

Shelby County Schools Positive Action Program

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Key words: Positive Behavior, Early Intervention Support, At-Risk Population, Alternative Schools Attendance

Funding Sources:

Yearly grant issued by the Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

The Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services allocates Shelby County Schools a grant each year in the amount of \$75,600.00. If the district reaches the contract goals, the amount increases for the next school year. The proposed budget is used for the following goals:

- Staff Professional Development/ Training
- Student materials (testing material, curriculum books, activities, promotions items, snacks, etc.)
- Staff Payroll

Project Description:

The Positive Action Program is dedicated to creating an environment for growth and development of the whole student and to providing the services, resources, and support needed for students to meet major goals or career aspirations. The student assistance program aims to reduce students' behavioral and disciplinary violations and substance use habits while improving school attendance and academic performance.

Staffing Pattern:

Program Director (1)
Lead Social Worker (1)
Special Project Coordinator (1)
School Social Workers (14)
School Psychologist (2)

Population Served:

At-risk, alternative students.

Program Origination:

The Tennessee Prevention Network is a statewide prevention program directed at providing primary prevention services to individuals who have been determined to require treatment for substance use disorder. These students fall into one of the following categories:

Selective: individual or a subgroup of the population whose risk of developing a disorder is significantly higher than average

Indicated: Individual in high-risk environment that has minimal but detectable signs or symptoms foreshadowing disorder or has biological markers indicating predispositions for disorder but do not yet meet diagnostic levels.

Issues Addressed:

- Early prevention support
- School attendance

- Low motivation
- Positive school climate for students
- Social and emotional learning
- Economically Disadvantaged
- Member of a racial/ethnic minority

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

- Increase in the number of student completions of program
- A reduction in the number of students' out-school-suspensions and discipline referrals
- An increase in the number of students who successfully transition from alternative schools back to homeschools
- A reduction in the student dropout rate

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

Of the 250 to 300 students enrolled into the Positive Action Program each year, seventy-five percent (75%) successfully completed the program. Students take a pre-test before starting group sessions and a post-test after completing all lessons. Staff recruit students beginning in August of each school year and complete all groups by the end of school in May. At the end of the year, staff matched pre- and post-test scores of the total number of students enrolled in the program. Shelby County Schools Bright Bytes / Power B-I system tracks out of school suspensions by schools. Staff meet with professional school counselors and administrators weekly to address student attendance.

Project Timeline:

The program begins in the fall of each year. Each August, staff start recruiting students from middle and high schools to enroll in the Positive Action Program. Students and parents attend intake sessions for an overview of the program. Parents then give consent for their child to attend the program.

Students meet in a group for one hour each week for ten weeks. Selective students are asked to write a Success Story at the end of the ten weeks. Regular programming ends in May of each school year. Upon completion of the program, several students transition back to homeschool or graduate. The program continues at several schools during summer break.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, Early Intervention Program:

The Positive Action Program utilizes the Positive Action Curriculum for middle and high school students in grades six through twelve. The Positive Action Program is a comprehensive, coherent program that addresses multiple components and student-related environments, including school, family, and community. The Positive Action Program focuses on individual, classroom, and the school system to help improve academic performance, social and emotional performance and attendance and to decrease student dropout rates.

Group Sessions are 45-60 minutes in duration: The Positive Action Program lessons are grade-band specific, and the lesson breakdown is as follow: 6th grade – 24 lessons, 7th grades - 22 lessons, 8th grade – 24 lessons, and 9th – 12th grade – 32 lessons.

Each quarter, Shelby County Schools Mental Health Center submits at least two success stories from students who completed the program to the state.

Current Status of Project:

The Positive Action Program is currently in its fourth year of full implementation under the new director. Data is collected each quarter and used to measure the program success. The program's grant allocations and enrollment increase each year.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

I serve as the Special Project Coordinator (SPC) at the SCS MHC site. As a SPC my role is to assist the Director and Lead Social Worker. I manage the grant, collect all student data and provide monthly reports to the state of Tennessee and district level staff. In addition, I submit student attendance and program completion data on a weekly basis.

Several years ago, the department was searching for positive interventions to increase motivation and provide alternative ways for students in high-risk environments. The Positive Action Program is an option for students to participate in the schools and local community and is used to motivate and increase efficacy by using the tools learned from the program in their everyday life.

Lessons Learned:

The program staff learned a great deal from participating in the project. Before group sessions begin, each student takes a pre-test and at the end of group sessions students take a post-test. The tests are mailed to our sponsor for yearly reports. Per the data summary report, student attendance noticeably improved throughout the academic year. We believe that there is a strong correlation between improved academic success and student attendance rate.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the project:

I believe the Positive Action Program is a way to help improve the culture of the program. As a SPC, any time the district can find ways to improve the academic success of our students. we can create a positive climate of success. We encouraged the participation with group activities and by planning fun student driving events.