

February 15, 2005, School Board Meeting Presentation
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Good evening Dr. Otto, President King and members of the board. This year the Substance Abuse Specialists jobs have encompassed a huge variety of responsibilities on each campus and throughout the district. Tonight I will highlight the broad scope of our positions. We are at our campuses each day to provide education, prevention, and intervention strategies to students who may be at risk for Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drugs. The Substance Abuse Specialists and Rick Hooker, Coordinator of Safe and Drug Free Schools, work together to coordinate staff trainings, develop education and prevention programs and provide drug and alcohol resources. In addition, we are also available to speak with parents, groups and other organizations that are concerned about students at risk for TAOD.

Recently, our team has been asked to present staff education and awareness trainings at each high school campus. The purpose of these trainings is to help teachers and staff identify the early warning signs of drug and alcohol use and abuse. We developed a series of standardized forms, which are placed on the shared drive at each campus so they are easily accessible to all personnel. We have received positive feedback from our staffs and administrators regarding these trainings. We have also expanded our presentations to include Middle Schools campuses and Special Programs Center.

Each day we try to meet with students who may be at risk for TAOD. Our goal is to be able to talk with them, communicate with parents, and provide resources when necessary. During our meetings with students, we are always trying to help students recognize the dangers of TAOD. In some cases we are not aware of the student being at risk until after a violation has occurred. At that point, parents, administrators, school counselors or teachers will contact us to meet with the student as soon as possible.

In an effort to really make a difference in our school community we have realized that education and prevention needs to begin very early. For example, in October we launched a awareness and education campaign during Red Ribbon Week. We visited and presented to over 20 Elementary Schools in our district. We were able to share, learn and provide leadership skills to 4th and 5th graders. In addition, we were able to get a glimpse of the knowledge base they had related to TAOD. As research suggests, starting prevention education at a young age is critical.

In addition to Elementary Schools, we have presented to several Middle School Health Classes. We discussed the ways TAOD affect relationships. The students were able to participate in a great discussion about the ways they have seen how TAOD can damage friendships, families and other relationships. We are continuing to present in Middle School Classes throughout this semester.

In the high schools we have presented to Psychology Classes, PAL's classes, Health classes and Athletics. We discussed the physiological and psychological effects drugs have on the body. The students engaged in great conversations and were very knowledgeable about this topic.

The Substance Abuse Specialists, also known as the SAS staff, are in constant communication with campus administrators, counselors, teachers and parents. We make ourselves available to attend campus management meetings, meetings with parents and attend truancy hearings. The role of advocate is another hat we wear. It is our goal to be an advocate for students and parents during uncertain times. As you can imagine, it can be very upsetting to receive a call from a school official informing you that your child was found with drugs or is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The Substance Abuse Specialist tries to facilitate the appropriate referrals for the student and their family. In addition, we are also available to meet with the student and provide ongoing support during the school day. Furthermore, we are there to provide support when a student transitions back to their home school from Special Programs Center or coming back from inpatient treatment.

Aside from our roles as Substance Abuse Specialists, we are always looking for opportunities to reach as many students as possible. Some ways we have done this include serving as mentors for the School Aged Parent Program. We attend monthly group meetings as well as spend individual time with our school-aged parents on their high school campus. Another way, we, as individuals try to provide positive relationships and interactions with students is being involved with extracurricular activities, including the basketball team, stomp team and a bowling team. These opportunities provide students with positive role models and a way to be involved with their school in a productive way.

Another way that we are trying to stay in touch with the needs of our students and schools is by taking a broader look at what is happening in our community. We are a part of a countywide group focused on identifying the latest drug trends, reports of overdoses and to know what drug issues our community is facing. This group is called the Collin County Substance Abuse Coalition and consists of many different people including Directors of Treatment Centers, mental health

professionals, police officers, Drug Enforcement Administration, juvenile probation counselors, nurses, hospital administrators and staff members from Allen, Frisco and McKinney ISD. The Substance Abuse Specialists attend monthly meetings where these and other relevant topics are discussed.

Our team is always looking for opportunities to expand our knowledge base in an effort to keep up with the quickly changing drug and alcohol culture. We have attended drug and alcohol trainings presented to PISD officials through the Plano Police Department, Region 10, and the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. The trainings give us the ability to stay abreast of the latest changes and to take this information back to our school campuses so that our staff and administrators stay informed.

We thank you for this opportunity to share what we do each day. It is our hope that by keeping the lines of communication open on the topic of substance abuse we will have a positive impact on students, staff, and parents and contribute to Plano Independent School Districts commitment to excellence.