

## **A School Guideline for Making Effective Referrals to Mental Health Services**

Below is a method of making referrals that increase the likelihood of a successful hand-off from a school to a mental health provider for a youth's mental health or crisis evaluation. In following these suggestions, the school increases the level of cooperation in keeping the student safe. It involves:

1. Involving the student in the referral.
2. Involving the parents in the referral.

These techniques help make an effective referral that will be acceptable or appropriate to the person making the referral, the person or agency receiving the referral, and ensure an increased partnership between the parents, the students, and the school.

### **Step 1. Clarify the Problem**

It is common for referrals to be made before the nature of the problem has been clarified. This may result in inappropriate referrals that create a negative experience for the student and the referral source and can jeopardize a positive outcome for an initial appointment and continued involvement of students and parents. By taking the time to listen and clarify the concerns the school can accomplish obtaining the information needed to support a correct referral.

### **Step 2. Involve the Student and the Parents**

By having the problems clarified you can then present objective evidence to support your concerns. Ask the parents their opinions and address any reluctance. Ignoring the parents' concerns may fracture the school/parent relationship.

**Fill out the risk screening tool, share it with the youth and parents and ask if you can share it with the mental health or crisis provider for their risk assessment. It is best to use an evidence-based screening tool and add any information you feel is helpful (such as what brought the youth to your attention and other pertinent information such as the reason for your referral – Suicide Attempt, Suicide Threat, Suicide Ideation, Threat of Violence). Fax a copy of the referral form to Scranton Counseling Center (fax number is at the top of the form).**