

2015 National Exemplary Awards for
Innovative Substance Abuse Prevention Programs, Practices and Policies
APPLICATION COVER SHEET
(INCLUDE WITH APPLICATION)

1. Has this intervention been submitted for an Exemplary Award in previous years? [Circle one]

Yes No

2. What is the primary target for this program, practice or policy? [Circle one]

Individual School-Based Family/Parent Peer/Group
Workplace Environmental/Community-Based Other

If Other, explain: _____

PROGRAM INFORMATION

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I have reviewed the information contained in this application and certify that it is accurate, to the best of my knowledge.



Program Director Signature

9.2.15

Date

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Nominating Agency Signature

9.2.15

Date

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ABSTRACT

In August 2012, the Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) in coordination with Ventura County Behavioral Health Alcohol and Drug Programs, developed and implemented the BreakThrough Student Assistance Program (SAP), an alcohol and other drug (AOD) and violence reduction-focused program that provides an individualized service plan designed to offer an alternative to suspension and expulsion for all middle and high school students. The BreakThrough Program assists students and their families to successfully navigate the school system by honoring confidentiality and offering personalized academic supports and socio-emotional resources. Referrals to BreakThrough may be mandatory or voluntary. If a student attending CVUSD was suspended for alcohol, tobacco, drug use and/or violence, district policy stipulates that the student must be referred to BreakThrough. Voluntary program referrals can also be made by CVUSD administrators or staff, parents, and other concerned individuals who believe the student will benefit from the services provided.

BreakThrough is designed to meet the higher level of risk for students with personal challenges, using a one-person-at-a-time approach. Given the indicated population's high risk for substance abuse, the Brief Risk Reduction Interview and Intervention Model (BRRIM), an evidence-based prevention practice, is used to connect students and families with services designed to meet their unique needs and challenges. Program evaluation statistics indicate strong evidence of positive outcomes aligned with two Center for Substance Abuse Prevention strategies: 1) Problem Identification and Referral, 2) Education. This means there is a high likelihood that program elements will lead to anticipated outcomes such as reduced substance abuse and increasing protective factors. It is an umbrella program in that it offers prevention, identification, screening, intervention and support strategies within a school district and in collaboration with a broad network of collaborative partners. The BRRIM Interview, a 90-minute asset-based interview, is a nuanced screening tool at the center of the BreakThrough process. Core components include the Family Conference, the Family Plan (a prevention services agreement), education and brief intervention counseling, and referral to school and community resources. Using evidence-based practices including Motivational Interviewing, participants are linked to services that reduce AOD use and improve academic outcomes.

Key findings and accomplishments of BreakThrough show that over the past three school years (2013-14, 2014-15), a total of 500 students and their families completed BreakThrough Family Conferences. The average number of discipline incidents decreased significantly after students completed the BreakThrough program; 96% of mandatory participants were never cited a second time for the same or behavior. Voluntary and anonymous student surveys (N=42) administered during the 2014-15 school year reflect that 95% reported the program was helpful; voluntary and anonymous parent surveys (N=36) reported 100%. Parents are referred to and complete evidence-based parenting programs such as Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) through Interface Family and Children Services and the Parent Project delivered through our school district's School Resource Officers. The BreakThrough staff has collaborated with other community prevention providers to offer Reality Parties and Social Change events designed to provide participants opportunities to learn about the Social Host Ordinance and to examine the social norms pertaining to underage drinking and drug use. In 2014, the California School Boards Association (CSBA) honored the CVUSD BreakThrough program with the Golden Bell Award. The Golden Bell Award signifies exemplary programs that highlight best practices to support effective governance, teaching and student learning.

