies). The SAC is equipped to develop and implement school crisis response plans in the event of catastrophic emotional events that could impact on multiple students. The SAC acts as a liaison with community agencies as a regular participant in Municipal Alliance meetings and on-going communication with local law enforcement officials.

The New Jersey Administrative Code (§18A:40) requires policies for suspicion of substance use among students. This policy is predicated on a knowledgeable staff—both in terms of familiarity with common drugs of abuse and their related symptoms, as well as response procedures. The SAC is specifically trained in all mandated subcomponents of these statutes, including staff training on current trends, signs and symptoms of abuse, knowledge of local and community organizations that are available for the prevention, early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation of individuals who show symptoms of substance abuse, legal guidelines for the implementation of substance abuse policies, and the ability to interview students suspected of abuse in order to assess a student’s current level of drug/alcohol involvement.

### **Student/Parent Programs 2010/2011**

1. “What Every Parent Needs To Know...” - Substance Abuse Awareness  
Burnet Middle School – October 2010
2. “Internet Safety – Burnet Middle School – November 2010
3. “What To Do with Your Angry Child” – Burnet Middle School - January 2011
4. “Health and Wellness Event” – Burnet Middle School – March 2011
5. “Safe Dates” – Burnet Middle School – April 2011

\*Any and all topics of interest are welcome; please contact Jill Hall, Tara Colandrea or Lucille Williams.

### **Event/Months**

September – Family Health and Fitness Month  
October – Red Ribbon Month – Drug Free Lifestyle  
November – Great American Smoke Out - Month  
December – National Drunk and Drug Driving Prevention Month  
January – No Name Calling Month  
February – National Heart Month  
March – National Nutrition Month  
April – Alcohol Awareness Month  
May – World No-Tobacco and Buckle Up American Month  
June – National Safety Month

## School Counseling Program

Groups that offered throughout the academic year include:

Social Groups:

1. **Anger Management** – a 12-week program for students who have had multiple disciplinary referrals related to anger or aggression. Students are referred to this program through the Principal or Vice-Principal, and occasionally by a parent requesting assistance. Members of the group have their discipline referrals tracked. If after the 12 weeks the issue remains, they are recommended for individual counseling with the SAC.
2. **Bullying** (separate groups for the perpetrators and the victims) – these groups consist of students usually referred either by teachers or administrators, or occasionally parents, due to their bullying behavior or victimization. Each group runs for 8 weeks, with reunion groups once per month thereafter. Students are encouraged to seek assistance from trusted adults should the problems continue, and are sometime asked to remain in group for an additional 8 weeks.
3. **Unknown Sons** (group for boys who have not contact or limited contact with their fathers due to divorce, separation, incarceration, or abandonment) – this groups runs once per week throughout the school year. There is no set number of sessions, as it is conducted as a support group. Students are identified through the school counselors, teachers, and parents. This group is voluntary and evolves as student's cycle in and out.
4. **Grief** (for students who have suffered a loss due to divorce or death) – this 12-week group uses information provided by “Good Grief” a foundation dedicated to working with children and adolescents who have sustained a significant loss. Students are identified for this group through the school counselors, teachers, administrators, school nurse or family. Students are exited at the conclusion of the 12<sup>th</sup> week session, with individual follow up with the school counselors.
5. **Social Skills** (for students who struggle in social situations) – This group funs for 8 weeks, and culminates with a social event such as meeting for lunch or a movie. Students are often self-referred, or referrals come from teachers and parents. All are exited after 8 sessions.
6. **Social Skills II** (for our autistic population) – This group provides social opportunities through role-play and experiential learning. The program runs for 8 weeks.
7. **COSA** (Children of substance abuse – for students who struggle with a loved one's addiction) this group is called a “friendship group”. We meet weekly throughout the school year with the common issue being family issues related to substance use. Students are taught the family roles in a substance using or recovering family, and are given information regarding substance use and recovery. This group is ongoing. Students are identified generally by coming to

see the school counselor for another seemingly unrelated issue, and having the substance use revealed.

8. **Recovery Group** (for students who are dealing with their own substance abuse issues) This group runs as needed based upon the number of students who have acknowledged their issue with substance use, or have been referred by a community agency for follow up as a part of treatment planning. This group meets weekly. As recovery is a lifelong journey, there is no exiting process for this group.
9. **For Girls Only** (for girl's only dealing with the day to day issues of being an adolescent girl). This group runs 10 to 12 weeks and meets weekly. Student's are self-referred or referred by a teacher.

#### Academic Groups:

1. **Study Skills** – An 8 week group for students identified by their teachers as having weak study skills. The group's goal is improved study habits that translate into improved grades and a stronger connection to the school community. If an improvement in grades is not seen on the report card, the student is referred for individual study skills counseling.
2. **Organization Group** – this group is very similar to the study skills group with the issue being related to organization. Again, if improvement is not seen the student meets individually with the school counselor for additional assistance.

### Resources and References

Jewish Community Center – [www.jccnj.org](http://www.jccnj.org)  
Good Grief – [www.goodgrief.org](http://www.goodgrief.org)  
NJ Family Care – [www.njfamilycare.org](http://www.njfamilycare.org) (877)414-9251  
Human Services Center – [www.ucnj.org/humansvcs/youthsvcs.html](http://www.ucnj.org/humansvcs/youthsvcs.html)  
High Focus Centers – [www.highfocuscenters.com](http://www.highfocuscenters.com)  
DYFS – 1-888-NJ-ABUSE  
Trinitas – Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization – (908)994-7154  
    Psychiatric Emergency Room – (908) 994-7152, (908)994-7131  
    Children-Family Crisis Clinician – (908)693-4873, (908)693-4873  
Summit Oaks Hospital –sexual orientation or gender identity – (908)277-9071  
Union County Social Services – (908)965-2700  
Interfaith Council for the Homeless (908)753-4001  
Catholic Community Services – (800)227-7705  
Westfield Department of Human Services - (908)789-4079  
Summit Psychological Services - (908)273-3355  
Family and Children's Services - (908)352-7474  
Behavior Therapy Center, Millburn - (973)376-6062  
Union County Psychological Services - (908)232-8381  
Clark Psychological Center - (732)381-6118  
Youth and Family Counseling Service, Westfield – (908)233-2042

ADHD Family Counseling Center, Westfield – (908) 389-0682

Dr. Nicolas Romano, Mountainside – (908) 233-8078

Catholic Community Services, Cranford – (800)277-7705

Children’s Specialized Hospital, Mountainside – (908)233-3720

Counseling Center for Human Development, Cranford – (908)276-0590

Family Resource Center, Cranford – (908) 276-2244

## **OCD**

Dr. Harish Malhotra, Summit, (908)273-6164

Psychology Associated of Cranford. (908)276-3888

Trinitas – Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Emergency (908)994-8128