

**Imperial County Office of Education**  
**Student Well-Being and Family Resources**

1398 Sperber Road El Centro, CA 92243 \* 760-312-6498

**New Employee Training Manual**



**Imperial County, El Centro Ca. 92243 760-312-6498**

<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Imperial Valley Risk Factors</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Self Awareness and Personal Development</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Prevention and Intervention Basics</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Understanding Your Role and Responsibilities</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Working with Individual Students: Steps and Skills</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Additional Resources: Facts About Substance Abuse, Violence and Mental Health</b>	<b>38</b>

## **WELCOME TO THE IMPERIAL COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION STUDENT WELL BEING AND FAMILY RESOURCES TEAM!**

Imperial County Office of Education Student Well-Being and Family Resources Department (SWB&FR) has been providing services to Imperial County Schools for over 20 years. The program brings together schools, communities, families and youth in a working partnership to support students at all grade levels dealing with challenges. Our staff works to prevent problems that interfere with educational success, including alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, suicide, teen pregnancy, gang violence, dropping out, and poor academic performance. Student Well-Being and Family Resources helps young people make healthy lifestyle choices, stay in school and complete their education by helping individuals build social emotional learning skills.

SWB&FR staff members provide individual paraprofessional counseling, facilitate supports, informational groups, conduct presentations in classrooms, trainings and coordinate various other activities required by the assigned program. In general, the functions of most grants include: prevention education, identification of students in need of assistance, intervention to ensure student access services, pre-assessment of the nature and degree of the problem, referrals to the appropriate resources and ongoing support for healthy lifestyle choices. Teachers, principals, counselors, parents and peers are the regular source of student referral to SWB&FR programs.

The Department obtains its strength from well-trained staff in many elements including the confidentiality of the program services. Sharing information has not been an issue of concern in any of our programs. As soon as students make contact with a SWB&FR staff member, confidentiality is discussed with them including the *confidentiality exceptions*. Also during the first contact with the student, the staff member asks for permission to meet with the student's parents in order to better serve the student and the family's needs. By involving parents, we have an opportunity to intervene and help the entire family. As a staff member for SWB&FR you will become well aware of resources in the community, because referrals are made according to the needs of the student and their family. The referral made may include a referral to participate in support groups facilitated by the referring staff member or other staff members. The pre-assessment is done within three sessions and students are referred to needed resources.

In Imperial County Office of Education Student Well-Being and Family Resources, services are offered at various school sites, including high schools, Alternative Education schools, middle schools, and elementary schools. Staff members are able to make contact with students during the school day and provide immediate intervention and paraprofessional counseling services according to the assigned program. The emphasis on confidentiality and the

consistency students experience with in our programs create an awareness of the importance to talk about the difficult issues students face.

Supervision for SWB&FR staff member is a process that supports personal and professional development and it insures that legal issues are addressed in a timely manner. Once a week the staff will meet with their supervisor to discuss some of the more challenging issues they faced during the week. This provides an opportunity to debrief and to remind staff of the importance of taking care of themselves. During this process staff also has the opportunity to practice their skills, give and receive feedback on situations they are addressing in one on one session or in the groups. Working with students with high risk behaviors is very challenging and often the student's issues tap into the issues of the adults working with them. For that reason, although SWB&FR staff will receive a great deal of preparation, they will be encouraged to take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program as needed.

This handbook is a starting place. You will continue the process of learning about the prevention and intervention field through meetings with your supervisor and other team members, training workshops, and every day contacts with students and families. This is not the only source of information available to guide your work. You will also find lists of published and on-line resources in this handbook.

It is important to note that this handbook and related training sessions **will not** prepare you to be a counselor or mental health specialist. It will help prepare you to make a positive difference in the lives of students in a different way- by helping them recognize and use their strengths to live healthy lifestyles, avoid substance abuse, make informed choices, cope with challenges and problems, and ask for and get assistance when they need it.

Throughout this handbook, you will find notes marked with the following symbols:

- ✓ Will direct you to **information resources** for learning more about the topics covered in this handbook. Your supervisor will also provide you with handouts and reading lists to help you get more information and deeper understanding of the prevention and intervention field.
  
- ❖ Will mark notes that ask you to take **time to reflect** on what you have been reading, how the information in this handbook relates to your work, and how you relate to it on a personal level. This process will help gain a clear understanding of the issues and how they relate to you. This is important because when individuals work with students a wide variety of issues will come up and it is important to be aware of the issue that might affect you the most in order to be able to provide the appropriate support.

**Books:** Below you'll find a sample of books you will receive. They are not listed in any particular order. As it was stated previously, you'll read these book and your supervisor will discuss them with you and explore how you relate or not to the material. Keep notes of questions as you read to also discuss with your supervisor. The books are yours, so you are welcome to highlight and make notes.

- **The Art of Talking So That People Will Listen** – Paul W. Swets
- **Difficult Conversations** – Douglas Stone-Bruce Patton-Sheila Heen
- **Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World** – H. Stephen Glenn, Ph.D.
- **Everything You Need to Know About Chemical Dependency-** Vernon Johnson
- **Another Chance** Hope and Health for the Alcoholic Family- Sharon Wegscheider

- **It Will Never Happen To Me**- Claudia Black
- **Motivational Interviewing** - Miller
- **I'll Quit Tomorrow** - Vernon Johnson
- **Intervention** – Vernon Johnson
- **Conducting Support Group** – Martin Fleming
- **Emotional Intelligence** – Daniel Goleman
- **7 Strategies For Developing Capable Students**- H Stephen Glenn
- **Punishment By Reward**- Alfie Kohen
- **Educating Minds and Heart** – Cohen
- **Caring Classrooms and Intelligent Schools** -Cohen
- **Greif Recovery Handbook** – John W. James
- **Fostering Resiliency** - Krovets
- **A Biological Brain in a Cultural Classroom** - Sylwester
- **How to Explain Brain** - Sylwester

## ***Imperial Valley Risk Factors***

Every community has some characteristics that increase the impact of certain risk factors on children in youth in that community. Researchers call these characteristics “*amplifiers*”. In Imperial County, geography and high rates of poverty and immigration amplify risk factors.

***Geography:*** Imperial County’s location on the United States border with Mexico increases access to alcohol and other drugs for youth. While Mexico’s legal drinking age is officially 18, many alcohol outlets sell to minors. Nightclubs in Mexicali serve minors and distribute flyers about youth-oriented parties and specials in Imperial County communities and near high schools. These practices contribute to what the U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration has called “an epidemic of adolescent binge drinking in border areas”.

***Poverty:*** Many children and youth in Imperial County are in families experiencing extreme economic hardship. Poverty does *not* cause substance abuse, violence, or mental health problems; however, economic hardship causes stress that contributes to those problems. Imperial is the California County with the largest percentage of children and youth living in households with incomes below the federal poverty level (33%) and below 200% of the federal poverty level (65%). (The federal poverty level is based on calculations of the number of people in a household and the costs of basics needs like food and housing. In October 2008, 24% of Imperial County adults were unemployed. This was the highest unemployment rate in California and more than three times the statewide rate.

***Immigration:*** For generations residents of Mexico have crossed the border to make their homes in the Imperial Valley. Families most often immigrate to find better life opportunities, especially for their children and over time achieve that goal. However, language barriers and cultural adjustments create high levels of stress for children, youth and families during their immigration transitions. In the 2000 Census, 32% of Imperial County’s population of 142,361 was born in Mexico. In 2007-2008, Imperial County school districts reported to the California Department of Education that 42% of students county-wide were English language learners. This indicates that these students are immigrants or the children of isolated immigrant families. They experience stressors, including isolation because of language barriers, disruption of family and peer support networks, and adjustment to new communities and schools.