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

A. Philosophy

Mission Statement/Program Rationale: BreakThrough helps students and their families successfully navigate the school system by honoring confidentiality and offering personalized academic supports and socio-emotional resources. The mission statement of the Conejo Valley Unified School District is to provide a quality education in an environment where “Every Child Matters.” The BreakThrough program embodies the district’s mission by working with one family at a time to support the academic and personal achievement of each student. BreakThrough offers a prevention, identification, screening, intervention, and support strategies within a school, often in collaboration with a community support network. This approach ensures that a collaborative prevention model can be a successful approach to reducing the incidence of AOD use among youth and reduce suspensions. The BreakThrough program helps families to identify AOD concerns, and develop a prevention plan for the student and family to address high risk use behaviors. Staff utilizes Ken Winter’s Brief Intervention protocol as well as the Community Intervention Insight Curriculum and actively partners with Ventura County Alcohol and Drug Programs, Youth Programs and Services through AOD referrals.

Philosophy/Conceptual Framework: *Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) evolved from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) model of the 1960s–1970s. SAPs at first only addressed substance abuse in students, but soon expanded to help address a wide range of issues that impede adolescent academic achievement. As Gary Anderson writes in the first published model for Student Assistance Programs, “Any student assistance program effort demonstrates that a school system recognizes, first, that such problems do plague students and, second, that a responsible system of adults must respond and help.” – California Department of Education*

Given the indicated population’s high risk for substance abuse, the BreakThrough SAP is designed to meet the higher level of risk using a one-person-at-a-time approach. The program draws on the evidence-based practices of Screening and Brief Intervention, Motivational Interviewing, Risk and Protective Factors, Stages of Change, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Applications. Using evidence-based prevention practices to connect students and families with services designed to meet their unique needs and challenges creates an increased likelihood that program elements will lead to anticipated outcomes such as preventing or reducing substance abuse and increasing protective factors. According to Redleaf Resources, effective SAPs, “offer a cost-effective, coordinated, and comprehensive prevention system that staff support, agencies join, and districts sustain.” Redleaf Resources believes that a centralized SAP infrastructure creates a portal between public education and prevention partners in every system.

What distinguishes the approach to Student Assistance Programs is that it turns every referral into an opportunity for highly trained district staff to meet with and create relationships with the student’s family. BreakThrough staff identifies barriers to achievement encountered by individual students. This informs the prevention plan and appraises school personnel about critical and timely changes that are necessary to benefit all SAP participants. This model sustains because it begins with listening carefully to the first prevention partner – the student and his family – using what we call a *One Student/One Family at a Time* approach.

To implement this approach, BreakThrough uses the Brief Risk Reduction Interview and Intervention Model (BRRIM) as an introduction to BreakThrough SAP process. The Brief Risk Reduction Interview & Intervention Model (BRRIM), has been used successfully in California for over 20 years as an early intervention model for youth starting to struggle with behavioral issues that include alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other drugs, violence and other barriers to learning.

“No Illegal or High-Risk Use” Message: During the 2012-13 school year, the CVUSD School Board created Board Policy (5131.6), which stipulates that mandatory referrals accompany AOD, Tobacco/E-Cigarettes and/or violence-related suspensions. The policy establishes equal access to evidence-based prevention for every middle school and high school student, encourages staff to refer any student whose behavior concerns them, and mandates services for students who receive serious suspensions for alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs and violence. The infrastructure is a centralized team led by an AOD-trained school counselor who works collaboratively with district staff and community agencies. Concern-based referrals by parents, staff, or peers are encouraged. The initial engagement provides an individualized interview and plan development so each individual student and family has a customized plan based on their strengths, needs, priorities. Each plan links to every available and appropriate school and community resource. Confidential data is used to evaluate the effectiveness of every aspect of the program, identify trends across the district, and help the team to respond to gaps in service or new needs.

B. Needs Assessment

Data for Needs Assessment: In 2012, the CVUSD Board of Education was motivated to investigate the district’s ability and capacity to provide a Student Assistance Program to the constituents in the district. There continues to be strong correlation between AOD use and academic problems. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2009 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* indicated that approximately 19% of students aged 12-17 with average grades of ‘D’ or lower reported using marijuana over the past 30 days. According to the *13th Biennial California Student Survey 2009-10: Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Use Among Students – Grades 7, 9, and 11*, youth reported relatively stable access to alcohol, increases in the use of marijuana and unchanged overall AOD use. In *Marijuana in Ventura County: A Gateway for Discussion, Second Edition*, Ventura County Sheriff’s Office (VCSO) reports that marijuana-related arrests for juveniles (under 18) doubled from 139 in 2005 to 273 in 2010.

The Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) Department in its *Prevention Strategic Plan: 2010-2015*, cited several studies focusing on AOD behaviors reported by underage youth in Ventura County:

- Underage drinking is perceived as normative behavior, with students reporting drinking on school campuses, including in classrooms
- Binge drinking among 18-20 year olds was higher than any other group within a 30-day period
- Law enforcement survey findings indicated that underage drinking occurred in 70% of all disruptive party calls in a 12-month period
- Place of Last Drink (POLD) analysis indicated that, when compared to any other age group, 18-20 year olds were over twice as likely to indicate using drugs on the day of their arrest

According to the *Youth Substance Abuse Survey (2010)*, conducted by the VCBH Alcohol and Drug Programs:

- 93% of youth in substance abuse programs reported lifetime use of marijuana
- 68% indicated using drugs and drinking within the past 30 days
- 24% reported lifetime exposure to impaired driving
- 29-46% reported problems with school work or missing school
- 56% reported problems with police
- Females reported significantly higher (20%) AOD risk behaviors and resulting problems

These statistics were reflected in high numbers of CVUSD AOD suspensions and expulsions. Due to these factors the CVUSD Board of Education approved an agreement with Ventura County Behavioral Health and instituted a Board Policy stipulating that all students suspended for alcohol, tobacco, other drugs or violence are mandated to attend BreakThrough.

Data Analysis: Analysis conducted by Redleaf Resources identified three key strengths: 1) visionary leaders, 2) readiness to learn, and 3) willingness to adopt the policies and procedure changes needed to implement this SAP model. CVUSD utilizes a tiered, Response-to-Intervention approach similar in intent and structure to the VCBH use of the Institute of Medicine's three prevention populations: "Universal" prevention for all students, group supports for "Selected" vulnerable populations, and individualized or "Indicated" services those at higher risk. This analysis revealed that prevention services are now in place to meet the needs of "Universal" and "Selected" populations. Consequently, the BreakThrough Program is positioned to address AOD root causes and make appropriate referrals for targeted prevention populations.

The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) gives school districts the opportunity to support school improvement efforts through self-reported student data on level of substance use, violence, and crime-related behavior. CHKS data indicate that alcohol and drug use is problematic among high school youth in Ventura County. Looking at district-level CHKS data, the BreakThrough program provides a vehicle for a local school district (CVUSD) and the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) to work collaboratively to educate students and their families about prevention.

Downward trends of AOD use have been evidenced in CHKS data over the past eight years. However, recently published CHKS data (2014) specific to Ventura County indicate the following:

- 34% of 9th graders and 55% of 11th graders report lifetime alcohol use
- 32% of 11th graders report alcohol use during the past 30 days
- 11% of 9th graders and 20% of 11th graders report binge drinking during the past 30 days
- 24% of 9th graders and 42% of 11th graders report lifetime marijuana use
- 14% of 9th graders and 23% of 11th graders report marijuana use the past 30 days
- 5% of 11th graders report lifetime use of heroin (slightly higher than the state average)
- 13% of 9th graders and 20% of 11th graders report illegal lifetime use of prescription painkillers
- 58% of 9th graders and 71% of 11th graders report 'Fairly Easy' and 'Very Easy' access to alcohol
- 54% of 9th graders and 71% of 11th graders report 'Fairly Easy' and 'Very Easy' access to marijuana

- 19% of BreakThrough students report binge drinking during the past 30 days
- 46% of BreakThrough students report using marijuana during the past 30 days

Short- and Long-term Planning Processes: Tools and systems are in place to address outcome evaluation. In addition to recently implemented pre- and post-survey data, BreakThrough staff is required to enter and submit certain information on a monthly basis, via the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), California Outcome Measurement Service for Prevention (CalOMS) and Prevention Services contract provider monthly reports. Several of the items being collected internally (i.e., participant information, referrals to the program) are included in the required reported systems. BreakThrough has a designated staff person who maintains the various records for the different reporting purposes.

