

**Five Essential Practices that Behavioral Health Clinicians Need to Know About K-12 Schools: Student Assistance Programs, MTSS and Other Initiatives in Pennsylvania  
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Susan L. Tarasevich, Ed.D. received her B.A. in Biology from Seton Hill University. She began teaching high school Biology, Chemistry, and Advanced Physiology while pursuing a Master of Science in Education (M.Ed.) degree in secondary science teaching and school counseling at Duquesne University and the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education in Administration and Policy Studies. She served as a classroom teacher, school counselor, and administrator until moving into her current role as lead trainer for the Student Assistance Program Training. Addiction Medicine Services of UPMC-WPH is a Pennsylvania Approved SAP Training Provider.

In her role as Clinical Trainer, Susan has consulted with numerous school districts, cyber, charter and parochial educators K-12 locally, statewide and nationally as counties and state agency professionals in the design, implementation, and evaluation of student-centered prevention programming.

Dr. Tarasevich is a frequently sought presenter on topics related to the adolescent brain; substance use K-12; trauma-sensitive school practices and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. She has co-authored two books: Promoting Child and Adolescent Mental Health (Jones and Bartlett, 2013) and Caring in Times of Crisis (Youthlight, 2001).

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Haley Hiller, M.Ed. received her B.A. in Political Science and Communications and her M.Ed. in Secondary Social Studies Education from Duquesne University. She began her career as a classroom teacher at a Pittsburgh area Charter School teaching 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grade U.S. History.

After her years in the classroom, Haley moved on to work for Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, & Families as an Educational Liaison. As an Educational Liaison Haley worked with youth ages 14-24 in the child welfare system in Allegheny County assisting them with high school retention and post-secondary planning and transition.

Haley then moved on to join Dr. Susan Tarasevich as a Clinical Educator/Student Assistance Program Trainer with Addiction Medicine Services of UPMC-WPH, which is a Pennsylvania Approved SAP Training Provider. As a Clinical Educator/SAP Trainer Haley is able to meld her experience as both a classroom teacher and someone who has extensive knowledge of systems together to train and support public, private, cyber, and charter school educators, administrators, and staff as well as county and agency professionals.

Audience: Appropriate for a wide audience: Professionals (Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Counselors, Physician Assistants working in Mental Health Settings, Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners, Psychiatric Nurses, Social Workers, Teachers, Residents, Fellows, Trainees, Students, and Peer Specialists), Patients, and Families with a basic knowledge of schools, but little to no background in school based behavioral health mechanisms currently in place. Appropriate for introductory and intermediate levels.

### **Five Essential Practices that Behavioral Health Clinicians Need to Know About K-12 Schools: Student Assistance Programs, MTSS and Other Initiatives in Pennsylvania**

Clinicians and Educators have different but essential roles and responsibilities when working with children, adolescents, and their families. Each system has unique legal limitations and ethical codes of conduct that may, at times, seem at odds. The Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program is a K-12 mechanism for addressing learning barriers that compromise student success in school. The school-based professionally trained SAP team, including a liaison from a community behavioral health agency, collaborate to provide early intervention, screening, and supportive services for students' behavioral health concerns.

This presentation will review the structure, roles, and responsibilities and boundaries of school Student Assistance Teams in Pennsylvania schools. There are differences between school, and clinical legal and ethical boundaries, particularly confidentiality, and these are important to recognize when generating collaboration. A significant strength of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program is the presence of the SAP Behavioral Health Liaison and their important responsibilities described. Discussed are resources, as well as opportunities for better collaboration and safety net coordination.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) uses the Public Health Model for Prevention and aligns systems and practices using data-based decision making. A basic understanding of the framework is essential for understanding schools and their initiatives to address behavioral health

### **Three (3) learning objectives**

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Identify the purpose of SAP in Pennsylvania
2. Describe the roles, responsibilities and boundaries of SAP professionals.
3. Discuss three legal and ethical similarities and differences between school and clinical statutes.
4. Outline the MTSS framework
5. State five ways to improve collaboration between clinicians, families, youth and school personnel.

### **Three (3) current (within the past 10 years) *peer-reviewed* publications that support the evidence base for the content of your presentation**

1. August, G. J., Piehler, T. F., & Miller, F. G. (2018). Getting "SMART" about implementing multi-tiered systems of support to promote school mental health. *Journal of school psychology, 66*, 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.10.00>
2. Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*, 133–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709334798>
3. Bruns, E. J., Duong, M. T., Lyon, A. R., Pullmann, M. D., Cook, C. R., Cheney, D., & McCauley, E. (2016). Fostering SMART partnerships to develop an effective continuum of behavioral health services and supports in schools. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 86*, 156–170. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ort0000083>
4. Cook, C.R., Lyon, A.R., Locke, J. (2019) Adapting a Compilation of Implementation Strategies to Advance School-Based Implementation Research and Practice. *Prevention Science 20*: 914. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1121-019-01017-1>

5. Fertman, C.I., Delgado, M.M & Tarasevich, S.L (2013). Promoting Child and Adolescent Mental Health. Burlington: MA. Jones and Bartlett Learning.
6. Fertman, C.I., Tarasevich, S. & Hepler, N. (2003). Retrospective Analysis of the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Program Outcome Data: Implications for Practice and Research. SAMSHA/CSAP, Washington, DC. Downloaded from the Web: 1.28.04: [http://www.nasap.org/sap\\_booklet\\_3.pdf](http://www.nasap.org/sap_booklet_3.pdf)
7. Tarasevich, S.L. and Fertman, C.I. (2002). An Evaluation of the Pittsburgh Public Schools Student Assistance Program. Report Submitted to the Board of Public Education, Pittsburgh, PA.
8. Fertman, C.I. Fichter, C.M., Schlesinger, J.A., Tarasevich, S.L., Wald, H.P. and Zhang, X.Y. (2001). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Student Assistance Programs in Pennsylvania. *Journal of Drug Education*. 31, 4: 353-366. <https://doi.org/10.2190/BARY-YUKF-JLY9-YU8L>
9. Tarasevich, S.L. (2001). A Study of the Relationship Between Student Assistance Process and Outcomes. Dissertation: University of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh, PA.