***Take time to reflect...***

## SELF AWARENESS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

You are entering a new field and asking yourself if this is the right kind of work for you is an important question. In “Learning the Art of Helping” by Mark E. Young, writes that Carl Rogers considered three personal characteristics to be essential for a helper: congruence, positive regard, and empathy.

**Congruence:** The ability to be completely genuine with another person. Congruency means that there is consistency between what a person feels and says and how he or she acts. If we are congruent, we react to the client in the here and now and do not hide behind the façade of the professional role.

**Positive Regard:** The helper must respect the personhood of each client and believe that all persons have inherent worth.

**Empathy:** Is the ability to understand another person’s feelings or world view. Rogers believed that through empathy, clients feel understood and are empowered to solve their own problems.

Other characteristics of effective helpers identified by the experts (Learning the Art of Helping).

- ❖ Positive View of Humankind- You believe that most people are basically good and are striving for self-improvement. You enjoy people and believe that people can change.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*
- ❖ Stable and Mentally Healthy- You have a good self-esteem and are basically secure, mentally healthy person.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*
- ❖ Good Self-Care Skills- You know your limits and are able to set boundaries to protect yourself from burnout.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*
- ❖ Intelligent and Psychologically Minded- Intellectually curious person who is interested in the psychological world of other people. You can appreciate both a scientific and an artistic approach to learning about helping.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*



- ❖ Creative- You are a creative person in some aspect of your life. You are not rigid or inflexible in your attitudes. You are not bothered by many prejudices about people, culture, religion, and family custom that differ from your own.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*
- ❖ Courage- You have enough courage to examine your own personal problems and to seek help and guidance for yourself when you need it. You are willing to admit that you need to change and grow. You are able to deal with the cruelties that other people inflict on each other without being disturbed that it disrupts your own life or your ability to help.  
*How true is this for you?*  
*How can you grow?*

Being a staff member at Student Well-Being and Family Resources or any other agency require a great deal of learning as well as working through a process of self discovery. This process helps the staff members to appreciate people at an intimate level that few professional experience.

In the course of your work, you will come in contact with students and families with backgrounds, experiences and values that may be very different from yours. Students will test limits to challenge you. Many students have learned distrust of adults from adults who took a “do what I say, not what I do” approach and did not follow up on commitments. Students will test you to find out how trustworthy you are. You will learn from them about their lives and about yourself. What you learn will probably challenge some of your attitudes and assumptions. Doing your work effectively requires making a commitment to self awareness and to ongoing personal development or to, in other words, “walk the walk” you talk about with students.

Learning this field takes years. It is a difficult journey because you must be committed to understanding yourself as well as the individuals you’ll be working with. We are to focus on students, parents and teachers and at the same time watch our tendencies to judge, boost our egos, or to force our view point on others. Through ongoing personal development we learn how to help others.

### **Setting and Keeping Healthy Boundaries**

Student Well-Being Staff need healthy physical, emotional and intellectual boundaries to maintain professional distance from students and do their work effectively. Moreover, Student Well-Being & Family Resources staff help students who have not experienced healthy boundaries learn about setting, keeping and respecting personal limits by modeling boundaries.

Listening **with** and **to** your heart will help you set and keep healthy boundaries.

To listen **with** your heart:

- ✓ Recall that genuine empathic listening does *not* necessarily mean "I agree with you!"
- ✓ *Temporarily* set your own opinions, needs, and other priorities aside.
- ✓ Focus solely and non-judgmentally on the student: (a) watch their face, eyes, body, and hands and gestures and (b) listen to their words and speech dynamics
- ✓ From time to time, tell them the *essence* of what you are hearing/sensing (use a few words or a phrase, at most) in your own words (avoid parroting theirs) **without** questions, comments, or solutions (this is the hard part!).
- ✓ Use attentive posture; comfortable eye contact; and gestures, expressions, and intensity that match the student's.

To listen **to** your heart:

- ✓ Take a few minutes after interactions with students to "check in with yourself".
- ✓ This is the time to think about your opinions, needs and priorities.
- ✓ Be alert to issues and situations that are sensitive for you.
- ✓ Ask for help when you need it.

Working with students will almost certainly challenge your boundaries. Be alert for **warning signs** of boundary problems like the following:

- Not being able to stop thinking about a student
- Feeling emotions such as pity, anger or disgust about a student or family
- Wanting to "rescue" a student
- Receiving an expensive or otherwise inappropriate gift from a student

When you experience a **warning sign**:

- ✓ Acknowledge the warning sign.
- ✓ Identify a boundary for yourself and strategies for keeping it.
- ✓ Ask a co-worker or supervisor for help.

You are attending to boundaries when:

- ✓ Your focus is on students. Services are for them and not about you.
  - ✓ You get help from your personal support system outside of work.
  - ✓ You become comfortable with and respect differences.
  - ✓ You can identify, control and change their own false beliefs and assumptions.
- You know your limits and ask for help when you need it.

## PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION BASICS

Read this section to learn about:

- Definitions of prevention and intervention
- Core prevention concepts
- Key intervention approaches

### ***What are prevention and intervention?***

- Prevention is the steps we take to educate students about:
  - High risk behaviors including the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse, violence and mental health problems;
  - How to avoid those behaviors and problems; and
  - How to get help for them.
- Intervention is the steps we take to:
  - Identify students with signs and symptoms of substance abuse, violence and mental health problems and
  - Provide them with information, motivation and opportunities to take care of themselves in healthy ways and get the help they need to do that.

### ***Guiding principles***

The following four principles are the foundation for the Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department's prevention and intervention work.

***Strengths-Based Approach:*** Every individual has strengths. With meaningful options, students can build on their strengths to make a positive difference for themselves and the community. It is important to believe in students and their ability to make the appropriate choices, but it is also important to understand they are limited by their experience and the influence of those around them. Staff works with students as part of the process to help students to make informed decisions and choices.

***Empowerment:*** The purpose of services is to assist students to make their own choices and decisions, identify and successfully use their abilities and capabilities, feel hopeful, and achieve their goals. This involves helping clarify choices they make and letting them experience the challenges of life. Students are truly being helped when they don't see that the staff person working with them helped them.

***Modeling:*** Prevention Specialists focus on encouraging at-risk youth to make positive life choices by modeling positive behavior. The students are subject to cultural and peer pressure so it is crucial for those serving in these students programs to model the skills and attitudes students are to learn in order to deal with the daily challenges they face. Being real, empathetic, consistent and

using appropriate self disclosure will help you connect with students in a real way that will truly impact them and often provides students with behavior models that are unfamiliar to them.

***Mutual trust, respect and honesty:*** To earn the trust and respect of students and their parents/caregivers, we demonstrate care and concern, follow through in a timely manner, protect privacy, and treat all students and their family members as we want to be treated ourselves.

***Research-based approach:*** All Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department services and programs reflect social science research on what works to prevent substance abuse, violence, mental health problems and other at risk behaviors.

## ***Risk and Protective Factors and Youth Development***

### **Reduce risk factors + Promote protective factors = Prevention**

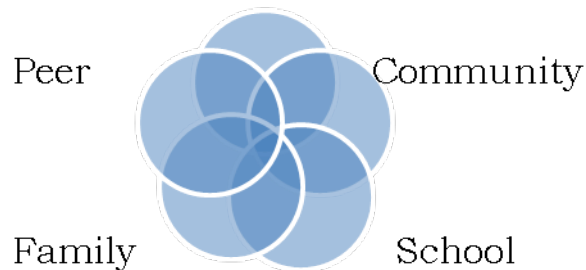
Twenty years of research has shown that empathy, compassion and respect for children and youth are required to help students prevent substance abuse, violence and mental health problems. However, caring and respect alone are not enough to help students, especially children and teens who are exposed to significant stress and adversity, to avoid these problems. Researchers have studied the effectiveness of different approaches to prevention to develop the framework that guides the work of the Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department.