Internal Data Being Collected	Required Reporting Systems Used/Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRRIIM Participation Log: Tracks BreakThrough participant information, BreakThrough and CVUSD ID numbers, referral numbers, referral reason, services provided • Calendar for planning and tracking BRRIIMs, Insight follow-up sessions, exit interviews • Monitoring of return to program statistics • Family Conference and program attributes • Pre-survey student / parent for baseline data • Post-survey student / parent success attribute ratings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CalOMs: includes number of referrals, participants served, location and duration of program, ethnicity and other demographics of participants • VCBH Monthly Report Documentation (per contractual requirement): narrative reports and supporting documentation regarding program objectives and related activities • California Healthy Schools Survey (CHKS), every two years

In addition to reviewing existing data collection tools, the evaluation team asked key participants which program indicators would be most important to document and track to measure change over time. As indicators of programmatic success, the following have been identified by all stakeholders as being both present in the BreakThrough program as well as desired outcomes:

- Return-to-program: To demonstrate program effectiveness, “return to program,” (subsequent suspension-based referrals), will decrease, indicating that program participants are not repeating the behaviors that placed them in the program in the first place. For example, during the 2014-15 school year, only five students ‘returned to program’, indicating overwhelming success.
- School attendance: If BreakThrough is having the desired impact on participants, school attendance rates should increase among those students who have participated in the program.
- Suspensions and expulsions: Over time, the number of suspensions and expulsions in identified areas (alcohol, drugs, and violence) are expected to decrease proportionally as effective prevention services are provided early for students at risk.

Program Evaluation of Target Population Representation: Initial data collection strategies primarily consisted of document reviews, a comprehensive site visit, key stakeholder interviews, and summary data provided by staff. In April 2013, during the initial phases of data collection, EvalCorp staff conducted a day-long program site visit to learn about the various BreakThrough components, collect and review program documentation, examine current program data collection activities, and conduct informational interviews with program staff. Additional communications regarding program implementation between the evaluation team and program staff continued through June 2015 to include program evaluators from the Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) and Bach Harrison, Survey Research and Evaluation Services.

C. Populations Served

BreakThrough Target Population: BreakThrough is designed to serve the CVUSD student population across genders and ethnicities/races in grades 6 - 12. Program participants range from age 11 to 19. All identification data collected through the BreakThrough program is confidential. Just over 50% of students referred to BreakThrough identified themselves as White, about 33% identified themselves as Hispanic, and about a 25% identified themselves as Spanish-speaking. These data indicators are representative of the district demographics. During surveys administered during the 2014-15 school year 90% of participants fell within the range of 13-17 years old. Eighty-three percent identified as White (includes those who are ethnically Hispanic). This population span is consistent with CHKS respondents most likely to exhibit risk behaviors.

Target Population Recruitment / Retention: BreakThrough program referrals can be mandatory or voluntary. If a student attending the CVUSD is suspended for alcohol, tobacco, drug use and/or violence, district policy stipulates that the student must be referred to BreakThrough. Additionally, voluntary program referrals can be made by CVUSD administrators or staff, parents, and other concerned individuals who believe the student exhibits AOD risk behaviors. The goal for the first year of BreakThrough was to serve 75 students. During the program's first three years, a total of 465 students were served. As the program has developed BreakThrough staff has incorporated service to foster youth and homeless, and socioeconomic disadvantaged students. These populations were identified through the referral process but also have since become targeted populations in CVUSD's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). School administrators articulate consequences for those who choose not to participate as well as for those who commit a second offense for the aforementioned Education Code violations. To better address the needs of all families, the CVUSD Board of Education and district administration hired a bilingual office manager and counselor. Additionally, the BreakThrough office was relocated to a newly refurbished neutral and confidential location where all students, including diverse, gifted and at-risk learners, are able to receive services.

