

*The ASSIST approach is a strategy we developed that addresses three critical areas primarily presenting in challenged students. These issues threaten school success, graduation rates, and include:*

- Attendance (Truancy)
- Behavior (Disciplinary Referrals, Bullying, Fights, Class Disruptions, etc.)
- Academic Performance (GPA)

ASSIST provides a rapid response and intervention to students identified by school administrators in need of assistance in the 3 identified areas above. It provides an integrated multi-service approach of proven evidence-based programs to appropriate students, based upon tailored service plans that are the result of individualized student assessments.

This wraparound approach provides a continuum of services for schools and students that is modeled upon a paradigm of nationally recognized evidence and research based programs proven to have achieved dramatic results in improving attendance, grade point averages, and behavior in our schools.

### **Youth Diversion Programs (YDP)**

*These programs seek to keep kids in school by diverting youth from the criminal/juvenile justice system, PINS (Persons In Need of Supervision), Pre-PINS, or placement. In many instances, youth who commit an illegal or delinquent act face actions that may result in removal from school and potentially face placement in detention and/or other facilities. These actions interrupt the school process and actually decrease the students chance of future success.*

### **PEER MEDIATION**

This program is designed to divert youth from escalating volatile situations that have the potential to result in a suspension or an arrest. The program identifies youth who may already have been involved in fights, or are currently involved in disagreements that may end up in a physical altercation, and encourages them to voluntarily participate in a peer mediation program. The student peers are trained, monitored and assisted by members of our staff, who themselves have been trained in running peer mediation programs. The goals of all components of Youth Diversion are to reduce youth crime, juvenile delinquency, and present an alternative to arrest in appropriate circumstances.

### **INITIAL RESPONSE TEAM (IRT) FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING**

The goal of the IRT model is to divert potential Persons in Need of Supervision and Juvenile Delinquency (PINS/JD) petitions in family court through early school-based intervention. Using the evidence-based practice of Family Group Conferencing, this process allows intervention involving a community/team approach to incorrigibility, truancy and juvenile offenses by developing an intervention/restitution plan outside of the courtroom and is agreed upon by all parties involved. When available, partners include probation and the School Resources Offices. In addition, our coordinates meetings, researches current services that may be offered, and facilitates communication and information sharing between administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, and families. Based on the nature of a referral, and the student's attendance, report card and discipline reports, a meeting with the student is conducted and appropriate services are identified. Team members, the student and their family then help create a formal contract, with established goals for the student to improve his/her behavior and succeed in school, that all are asked to sign. Progress is tracked on a weekly basis.

### **RESULTS-TO-DATE INCLUDE:**

- 40% reduction in Unexcused absences at Strough Middle Schools IRT-Family Conferencing program
- 57% of all youth in Sauquoit CSD's IRT program improved or had "0" missed days after program involvement
- 51% reduction in Office Discipline Referrals (ODR's) for all youth in Whitesboro CSD's IRT Program

- 75% of all youth in Westmoreland CSD's IRT program improved or maintained their unexcused absences
- 66% of all youth in BOCES Alternative Education improved the number of classes they are passing
- 54% of all youth in Strough Middle Schools IRT program improved their GPA's
- 85% of all youth in Sauquoit CSD's IRT program improved their In-School Suspension (ISS)
- 92% of all youth in Whitesboro CSD's IRT program improved their Out of School Suspensions (OSS)
- 75% reduction in both ISS and OSS in Westmoreland CSD's IRT program with 89% improving their # of ISS's
- County wide there has been a 19% reduction in the number of Persons in Need or Supervision (PINS) in the schools with IRT over the past three years. During that same time, there has been only a 5% reduction in schools without IRT.

### The Arrest Diversion Program

The Arrest Diversion Program seeks to keep kids in school by diverting youth aged 10 - 17 from the criminal/juvenile justice system when they commit non-serious illegal acts upon school grounds. In many instances, when youth commit an illegal act, they face action that results in being removed from school and potentially facing placement in detention and/or other facilities. Numerous studies have shown that removing a child from a home setting and interrupting the education process is one of the most expensive and least effective solutions. County, state and federal estimates run the gamut of \$166,000 to \$260,000 per child for placement up to a year. This program attempts to use the concepts of Family Group Conferencing in which youth are held accountable for their actions through the principles of restorative justice, instead of being charged with a crime. The student also receives support services such as mentoring, tutoring, anger management etc., that seek to enhance protective factors while attempting to mitigate any at-risk factors present.

The Arrest Diversion Program is a collaborative effort between our agency, the Utica City School District, the City of Utica, and the Utica Police Department. The program has an OJJDP peer mediation model component called Peers Making Peace. This component identifies youth who may already have been involved in fights, or are currently involved in disagreements that may end up in a physical altercation, and encourages them to voluntarily participate in a peer mediation program. The student peers are trained, monitored and assisted by members of our staff, who have been trained in running peer mediation programs. The goals of both this program components are to reduce youth crime, juvenile delinquency, and present an alternative to arrest in appropriate circumstances.

Past program success includes improvement of the enrolled students in the following areas:

- 60% Attendance Improvement – 60% of youth enrolled in the program improved or maintained their attendance after entering the program, as compared to their performance prior to program enrollment.
- 86% Behavior Improvement – 86% of youth enrolled in the program improved or maintained their behavior after entering the program, as compared to their performance prior to program enrollment. Behavior improvement is measured by the reduction in Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODR).
- 51% Improvement in Academic Performance - 51% of youth enrolled in the program improved or maintained their Grade Point Averages (GPA's) after entering the program, as compared to their performance prior to program enrollment.
- Over 100 Kids Diverted from Arrest –
- 49% Reduction in School Based Arrests – during the first year of implementation, school based arrests on the secondary campuses of the Utica City School District decreased 49%.