Based on social science research on what works, we help students to **reduce risk factors** that increase the likelihood that students will use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; act violently; and/or have mental health problems and **promote protective factors** that help children and youth avoid those problems. To understand risk and protective factors, we must consider the influences in students' lives that protect them and put them at risk.

Factors that lead to or protect individuals from underage alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, fighting, violent crime, weapons use, and other drug consumption exist at many levels of influence, since individuals are connected to and interact with others and the society around them. Consider the sixth-grade student who just started smoking. Her parents smoke. Her friends smoke. The local convenience store does not card her when she buys cigarettes. The magazines she reads feature advertisements showing how "cool" smoking can be.

Now, picture a student surrounded by a series of concentric rings representing various factors that influence his or her behavior. Family, peers, school, and the community interact with the individual and with each other in a dynamic system.

## Influences on Students



Different factors in each of these areas either protect children and youth from substance use, violence and mental health problems or put them at risk for these problems. Research has shown that the more risk factors a student experiences, the more likely it is that he or she will have problems related to substance abuse, violence and mental health. Conversely, the more protective factors that are present in a child’s or teen’s life, the less vulnerable he or she will be to these problems.

Research has consistently shown the impacts of risk and protective factors over time in diverse groups of children and youth. The studies indicate that risk and protective factors affect students the school age years through adolescence and that the factors affect children and youth of all races/ethnicities.

<b>Risk Factors</b>	<b>Protective Factors</b>
<b><i>Community</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of alcohol/drugs</li> <li>• Availability of weapons</li> <li>• Community norms favorable to alcohol/drug use and violence</li> <li>• Transitions and mobility</li> <li>• Extreme economic hardship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive expectations of children and youth</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate in community activities</li> <li>• Community norms and laws that discourage substance use and violence</li> </ul>
<b><i>Family</i></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family history of problems</li> <li>• Family conflict</li> <li>• Favorable family attitudes about problem behaviors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive bonding between family members</li> <li>• Parent/caregiver involvement in/monitoring of children’s</li> </ul>

	activities
<b>School</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic failure beginning in late elementary school</li> <li>• Lack of commitment to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of community in classrooms and schools</li> <li>• Clear expectations and rules</li> <li>• Caring, respectful relationships between adults and students</li> </ul>
<b>Individual/Peer</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early and persistent behavior problems</li> <li>• Friends who engage in problem behaviors</li> <li>• Favorable attitudes toward alcohol, tobacco, drugs and violence</li> <li>• Biological factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to adjust to or recover from change or misfortune</li> <li>• Willingness to ask for help</li> <li>• Positive relationships with healthy peers</li> </ul>



***Get more information...***

For more information on risk and protective factors and the research that identified these factors, go to [guide.helpingamerica.gov/youth.gov/programtool-factors.cfm](http://guide.helpingamerica.gov/youth.gov/programtool-factors.cfm)

The table above shows risk and protective factors that increase and decrease the likelihood that all youth throughout the United States will have problems with substance abuse and violence that may, in turn, contribute to mental health problems. Risk and protective factors look and act differently in each student’s life and in every community.

## ***Balancing Risk and Protective Factors***

Our work is to help students build on their personal, peer, family and cultural strengths to counter-balance risk factors with protective factors. Prevention services *cannot* change a student's family history or economic status.

Prevention services *can* reduce some individual, peer and school risk factors and enhance protective factors to help children and youth cope with stressors in healthy ways.

## ***Social Emotional Learning***

Social Emotional Learning builds the foundation for accepting responsibility; managing emotions; appreciating diversity; preventing violence, substance abuse, and related problems; and succeeding academically (Weissberg, Resnik, Payton, 2003).

Through the years, there has been very little merit given to the importance of emotions for the success of individuals. Emotions have been perceived as though they were in the way. Logic and objectivity seems to be what is valued in the American culture although human beings are motivated by emotions. "Emotions, after all, are the threats that hold metal life together. They define who we are in our own mind's eye as well as in the eyes of others" (LeDoux, 1998). Emotions guide most of everything that we do in our lives whether we realize it or not and the more social emotional competencies an individual possess the more tools that individual has to draw from.

**Social Emotional Learning** is the process through which children and youth acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills associated with the core areas of social and emotional competency. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning has identified five skills of social emotional learning. They include: (1) self-awareness; (2) self-management; (3) social awareness; (4) responsible decision making; and (5) relationship management ([www.CASEL.org](http://www.CASEL.org)).

- *Self-Awareness*: identifying and recognizing emotions; accurate self-perception; recognizing strengths, needs, and values; self-efficacy
- *Self-Management*: impulse control and stress management; self-motivation and discipline; goal setting and organizational skills
- *Social Awareness*: perspective taking; empathy; difference recognition; respect for others
- *Responsible Decision-Making*: problem identification and situation analysis; problem solving; evaluation and reflection; personal, social, and

ethical responsibility

- *Relationship Skills*: communication, social engagement, and relationship building; working cooperatively; negotiation, refusal, and conflict management; help seeking

Student Well-Being and Family Resources staffs' work is to build the SEL competencies mentioned. There are many risky behaviors student engage in including the use of alcohol and drugs, engage in violence and gang activity and early sexual activity that could lead to teen pregnancy. SEL competencies provide students with the opportunity to make wiser choices that could help them be successful in life. The mentioned competencies are addressed through the various prevention and intervention programs implemented throughout the schools in Imperial County.

✓ ***Get more information...***

You can find out more about social emotional learning from the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning web site at [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org) or at [www.schoolclimate.org](http://www.schoolclimate.org).

❖ ***Take time to reflect...***

Please write your understanding of SEL competencies and why do you think they are important to you for your new job.

- *Self-Awareness*:
  
- *Self-Management*:
  
- *Social Awareness*:
  
- *Responsible Decision-Making*:
  
- *Relationship Skills*:



## **Youth Development Opportunities**

In the past, many programs for teens have focused only on young people's problems and helping them to be "problem-free". Research has shown that programs are more effective when services and activities broaden that focus to help students learn and practice the skills or "competencies" they need to make a healthy transition to adulthood.

Youth development competencies are:

- *Social competencies*, such as work and family life skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills;
- *Moral competencies*, such as personal values and ethics, a sense of responsibility and citizenship (including participation in civic life and community service);
- *Emotional competencies*, such as a sense of personal identity, self-confidence, autonomy, and the ability to resist negative peer pressure;
- *Physical competencies*, such as physical conditioning and endurance, and an appreciation for and strategies to achieve lifelong physical health and fitness; and
- *Cognitive competencies*, such as knowledge, reasoning ability, creativity, and a lifelong commitment to learning and achievement.

## **Youth Development Critical Tasks, Competencies or Assets**

**Critical tasks for adolescents (10-15 years old) to accomplish to become productive and responsible adults are:**

### **• Cognitive development:**

- Expand knowledge;
- Develop critical thinking and reasoning skills; and
- Experience competence through academic achievement.

### **• Social development:**

- Increase communication and negotiation skills;
- Increase capacity for meaningful relationships with peers and adults; and
- Explore adult rights and responsibilities.

### **• Physical development:**

- Begin to mature physically and to understand changes that come with puberty;
- Increase movement skills through physical risks;
- Develop habits that promote lifelong physical fitness; and
- Learn to take and manage appropriate physical risks.