Staff Training: BreakThrough staff has received training from law enforcement, university faculty, county behavioral health and the Ventura County Office of Education. All support staff, including interns have had access to training from NAMI, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, LGBQ Cultural Competency, Brief Intervention and Solution-Focused Brief Counseling, and Drug Impairment Training for Education Professionals. BreakThrough personnel attended every AOD summit and recovery conference presented by our local county partners of VCBH and the Ventura County Office of Education. The program coordinator completed the one week Betty Ford Institute Medical Education Family Program at the Betty Ford Center. These professional development opportunities have given program

facilitators key training to assist the selected vulnerable populations targeted in our district's LCAP goals. Ongoing trainings include a systematic and strategic review and BRRIM cases and outcomes. The discussions and feedback address cultural issues, environmental barriers and assets, consideration of family patterns.

Ensuring Cultural Competency: BreakThrough staff members, through ongoing and broad training, are attuned to students living in a culture of risk. Consequently, staff takes utmost care to engage and protect students, families and the confidential nature of these interactions. In forming trusting relationships, BreakThrough staff discovers a wide range of potential barriers to academic and socioemotional success. During the first year, it became apparent that there was a need for Spanish-speaking office staff and a Spanish-speaking counselor in the BreakThrough program. During the second year of implementation, CVUSD hired a half-time bilingual counselor and a Spanish-speaking office manager. These changes have made a significant positive impact and are noted positively in parent survey data. Multi-cultural and multi-lingual environment reflects the importance of culturally sensitive professional practices. Program materials, surveys and face-to-face service delivery are available to all families. BreakThrough personnel demonstrate sensitivity to atypical family constructs and accompanying dynamics.

D. Building Capacity

Addressing Strategic Prevention: The BreakThrough program provides students with positive alternatives to discipline while addressing the root causes of AOD abuse. To leverage existing district priorities, the tiered Response-to-Intervention model is similar in intent and structure to VCBH use of the Institute of Medicine's three prevention populations: "Universal" prevention for all students, group supports for "Selected" vulnerable populations, and individualized or "Indicated" services those at higher risk. The district used the centralized SAP structure and flow of services to coordinate or "bridge" the gaps between their existing student support services.

VCBH meets their goals for increasing access to high risk youth and families, supporting an Indicated Prevention strategy that reduces the number of people who may need treatment, and bridges the Prevention Providers to the district to maximize their efforts. CVUSD meets their goals by providing district-wide systematic response to referred students and families that ensures that they receive evidence-based prevention that treats their concerns with care and confidentiality. The BreakThrough program is currently embedded within CVUSD's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

Collaboration and Support for County Strategic Plan: The stated mission of VCBH Alcohol and Drug Programs, Prevention Services is to, *"implement effective and sustainable primary prevention initiatives, guided by the best available local data, to systematically reduce community problems affecting everyone, and provide targeted strategies to increase protective factors for vulnerable populations."* Through grassroots efforts and ongoing outreach to AOD prevention providers in Ventura County, the BreakThrough program has created broad and sustainable access to prevention services for 20,000 students in Ventura County consistent with mission of VCBH.

CVUSD has partnered with several key agencies. Redleaf Resources is one of over 50 community organizations or agencies collaborating with the BreakThrough program. As Breakthrough progressed, Redleaf Resources identified other local, state and national resources that would improve program implementation. The VCBH Prevention Services vision of sharing the talent among the regional Ventura

County Prevention Provider Network, to which CVUSD belongs, made valuable connections with valuable partners such as Evalcorp Research & Consulting and Idea Engineering. CVUSD partnered with SAMHSA's Service-to-Science Initiative, a national initiative designed to enhance the evaluation capacity of innovative programs and practices that addressed critical substance abuse prevention and related behavioral health needs. After successful program implementation, SAMHSA personnel provided further programmatic guidance to align national, state and county prevention efforts. SAMHSA personnel shared systems expertise and provided technical assistance during the student/parent survey creation process. Breakthrough partners with Straight Up Ventura County to produce 'Reality Parties', in support of VCBH Social Host Ordinance outreach and the Ventura County Sheriff's Office Parent Project, to assist with actively engaging parents of the AOD target population. The overall impact of school district, county, nonprofit and state systems has strengthened the program.

