

# *Jasper Place STAR Program*

*★Strength*

*★Tolerance*

*★Attitude*

*★Resilience*

*STAR is one of 32 pilot projects funded by Alberta Health and Wellness. It is an integrated, school-based mental health promotion and prevention program, which allows service providers to work on-site with the students. It is led by Alberta Health Services in partnership with Alberta Education, health regions and other partners and community agencies.*

# *Our Vision*

*To promote mental and physical health in students by providing a circle of support in a safe and caring environment*

# *Our Goal*

*The goal of this program is to increase the coping behaviors, knowledge and skills for children who are considered to be at risk to enable them to make better choices and adopt behaviors to self protect their mental and physical health. Ultimately, we want to build relationships between students, educators and support agencies and be proactive in our approach to assisting students in life long skills. We want to create a sense of belonging at the school so that the students want to be there.*

# Target Population

*The target population is a group of 50 grade 10 students who are considered to be at risk based on one or more of the following criteria:*

- *Attendance issues*
- *Behavior conduct extremes- anger, substance abuse, aggression, avoidance, etc.*
- *Achievement concerns- failing coursework*
- *Social/emotional issues- self mutilation, eating disorders, delusions, depression etc.*

# *The services provided include:*

- *ongoing interaction with a youth success coach and/or aboriginal commitment coach*
- *access to an addictions counsellor*
- *access to a mental health therapist and/or school counsellor*
- *educational presentations and discussions with a public health nurse*
- *educational information on what services are available to provide*
- *regular visits by an elder*
- *monitoring of student courses and assistance with any subject in which they are experiencing difficulty*
- *modular coursework for those who cannot be in a classroom at any point, with the assumption they will return to regular classes*

# *The projected outcomes are:*

- *an increase in student attendance*
- *parents and students report easier access to services*
- *increase capacity of school and service-providers to meet student needs*
- *an increase in student awareness of healthy behaviors and choices*
- *an increase in number of students successfully completing grade level coursework*
- *service providers report improved ability for early intervention within the school setting*
- *a decrease in behavior extremes*
- *students are able to set and review goals*
- *students report a sense of belonging and feeling of safety and comfort within the school*
- *aboriginal students report increased cultural connections*
- *students fulfill graduation requirements by the end of the 3 year project*

*The partners involved in the project  
are:*

- *Alberta Health Services*
- *Alberta Education*
- *Big Brothers Big Sisters*
- *Child & Family Services*
- *Edmonton Police Service*
- *Edmonton Public School Board*
- *Kids Up Front*
- *The Family Centre*

# *Our On-Site Team*

- *Coordinator: Nancy Metcalfe*
- *Success Coaches: Dana Chimera, Matthew Oosterhuis*
- *Aboriginal Commitment Coach: Maria Dyck*
- *Mental Health Therapist: Michelle Brandt*
- *AADAC Addictions Counsellor: Michelle Meadows-Olsson*

# *The Coaches: Roles and Responsibilities*

- *dialogue with youth*
- *track attendance*
- *connect students with services inside and outside of the school*
- *communicate with parents*
- *communicate with teachers*
- *provide a place for students to connect, feel welcome and access resources to develop relations that are positive and productive*
- *actively set goals with youth*
- *advocate for youth*
- *coordinate career inquiries*
- *provide post secondary explorations*
- *assist youth to develop conflict management skills*
- *anger management program implementation*
- *help youth to learn time management skills*
- *assist students in following through with academic, personal and social commitments*

# *Aboriginal Commitment Coach- Roles and Responsibilities*

- *provides Aboriginal awareness through connections to organizations and events*
- *researches opportunities and resources that are available for Aboriginal youth*
- *offers talking circles*
- *organizes activities to promote self expression*

# *Mental Health Therapist:*

- *consultation and brief assessment regarding mental health issues*
- *consultation to the team through case conferences*
- *short term solution focused intervention*
- *information and referrals to appropriate services*

# *AADAC Addictions Counsellor:*

- *counselling to youth*
- *consultation with the STAR team through case conferences*
- *information sessions to youth, parents and staff*

# Successes

- *increased daily intervention with at-risk students*
- *increased teacher communication with STAR youth*
- *increased parental contact with the school*
- *decreased emotional outbursts*
- *decreased behavioral incidents and extremes*
- *improved attendance*
- *improved marks/achievement*
- *improved course completion*

# Challenges

- *substance abuse*
- *attendance*
- *transience*

# Ongoing Plan

- *continue to increase parent and teacher contact*
- *continue to monitor attendance & implement new strategies*
- *continue to educate on substance abuse*
- *more specific post secondary research- both employment and education*
- *continue to educate on healthy behaviors*
- *more education on service providers youth can contact on their own (for when they have left school)*

# Quotes from Students

- *"While I've been in the STAR program, my coach, Matt, has helped me with a lot of my anger and confusion and most important thing of all, my grades so I have a lot to thank the STAR program for."*
- *"It helps keep me focused on my academics and homework."*
- *"The program provides me with help in my work and when I have personal problems."*
- *"The program helped me overcome my fear of asking for help."*
- *"The program helped improve my attendance."*
- *"There are good people to talk to at anytime of the day."*
- *"There are helpers there for all your questions."*
- *"There is good advice."*
- *."When I am upset I come and talk to Matt and Matt calms me down. Then I don't go into class all upset. I don't know what I would do some days if I didn't have Matt to talk to."*
- *"If it were not for the STAR Program, I most likely would have already dropped out of school."*

# Quotes from Staff

- *"Students have described the STAR room as non-threatening and supportive."*
- *One of the Jasper Place counsellors commented that, despite the increase in our grade 10 enrollment this year, she has seen a decrease in the number of grade 10s the counselling department is seeing. She attributes this to the STAR program.*
- *From Jasper Place administrator: There are far fewer referrals of STAR students for discipline to the office because of the intervention of the coaches. "With the help of the coaches, the students are building problem solving skills and abilities." The students have additional meaningful adults in their lives. They are completing coursework even if they get removed from class for behavioral issues.*
- *"It's nice to see a new program that yields big results."*

# Quotes from Parents

- *"I am so happy. My daughter is coming to school now. Thank goodness for this program. She was so afraid before because there were so many students. Now she has a place to go where she is comfortable."*
- *"My son is doing so much better. I don't have any real concerns right now."*
- *"My daughter loves this school. She is doing very well."*
- *"My daughter is doing so much better this year. Last year she was teased constantly. This year there is no teasing."*

*Our  
Aboriginal  
Students*

## *The STAR room is a place where they:*

- *feel comfortable*
- *feel safe*
- *can complete their work*
- *can develop their artistic talents*
- *can pursue cultural connections*
- *help and support each other*
- *can take risks*

## *The STAR program has helped them:*

- *develop problem solving skills*
- *develop an awareness of substance abuse*
- *care about learning*
- *make commitments to school*
- *make commitments to athletics*
- *build relationships*

*Overall, our aboriginal students have:*

- *improved attendance*
- *increased course completion*
- *developed a sense of support, acceptance and belonging*