• **Emotional development:**

- Develop a sense of personal identity;
- Develop a sense of personal autonomy and control; and
- Develop coping, decision-making, and stress-management skills.

• **Moral development:**

- Develop personal values;
- Develop a sense of accountability in relation to the larger society; and
- Apply values and beliefs in meaningful ways.

*(Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989)*

Student Well-Being & Family Resource Department programs feature activities that provide opportunities for students to build competencies and work through tasks critical to preparing for adulthood. Activities based on social emotional learning and youth development strategies both focus on positive aspects of teens' lives. At the same time, our programs and activities are designed to communicate clear messages to students about the negative consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and violence.

It is often challenging to communicate messages that teens do not want to hear. Working with your supervisor and co-workers, you will continue to learn about the effects of substance abuse, violence and un-recognized mental health problems and about research-based prevention and intervention strategies.

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Read this section to learn about:

- What your job is and is *not*
- The legally mandated responsibilities that come with your job
- How to make sure you are doing your work responsibly

### **Key Functions**

In working with children, youth and families, Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department staffs are advocates, coaches, mentors, and facilitators with the following **six basic functions**. You will have many opportunities to explore these functions with your supervisor and co-workers and to learn and continuously build your skills to carry out these functions.

**Prevention-** Educating groups of students about substance abuse, violence and mental health problems and ways to avoid those problems and live healthy lives.

**Identification-** Finding individual students who need assistance to avoid substance abuse, violence and mental health problems because their risk factors outweigh their protective factors.

**Intervention-** Engaging students (individually and in groups) to let them know they are cared about and provide them with information, motivation and opportunities to make healthy changes in their lives.

**Pre-assessment-** Observing students to find out about their strengths and needs and determine what programs and services will benefit them.

**Referrals-** Connecting students and their families with programs and services at school and in the community that can help them.

**Support and Skill Building-** Checking in with and encouraging individual students. Facilitating groups that help students build health peer support networks.

## ***Summary of Important Responsibilities***

Student Well Being and Family Resources staff has important responsibilities to students, families, assigned school sites, the Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department Team and themselves. The following summary of responsibilities is adapted from the National Student Assistance Association Ethics Guidelines.

### ***Responsibilities to Students***

- Have primary responsibility to the student, who is to be treated with respect and dignity and with concern for confidentiality.
- Promote and enhance student's strengths, skills, and capabilities while addressing their needs.
- Inform the student of the purposes, goals, and procedures under which he/she may receive services.
- Make referrals to appropriate service providers based upon student's needs,
- Protect the confidentiality of students and exchange personal information only according to prescribed laws and ICOE policies.
- Follow appropriate reporting procedures when the student's condition or statements indicate danger to the student or others.

### ***Responsibilities to Families***

- Have primary responsibility to the family of the student, who is to be treated with respect, dignity, and with concern for confidentiality.
- Respect the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents for their children and endeavor to establish a cooperative relationship with parents.
- Respect the diverse ways people define families, including step families, extended families, relative caregivers and others.
- Inform parents of your role with emphasis on the positive nature of the program and the role of confidentiality between students, staff, and families.
- Get permission from parents/caregivers to provide services for a student according to school policy and legal mandates.
- Treat information received from families in a confidential and ethical manner.
- Offer families information on where and how to get support for the success of their children.

### ***Responsibilities to School Site***

- Introduce yourself and the services you will provide to school site administrators, faculty and staff.
- Establish and maintain a cooperative relationship with faculty, staff, and administration to facilitate the provision of optimum Program services.
- Promptly contact students who school staff refers to you.
- Follow all school site rules and procedures.
- Inform the school site if you will be absent or late.
- Always sign in and out at the school site office.

- Inform appropriate officials of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the school’s mission, personnel, students, or property.
- Work cooperatively with the community agencies, organization, and individuals in the school.

**Responsibilities to the Student Well-Being & Family Resource**

**Department Team**

- Participate fully in team meetings and trainings.
- Conduct yourself in such a manner as to bring credit to self and the Department.
- Treat your supervisor and co-workers with respect.
- Offer assistance and insight to your co-workers and seek the same from them.
- Meet with your supervisor regularly and fully inform him/her about your work, including both successes and challenges.
- Collect, record and submit to your supervisor all data, forms and other information required to evaluate Department services.
- If you have a conflict with another team member, talk with that team member about it directly (and not with other team members) and if you and the team member cannot resolve the conflict, ask your supervisor for help.
- Follow all Imperial County Office of Education and Student Well-Being& Family Resources Department policies and procedures.

**Responsibilities to Self**

- Monitor one’s own physical, mental, and emotional health and professional effectiveness.
- Refrain from any destructive activity leading to inadequate services or harm to self or a student.
- Take personal initiative to build professional skills and keep informed of innovations, trends and legal issues related to your work
- Understand and act upon their commitment and responsibilities to students, families, the Imperial County Office of Education and yourself.

**WORKING WITH INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS:  
STEPS AND SKILLS**

Read this section to learn about:

- Starting your work with students
- Developing trust with students and their families
- The skills you will practice and strengthen as you do your work.

This section will describe steps and skills for carrying out those functions. The information below is only a starting point. You will deepen your understanding of the steps in working with students and build new skills as you learn from your supervisor and co-workers, your experiences, students with whom you work and from yourself.

### ***Legal Mandates***

All Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department services are voluntary and strictly confidential. This means that staff members do not tell anyone outside their Department team any information about students with whom they are working or share any information students give them without permission from the student and his/her parents **except when state law mandates that information be reported.** These **legally mandated exceptions to confidentiality** occur when:

- You suspect or a student tells you that someone is abusing them or that their parents/caregivers are neglecting them.
- You suspect or a student tells you that she or he is an immediate danger to him/herself, that is, that he or she may harm her/himself.
- You suspect that a student poses a threat of a physical nature to another person.
- And or they are breaking school policy.

On the following pages, you will find the Imperial County Office of Education's policies and procedure for mandatory reporting in these situations and related Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department forms and procedures. Review these carefully and discuss them with your supervisor.

The information below explains and helps answer questions about these legal exceptions to the Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department's policy to provide confidential services for students.

### **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect**

As a classified employee of the Imperial County Office of Education you are one of 37 types of "mandated reporters" required to report child abuse and neglect to the County Department of Social Services.

*"A mandated reporter shall make a report ...whenever the mandated reporter, in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment, has knowledge of or observes a child whom the mandated reporter knows or*

*reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect.” Cal.Penal Code § 11166(a).*

The following are frequently asked questions and answers about reporting child abuse and neglect.

## ***Child Abuse Reporting:***

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

**Adapted from "The California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Law: Issues and Answers for Mandated Reporters" Pub 132 (1/00) California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention, p. 17-20.**

**1. Who am I to say what is abusive or neglectful?**

Mandated reporters sometimes feel reluctant to label behavior as abusive. They may feel they have no right to pass judgment on other people. However, if a reasonable suspicion exists, the protection of the child and compliance with the law must take precedence over these concerns. This protective action is beneficial to the parents as well, who may not recognize their behavior as abusive, or may be reluctant to seek help.

**2. What is the fine line between abuse and discipline?**

If the discipline is excessive or forceful enough to leave injuries, physical abuse has occurred. The use of instruments increases the likelihood of injuries. The intent of the reporting law is not to interfere with appropriate parental discipline, but to respond to extreme or inappropriate discipline which is abusive. Some parents hit their children in places where injuries are not visible. If a mandated reporter has reasonable suspicion of abuse, even with no visible signs, you are required to report.

**3. What if abuse occurred in the past?**

There is no time limitation regarding the reporting of child abuse. If a victim is still under age 18, the abuse must be reported.