Strategic Community Outreach: BreakThrough accesses federal, state, and local training to remain current with federal and state goals, priorities, and available technical assistance. SAP personnel have used online, state and county trainings as well as continuing education trainings sponsored by providers and other agencies. Activities across all settings connect Conejo Valley with trends and related needs consistent with those present within Ventura County. During the program's first year a significant focus was to form and solidify collaborations that would promote prevention goals and expand the resources available to BreakThrough staff. Formalizing the contractual collaboration between VCBH and the CVUSD was seen as a significant achievement by District and VCBH staff and administrators. A number of other key partnerships were developed and nurtured by program staff in the first year as well. The Program Coordinator estimated that she spent approximately 25% of her time seeking out and building collaborative relationships. The expansive collaborative network built between the SAP and numerous community agencies indicates how BreakThrough provides an efficient "bridge" between school district services and community-based services.

In order to address the needs of historically underserved populations, BreakThrough staff represents CVUSD on consortium councils such as the Conejo Coalition for Youth and Families, Ventura County Agencies Network, Ventura County Office of Education Foster and Homeless Youth Task Force, and the Ventura County Student Attendance Review Board. Over a three-year period, BreakThrough counselors have connected over 500 students and their families to housing, medical, mental health, employment, recreation, law enforcement and hospice services. Prior to the BreakThrough program creating services and connections, target populations within CVUSD were not uniformly informed of prevention community resources.

E. Strategic Planning

Goals and Objectives: A key long-term objective of BreakThrough is to coordinate prevention, intervention and support programs to ensure academic and socioemotional success of all participants. Through the BRRIM interview process, quality AOD community referrals, and the development and implementation of Board Policy, CVUSD sought to reduce expulsions and recidivism related to AOD and/or violence.

Two short-term program goals were to deliver BreakThrough with fidelity to all eligible members within the target population and to develop interagency collaboration in order to advance the goals of BreakThrough. Through early intervention, reducing the number of students who 'return to program', and increasing protective factors through asset-based counseling CVUSD is responding proactively to 1)

individuals who exhibit early signs of substance abuse and other problem behaviors associated with substance abuse; 2) address risk factors and increase protective factors unique to the individual; 3) reduce first-time substance abuse and/or to delay onset of substance abuse; and 4) increase access to prevention services and involvement and support for impacted family members.

BreakThrough Desired Outcomes:

- Increase students' protective factors including self-efficacy, decision-making capacity, and confidence to change
- Increase participants' readiness to change harmful behaviors (AOD abuse)
- Develop a unique Family Plan for each student
- Increase family involvement in participants' lives
- Reduce or prevent the likelihood of participants' AOD-related harmful behaviors
- Increase participant's use of community resources
- Sustain decreases in frequency and severity of AOD use, or related disciplinary infractions

Link to Needs Assessment Data: BreakThrough continues to address previous epistemological findings. Initial impact data show that the program is delivering services as intended, serving the target population, and having a positive effect on program participants and families, as shown by 1) enrollment and demographic data (intended services have been provided to participants reflective of the district population), 2) the low return to program statistic, and 3) positive perceptions expressed by BreakThrough staff, administrators, and parents. Additionally, data from key informational interviews indicate the program is serving a population that has been difficult to serve in the past and is providing a level of comprehensive service previously not available.

Overall, identified objectives and expectations of key stakeholders of BreakThrough have been surpassed, as evidenced by 1) the number of students and families served, 2) the quantity and quality of collaborative partnerships developed, and 3) support for the program (described above). In its first year of implementation the program served almost twice as many participants as intended: the goal was to serve 75 students, and the program served 142 students. During the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years BreakThrough served over 180 families each year. During that same time period 50 new strategic collaborative partnerships were established with agencies outside the school district.