**4. Should I inform the student that I have made child abuse report?**

There is no law or regulation regarding this. Consult your supervisor. It is often, but not always, good judgment to inform a middle school or high school student and explain the reasons for the report and what will happen as a result of the report.

**5. Should I inform the family that I have made a child abuse report?**

There is no law or regulation regarding this, and good professional judgment should be used. If a child is in imminent danger and the perpetrator has access to the child, it is better not to advise anyone in the family so that the child is not coerced or instructed to retract the disclosure.

## ***Outreach to target population***

Identification means reaching out to individual students who need assistance to involve them in your assigned program. You will find students through referrals from school site faculty and staff and once students and parents/caregivers get to know you through referrals you'll see more self-referrals from them. Referrals don't start automatically. You will use the following steps to get them started.

### **Steps to Identify Students Needing Assistance**

1. ***Contact key staff at school sites individually to introduce yourself and explain program services. Stay in contact on an ongoing basis.***

Key staff include, but are not limited to:

- Teachers
- Counselors
- Registration staff (who can identify new students who may need help to adjust to a new school setting),
- Staff who maintain attendance records (and can identify students with frequent absences)
- Staff who supervise detention
- Classified staff such as janitors and cafeteria workers who talk with students on a daily basis
- Members of the school's Student Attendance Review Board who meet with truant students and their parent caregivers.
- Probation officers who are assigned to or regularly visit the school

2. ***Stay visible. Greet students, staff and parents/caregivers at every opportunity, including:***

- When students are arriving at and leaving school
- In hallways at change of classes
- During breaks
- In the lunchroom
- At school events like open houses and assemblies

3. ***Be observant and assertive. Sell yourself as a resource. Check with faculty and staff for referrals and offer your services regularly.*** If you observe a student acting in a way that makes you think they could use help, talk to them. A wide variety of student behaviors can indicate a need for assistance. To avoid or deal with substance abuse, violence and mental health problems, students may "act out" or be withdrawn and quiet or "seem fine" on the surface.

4. ***Make presentations to classes and clubs about prevention and about the program.***

- Watch the responses of individual students.
- Some students may approach you to talk.



- Find ways to approach students who seemed responsive or uncomfortable but did not talk to you in the days after the presentation.

*Contact and collaborate with other programs.* These may include but are not limited to: Alcohol and Drug Counseling Program, Center for Family Solutions, Imperial County Probation Department, Imperial County Social Services, Behavioral Health and school districts.

### **Skills to Identify Students Needing Assistance**

Communication skills and observation skills are the two main abilities you will use and build to identify students as well as in all the other parts of your work. Demonstrate a sincere concern for students' well-being and see teen issues as critical concerns to be addressed at every opportunity

### **Observation Skills**

To identify students who need assistance, you must develop skills for observing students as they go through the school day. Observe the school site and how it works.

#### How to Observe:

- Be *patience* in order to slow down and watch.
- Pay close *attention* to your physical surroundings: who, what when, where and how students, faculty and staff move through the school day.
- Be *aware* of people's reactions, emotions, and motivations.
- Think about *questions* that can be answered through observing.
- Observe with an optimistic *curiosity* and avoid judgments.
- Observe *yourself* too, your attitudes, feelings, beliefs and responses.
- *Share* your observations with your co-workers and supervisors and listen to their feedback.

### **Communication Skills**

**“Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood”**- Stephen Covey

At SWB&FR communication will be a recurring theme, because it is at the heart of everything we do. We all depend on communication to help us meet our needs, find happiness and attain personal fulfillment. Through communication, we share meaning with others by sending and receiving messages sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally. In order to communicate effectively with others, we need to become more aware of ourselves and more sensitive to our thoughts and feelings.

It is important to understand that many of us and many of the young people we work with are taught to ignore feelings which interfere with their ability to experience intimacy. Many of the young people we work with are not trusting, so being real and sincere is going to be key in building that relationship. By

building relationship with students we are able to recruit them into the programs and help them with the challenges they face.

Often other professionals discuss how difficult it is to reach young people. They feel that students do not want to talk to adults; well our experience has been very different. We have learned that as long as we have staff who are very much focus on connecting with students, students are willing to participate in our programs and open up. The SWB&FR staffs' priority is to listen to students and look for ways to build SEL competencies.

Next you'll find some additional tips on communication. Your supervisor will continue to provide opportunities and material to expand you communication skills.

***From "The Art Of Talking So That People Will Listen" by Paul W. Swets.  
Listening Steps***

*Step One: Choose To Listen*- Barriers to listening can be overcome by making a conscious choice to listen. The choice to listen gives a clear direction to the mind that will minimize interference.

*Step Two: Listen Actively*- When you listen actively, you concentrate on what is being said and respond empathetically, which conveys acceptance. This response opens the door for further communication.

*Step Three: Listen For Ideas And Feelings*- There are 5 levels of listening: Cliches, Facts, Thoughts, Feelings about external events and Feelings about one's self. Being aware of the different levels help us determine which level we are at and if it is appropriate.

*Step Four: Listen With The Heart's "EAR"* – Listening to understand and acceptance are key to listening with Heart's Ears.

*Step Five: Listen to Yourself*- It is important to take time to put attention to understand your inner most feeling, thoughts, dreams and actions. If you are not willing to do this for yourself it is not likely that you will be able to do it for other people.

*Step Six: Know When To Keep Silent*- Silence of support let the individual know you want to hear them without interrupting.

**FROM "LEARNING THE ART OF HELPING"  
*Roadblocks to Communication***

<p><b>Ordering, Directing, Commanding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must do this.</li> <li>• You cannot do this.</li> <li>• I expect you to do this.</li> <li>• Stop it.</li> <li>• Go apologize to her</li> </ul>	<p><b>Praising, Agreeing, Evaluating Positively, Buttering up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You usually have very good judgment.</li> <li>• You are an intelligent person.</li> <li>• You have so much potential.</li> <li>• You've made quite a bit of progress.</li> <li>• You have always made it in the past.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Warning, Admonishing, Threatening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You had better do this, or else...</li> <li>• I you don't do this, then...</li> <li>• You better not try that.</li> <li>• I warn you, if you do that...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Name-Calling, Ridiculing, Shaming</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You are a sloppy worker.</li> <li>• You are a fuzzy thinker.</li> <li>• You're talking like an engineer.</li> <li>• You really goofed on this one!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Moralizing, Preaching, Imploring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should do this</li> <li>• You ought to try it.</li> <li>• It is your responsibility to do this</li> <li>• It is your duty to do this.</li> <li>• I wish you would do this.</li> <li>• I urge you to do this.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interpreting, Analyzing, Diagnosing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You're saying this because you're angry.</li> <li>• You are jealous.</li> <li>• What you really need is...</li> <li>• You have problems with authority.</li> <li>• You want to look good.</li> <li>• You are being a bit paranoid.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Advising, Giving Suggestions or solutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What I think you should do is...</li> <li>• Let me suggest...</li> <li>• It would be best for you if...</li> <li>• Why not take a different approach?</li> <li>• The best solution is...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reassuring, Sympathizing, Consoling, Supporting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You'll feel different tomorrow.</li> <li>• Things will get better.</li> <li>• It is always darkest before the dawn.</li> <li>• Behind every cloud there's a silver lining.</li> <li>• Don't worry so much about it.</li> <li>• It's not that bad.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Persuading with Logic, Lecturing, Arguing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you realize that...</li> <li>• The facts are in favor of...</li> <li>• Let me give you the facts...</li> <li>• Here is the right way...</li> <li>• Experience tells us that...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Probing, Questioning, Interrogating</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you do that?</li> <li>• How long have you felt this way?</li> <li>• What have you done to try to solve it?</li> <li>• Have you consulted with anyone?</li> <li>• When did you become aware of this feeling?</li> <li>• Who has influenced you?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Judging, Criticizing, Disagreeing, Blaming</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You're acting foolishly.</li> <li>• You are not thinking straight.</li> <li>• You are out of line.</li> <li>• You didn't do it right.</li> <li>• You are wrong.</li> <li>• That is a stupid thing to say.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Distracting, Diverting, Kidding</b>  <b>Think about the positive side.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to think about it until you're rested.</li> <li>• Let's have lunch and forget about it.</li> <li>• That reminds me of the time when...</li> <li>• You think you've got problems.</li> </ul>

## Helping Children Deal with Their Feelings

## Children Need to Have Their Feelings Accepted and Respected.

1. YOU CAN LISTEN QUIETLY AND ATTENTIVELY.
2. YOU CAN ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FEELINGS WITH A WORD.  
“Oh . . . Mmm . . . I See . . . “
3. YOU CAN GIVE THE FEELING A NAME.  
“That sounds frustrating!”
4. YOU CAN GIVE THE CHILD HIS WISHES IN FANTASY.  
“I wish I could make the banana ripe for you right now!”

All feelings can be accepted.  
Certain actions must be limited.

“I can see how angry you are at your brother.  
Tell him what you want with words, not fists.”

### **Connecting with Students**

You will contact students and their parents/caregivers to let them know you are there to help and to provide them with information about your program.

The purpose of these contacts is to start a relationship with a student and his/her family. This is sometimes referred to as *engaging* the student and her/his family.

## **Information + Motivation + Opportunity = Engagement**

<b>Information on</b> what services do, voluntary, confidential with exceptions, schedules, no cost.
--

<b>Motivation to</b> participate, ask for help, take a risk, and change something.
--

<b>Opportunity to</b> take a step, sign up, show up.
--

Experienced Student Assistance Representatives, Promotoras and Prevention Specialists have identified practices that help to effectively engage students and families:

- ✓ Follow up on referrals immediately.
- ✓ Meet students and parents/caregivers “where they are” geographically and in terms of what is important to them.
- ✓ Make contacts as convenient and comfortable as possible students and families.
- ✓ Keep in mind that students and families may have had negative experiences with services.
- ✓ Keep in mind that students and their families may be fearful that using services will affect their immigration status or benefits they receive.
- ✓ Listen more than you talk.
- ✓ Talk with children, youth and families in plain English or Spanish, avoiding jargon and acronyms.
- ✓ Balance your need for information with students’ and parents/caregivers’ need to be heard.
- ✓ Ask open-ended questions.
- ✓ Provide a clear understanding of what happens next.
- ✓ Remember students and families get to decide whether and when they will participate in services.

### **Engagement Tips**

Engagement starts **before** you contact a student and his/her parent or caregiver through the following steps:

- Find out how the student was referred, by whom, why and whether the student and/or family are aware of the referral.
- If the student was not “self-referred”, contact the referral source for more information.
- Follow school policy to get a permission slip and arrange to meet the student.
- Make sure you have the time and space needed to focus on your initial contact with a student.

The first contacts you make with students and their parents/caregivers are the first and in some ways most important steps in assisting them. The following are guidelines for these initial contacts.

### ***Guidelines for First Contact with a Student***

- I. Introduce yourself
  
- II. Clearly let the student know “You are not in trouble.”
  
- III. Tell the student about your program and services. For the Student Assistance Program and Puentes, this means letting the student know...
  - A. Participation is voluntary
  - B. What they say is usually confidential
  - C. What the confidentiality exceptions are
  - D. S/he gives permission for you to make parent/teacher contacts
  - E. S/ he can talk with you one on one.
  - F. S/ he can participate in Support Groups
  
- V. Ask the student to tell you about him/herself (let the student lead).
  - A. How do you feel?
  - B. Why do you think you here?
  - C. What happened?
  
- VI. Be aware of students
  - A. Their behavior
  - B. How they look
  - C. How they act
  - D. body language
  - E. Of students being labeled
  
- VII. Get background Information
  
- VIII. Closure of First Meeting
  - A. Give resources and referrals
  - B. Give homework
  - C. Give “contract”
  - D. Remind them about their outside support system
  - E. Get referrals for other students
  - F. Invite to talk with you again if the student has a need

### ***Guidelines for First Contact with a Parent/Caregiver***

## **Skills for Intervention**

SWB & FR staff use **motivational interviewing skills** to engage students. Motivational interviewing helps students and parents/caregivers think about what they want their lives to be like, their behaviors that keep them from living that way, and the changes they can make to achieve their goals. Research has established that this approach to talking with teens reduces substance abuse and violence and increases use of needed treatment services.

### ***Motivational Interviewing can help students to:***

- Recognize their high risk behaviors
- Evaluate how much of a problem their behavior is for them currently in relation to other issues in their
- Look at ways to begin the process of changing

### ***Empathy is the foundation for Motivational Interviewing.***

Empathy means:

- Listening in a supportive, reflective manner
- Demonstrating that you understand a student's concerns and feelings
- Communicating respect for and acceptance of students and their feelings
- Listening rather than telling

You will work with your supervisor to learn and practice **specific**

***Motivational Interviewing skills***, including how to:

- Ask open-ended questions that start with statements like "Tell me about" instead of yes or no questions that start with phrases like "Do you".
- Listen reflectively. Restate what a student says and ask if your re-statement is what they are feeling, what they mean, etc.
- Reframe: Explain another way to look at a situation, problem or a barrier a student sees to changing.
- Help students develop discrepancy to see the gap between where they currently are and where they want to be.

## ***Pre-Assessment***

Pre-assessment is observing students to find out about their strengths and needs and determine what programs and services will benefit them. Pre-assessment is intended to:

- Help students recognize and understand their strengths and needs.
- Explore goals and help students set personal goals.
- Model healthy ways to think about strengths, needs and problem solving.
- Connect students with services and activities to help them achieve their goals.

Student Assistance Representatives, Promotoras and Prevention Specialists do not have the training and certification or licensure to conduct assessments. You do, however, have more frequent contact with students in natural settings than most professionals do. This allows you to observe students and directly ask them questions that will help you to see their strengths and the areas where they need assistance. Your observations and conversations will help you determine which other programs can benefit a student.

To be sure you are not crossing the line between pre-assessment and professional assessment:

- Avoid using or even thinking in “diagnostic” terms. Think and talk about what only you see and hear. Through pre-assessment you may observe that a student appears sad. You don’t have the qualifications or information to say s/he is “depressed”. A student may tell you that s/he uses marijuana every day. You cannot and should not label the student as “addicted”.
- Remember that you are looking for signs that a student may benefit from a professional assessment, you are not conducting the assessment.
- Keep in mind that students may benefit from community and cultural activities as much as they do from professional treatment. Be alert to how participation in sports, arts, community service and other programs may help students avoid substance abuse, violence and mental health problems.

### **Pre-Assessment Steps**

#### ***Observe students***

Use the observation skills you are developing to see signs of students’ strengths and needs in different settings, including

- When a student is talking with you
- When s/he is interacting with peers
- In a classroom
- When s/he is interacting with teachers and school staff
- With parents/caregivers

#### ***Ask open-ended questions***



Directly ask students to tell you about:

- Feelings
- What they like to do
- What causes them stress
- Use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Experiences with violence
- Services and programs they in which they are now or in the past have participated

In the pre-assessment part of your work with individual students, it is important to remember to:

- ✓ Let students know you will be asking personal questions and they **don't** have to answer.
- ✓ Repeat information on confidentiality and mandated reporting.
- ✓ Be attentive to cultural and other differences in communication styles.
- ✓ Avoid using professional terms, jargon or acronyms.
- ✓ Be aware that students are also “assessing” you.
- ✓ Be alert to what is said, what isn't, how it is said and non-verbal cues.
- ✓ Ask for help from your supervisor and co-workers to interpret your observations.

### **Skills for Pre-Assessment**

In addition to observation and communication skills, you will develop abilities to discover students' strengths and help them see those strengths. Discovering strengths is at least as important as identifying needs in the pre-assessment process. Exploring strengths reveals resources to help students achieve goals and solve problems in the day-to-day context of their lives. Focusing on strengths begins to break down the traditional “one up, one down” status of service provider to client.

Discovering the strengths of students can be challenging. Day-to-day struggles can make it hard for students to see their strengths. It is sometimes hard even for staff to see a student's strengths. Questions like the following can help students and staff in the process of discovering strengths.

#### **Questions for Students**

- If you could choose one good thing to say about yourself, what would that be?
- How do you like to spend time by yourself? with your friends? with your family?
- Tell me about someone you look up to and why.
- What do you like about school?
- Who are your close friends and why are they special to you?
- Describe a time you had a good time with your family? other relatives? your friends, at school?

- What do you do for fun? When was the last time you did that?



### **Take time to reflect...**

Use these steps to think about why discovering strengths is important: 1) Using deficit-based descriptive terms or words, describe yourself in 75 words or less: (example) I am a procrastinator. I don't clean up after myself. I miss deadlines. I eat too much junk food. 2) Using strengths-based descriptive terms or words, describe yourself in 75 words or less: (example) I have kept the same job for 5 years. I take really good care of my children I am good in an emergency because I am level-headed. 3) **Ask yourself:** How did each style of description feel to you? Which would motivate you to make positive changes?

### **Referrals**

SWB & FR staff cannot provide “quick fixes” or meet all of the students’ needs. Instead, Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department staff connecting students and their families with programs and services at school and in the community that can help them.

Referrals start with matching students’ goals with services and activities to help achieve those goals based on each student’s strengths and preferences. Staff act as “**guides**” and provide information to help students develop “**road maps**” toward goals. What you observe and discover through pre-assessment guides referrals.

Students need more than the names, locations and telephone numbers of agencies and programs that provide activities and services. The referral process connects students with services and models planning for success and problem solving.

- National research has found that students and their families are most likely to follow up on referrals to services and activities when they have participated in selecting the services and activities and when staff:
  - Provide clear information to students, families and service providers.
  - Account for access problems, such as transportation, language and cultural barriers.
  - Help students and families review their options and make plans for getting to services.
  - Follow up with youth, families and service providers promptly.

Many students and families are unfamiliar with services and some have valid concerns about using them. For example, an immigrant family with a relative sponsor may fear that their sponsor will be held responsible for the costs of

mental health treatment for a student. It is important to provide complete, accurate information and to take all concerns seriously.

### **Referral Steps**

- ✓ For each service and activity referral:
- ✓ Identify and explore all potential barriers (transportation, scheduling, apathy, embarrassment, cultural differences, etc.).
- ✓ Work on strategies for overcoming barriers.
- ✓ Provide a written summary of referral information, planned strategies for getting past barriers, and back-up options.
- ✓ Follow up promptly to find out if the youth and/or family connected with the service activity and if there were problems, work on solutions.

### **Action Steps When a Student Discloses Suicidal Thoughts or Actions**

If a student discloses intention to commit suicide, staff must:

1. Never leave the student alone.
2. Ask student key question
  - Is the student planning to hurt himself?
  - Does the student have a plan?
  - Does the student have means to execute the plan?
3. School must be made aware of situation.
4. Call parents to come and pick up their son/daughter to take to mental health provider.
5. If parents are not available, law enforcement is contacted to determine if student must be detained
6. Always err on the safety of the student.

The following information from the U.S. Department of Education will help you understand and carry out these procedures when a student tells you he or she is thinking about or has tried committing suicide or when you think a student may be suicidal.

*Understanding Suicide as Part of a Process:* Contrary to popular belief, suicide is not an impulsive act but the result of a three-step process: a previous history of problems is compounded by problems associated with adolescence; finally, a precipitating event, often a death or the end of a meaningful relationship, triggers the suicide. Long-term problems can include: losing a parent or close relative at a young age; being a victim of domestic violence or child abuse; or living with an alcoholic in the family. The precipitating event which triggers a suicide attempt is usually a family crisis, a significant personal loss, or an

upset to self-esteem (such as failing a course, losing one's place on a sports team or being fired from a part-time job).

*Warning Signs:* Many behavioral and verbal clues--some subtle, others more obvious--can alert you to an adolescent's suicidal intentions. A teen at risk of committing suicide is experiencing deep depression, which may be indicated by loss of weight, appetite or interest in personal appearance; a change in sleeping pattern; fatigue; and feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem. Sudden behavioral changes may occur: the youth may become disruptive, violent, or hostile toward family and friends; or unexplainably moody, suspicious, anxious, or selfish. He or she may spend a great deal of time daydreaming, fantasizing, or imagining ills, in extreme cases experiencing memory lapses or hallucinations.

Some signals should come through loud and clear: the teen may express a desire to die, threaten to commit suicide, or inform friends of a plan. Self-abusive acts such as cutting off hair and self-inflicting cigarette burns are obvious suicidal gestures. The teen may develop a preoccupation with death and dying, make arrangements to give away prized possessions, withdraw from therapeutic help, or rapidly lose interest in once-valued activities and objects.

*Talking with a Student Who May Be Suicidal:* Keep the following guidelines in mind as you follow the Student Well-Being & Family Resources Department's procedures.

1. Take all threats and other mentions of suicide seriously.
2. Be non-judgmental.
3. Treat the student's problems seriously.
4. Ask direct questions, such as, "Have you been thinking of killing yourself?" Don't be afraid that you will be suggesting something the teen has not yet considered; usually you mentioning the topic is a relief.
5. Communicate your concern and support.
6. Offer yourself as a caring listener until professional help can be arranged.
7. Do not swear to secrecy. Let the student know that you have to make a report to get them help. Tell the student what will happen next.
8. Do not leave the student alone.

## ***Cultural Awareness***

This section focuses on two areas of challenges in your work: your own awareness and students' and families cultures and setting and keeping healthy personal boundaries.

The mnemonic “**ASKED**” is useful in understanding the role cultural awareness has in your work with students and their families

<b>A</b> wareness:	Am I aware of how my culture influences my interactions with others? Am I aware of my personal biases and prejudices towards cultural groups different than mine?
<b>S</b> kills:	Do I have skills for effective cross-cultural communication?
<b>K</b> nowledge:	Do I have knowledge of how factors related to culture and to racism contribute to disparities in education, health and the justice system?
<b>E</b> ncounters:	Do I use my cultural awareness, skills and knowledge in interactions with students, families, other service providers, and my co-workers?
<b>D</b> esire:	Do I really “want to” be culturally aware?

(adapted from the U.S. Office of Minority Health)

It is essential to remember that each individual experiences her/his culture uniquely. A person of the same race/ethnicity as you does not necessarily have the same culture you do. Many factors influence how each individual, including you, defines his/her cultural identity.

Identity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Race</li> <li>❖ Ethnicity</li> <li>❖ Culture</li> <li>❖ Community</li> <li>❖ Family</li> <li>❖ Where you live</li> <li>❖ Education</li> <li>❖ Relationships</li> <li>❖ Challenges</li> <li>❖ Opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Differing levels of importance</li> <li>➤ Changing or shifting over time</li> <li>➤ Impact of stress or crisis or need</li> </ul>

Another mnemonic, **RESPECT**, provides guidance for communicating effectively with people of all cultures.

**R**espect- expressed verbally and non-verbally

**E**xplanation- asking questions to be sure you understand and are understood

**S**ocio-cultural context- attention to race, class, gender, language, etc

**P**ower-acknowledging power differential between service providers and people seeking help

**E**mpathy-expressed verbally and non-verbally

**C**oncerns-eliciting emotions and concerns

**T**rust- earned

### **Effects of Substance Abuse, Violence and Mental Health Problems**

National research on the effects of substance abuse, violence, and mental health problems also provides important answers to the question “Why are prevention and intervention important?” Research findings challenge the myth that students who use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, behave violently, and/or experience emotional problems are “going through a phase”. Early experiences with these problems can and do affect children and youth throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

#### ***Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs***

A U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration study found that students who begin using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in elementary, middle or early high school years are not simply “experimenting”; they continue using.

- Youth who report ever having smoked, the vast majority (85.7 percent) are still smoking in the 12th grade.
- Youth who report ever having been drunk, 83 percent are still getting drunk in the 12th grade.
- Youth who report ever having tried marijuana, over three-fourths (76.4 percent) are still using marijuana in the 12th grade.

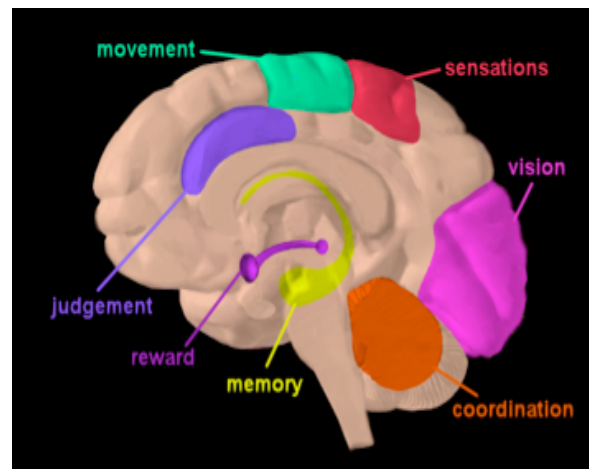
Medical research proved the harmful effects of smoking decades ago. Most children and youth know and believe that over time smoking causes cancer and other serious health problems. Fewer students know that harmful effects begin as soon as they start smoking. Teen smokers have smaller lungs and weaker hearts than teen non-smokers. They get sick more often than teens who don't smoke. When smokers catch a cold, they are more likely than non-smokers to have a cough that lasts a long time. They are also more likely than non-smokers to get bronchitis and pneumonia.

More recently, research on the biological effects of alcohol and other drug use has shown that teen substance abuse has long-term effects on the brain. Here is the National Institute on Drug Abuse's explanation of how alcohol, tobacco and other drugs affect brain development.

All drugs of abuse, such as nicotine, cocaine, and marijuana, primarily affect the brain's limbic system. Scientists call this the "reward" system. Normally, the limbic system responds to pleasurable experiences by releasing the neurotransmitter dopamine, which creates feelings of pleasure. Think about how you feel when something good happens- you're praised for something you've done well, or you drink a cold lemonade on a hot day-that's your limbic system at work. Because natural pleasures in our lives are necessary for survival, the limbic system creates an appetite that drives you to seek those things. The first time someone uses a drug of abuse, he or she experiences unnaturally intense feelings of pleasure. The limbic system is flooded with dopamine. The brain starts changing right away as a result of the unnatural flood of neurotransmitters. Because they sense more than enough dopamine, for example, neurons begin to reduce the number of dopamine receptors. Neurons may also make less dopamine. The result is less dopamine in the brain: This is called down regulation. Because some drugs are toxic, some neurons may also die. After enough doses, an addicted teen's limbic system craves the drug as it craves food, water, or friends. Drug craving is made worse because of down regulation. Without a dose of the drug, dopamine levels in the drug abuser's brain are low. The abuser feels flat, lifeless, depressed. Without drugs, an abuser's life seems joyless. Now the abuser needs drugs just to bring dopamine levels up to normal levels. Larger amounts of the drug are needed to create a dopamine flood or high, an effect known as tolerance. By abusing drugs, the addicted teen has changed the way his or her brain works.

Alcohol and other drug use harms young people's brains even if teens do not become addicted. Alcohol and other drugs hijack teens' brain systems at a critical time in their lives. During adolescence, the brain undergoes biological transformations, including losing over half of its neuron connections and developing new connections.

The parts of the brain that change during the teen years control judgment and the brain's "reward system". Alcohol and other drug use disrupt the balance between these brain centers and, as a result, the balance between planned thinking and impulsiveness and self-control and risk-taking. In the short-term, alcohol and other drug abuse



negatively affects students' memories and abilities to learn and causes depression and other mental health problems. Long-term use causes shrinking of the brain and impairs abilities to think and process information. These effects are permanent and continue even after someone stops using alcohol or other drugs.

### **Violence**

The physical effects of violence are obvious: injuries and death. Exposure to violence in their relationships, homes and communities also affects students at different ages in other ways.

#### *Effects on children in grades K-5*

- Sleep problems
- Disruptions in eating
- Difficulty separating from caretakers
- Preoccupation with details of traumatic event
  - Anxiety and aggression
- School difficulties, including problems with attention

#### *Effects on middle and high school students*

- Sleep problems
- Preoccupation with details of traumatic event
  - Hopelessness
  - Anxiety and aggression
  - School difficulties
- Unrealistic sense of power
- Difficulties with relationships

### **Mental Health**

Student Well-Being & Family Resources is not involved in the diagnosis or treatment of mental health problems. We do work to prevent mental health problems through the prevention of substance abuse and violence and to help students who may have emotional problems get assistance and treatment from professionals. Prevention of and intervention for possible mental health problems is important because:

*Many children and youth have emotional problems that early intervention and treatment can keep from becoming serious mental health problems.* The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services reports that mental health problems affect one in every five young people at any given time. An estimated two-thirds of all young people with mental health problems are not getting the help they need.



*Without intervention, mental health problems have serious consequences, including suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15 - 24 year olds and the sixth leading cause of death for five - 15 year olds in the U.S., according to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The rate of suicide for this age group has nearly tripled since 1960, making it the third leading cause of death in adolescents and the second leading cause of death among college age youth. For every teen who takes his or her own life, 100-200 of their peers attempt suicide. Between 500,000 and 1 million young people attempt suicide each year.*

Latinos account for 25% of adolescent suicide deaths, according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Latina adolescents are more likely to attempt suicide than White or African American girls. The National Hispanic Health Alliance has reported that one in three Latina teens attempt suicide compared to one in 10 White adolescent girls. In all other ethnic groups, young men more often attempt and commit suicide; Latina teens are twice as likely to attempt suicide than Latino young men.



### **Get more information...**

*Check out more facts and research on substance abuse and brain development at [teens.drugabuse.gov](http://teens.drugabuse.gov).*

*Find out more about youth violence at [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)*

*Learn more about children's and teen's mental health at [prevention.samhsa.gov](http://prevention.samhsa.gov)*



### **Take time to reflect...**

*This handbook section uses facts and statistics to describe the extent and impact of students' substance abuse, violence, and mental health problems. Our own experiences and those of our loved ones, our cultures, families and beliefs affect how each of us thinks about these issues. Take a few minutes to think about the information presented here in the context of your experiences with and attitudes about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; violence; and mental health. You will have opportunities to explore your thoughts further in facilitated discussions with your supervisor and co-workers.*