Number of Participants Reached: Since its inception in 2012, BreakThrough has served over 500 families in Ventura County. Given BreakThrough many successes after three years of implementation; the broad support it enjoys within CVUSD and the community, and the commitment of key stakeholders to realize recommendations, it is anticipated that BreakThrough will continue to deliver on stated objectives and outcomes, and outcomes will likely exceed expectations by expanding participant reach in the years ahead.

Ensuring Sustainability: Program sustainability and replicability have been considered from the onset of the CVUSD BreakThrough program. According to the National Student Assistance Association, BreakThrough incorporates all the elements necessary for SAP Best Practices: School Board Policy and Administrative Procedures, Staff Development, Program Awareness, Internal Referral Process, Problem Solving SAP Team, Educational Student Support Groups, Collaboration with Community Agencies and Resources, Integration with Other School Components, and Evaluation. Evalcorp reported four elements necessary for Student Assistance Program success: student and family success, program perception as a

trusted resource by students and families, a valuable resource to school sites and the district, and collaboration with agencies outside of school. BreakThrough embodies all four elements.

After three years of implementation and the conclusion of VCBH funding, BreakThrough has CVUSD's commitment to sustain and increase its current staffing. Additionally, BreakThrough has utilized MOUs to expand services through networking with multiple agencies, both public and private. CVUSD has codified support of BreakThrough in its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) allocations. This is indicative of the importance CVUSD places on the SAP. As previously stated, Board Policy was amended to ensure that all secondary students and their families have access to AOD prevention services. Through separate agreements Redleaf Resources consultants will continue to provide technical assistance and training. BreakThrough staff will ensure fidelity to this evidence-based model aligned with the Institute of Medicine's three prevention categories: Indicated, Selective and Universal. In doing so, BreakThrough will serve as a regional model for effective, school-based AOD intervention and prevention.

F. Implementation

Innovation: BreakThrough is unique in that it provides family specific services to any family in the school district. Beginning with the BRRIM process, BreakThrough is an umbrella program in that it offers prevention, identification, screening, intervention and support strategies within a school district and in collaboration with a broad network of community partners. According to the recent *Blue Ribbon Commission on Marijuana Policy: Youth Education and Prevention Working Group Policy Brief, Executive Summary*, "school-based approaches such as Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) are effective in improving school retention, academic achievement and reduction of drug use." Consequently, BreakThrough is positioned as an evidence-based, public school model for effective AOD prevention.

Although CVUSD is located in an affluent community, not all students and families have the same financial resources; thus BreakThrough is key to closing socio-economic and other cultural gaps to prevention services. As previously stated, BreakThrough received the 2014 California School Board Association Golden Bell Award. This recognition, along with the Service-to-Science award, substantiated that implementation of BRRIM is a data-informed, sustainable, integrated, and culturally sensitive service that creates access to prevention support networks.

Distinctiveness: BreakThrough is unique among SAPs because of how it uses policy, policy implementation, agency collaboration, uniform administration, referrals, individualized engagement process and data to keep the services relevant and on target to meet the outcomes of each partner.

- The policy establishes equal access to evidence-based prevention for every student, encourages staff to refer any student whose behavior concerns them, and mandates services for students who receive serious suspensions for alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs and violence.
- Voluntary referrals, received directly from a parent, staff, or peer when an AOD or violence related offense occurs, are explicitly encouraged and constitute 50% of SAP referrals.
- The initial engagement provides an individualized interview (BRRIM) and plan development so each individual student and family have a customized plan based on their strengths, needs, priorities. Family Plans link to appropriate school and community resources. Everyone is strongly encouraged to return if more time would be helpful.

- The confidential data collection is used to evaluate the effectiveness of every aspect of the program, identify trends across the district, and help the team to respond to gaps in service or new needs.
- CVUSD Deputy Superintendent considers BreakThrough in administration of expulsions and stipulated agreements.

Ventura County CHKS data and BreakThrough student survey data from 2014 indicate significant, ongoing and steadily increasing socioemotional stressors impacting the county's youth.

- 45% of 9th graders and 43% of 11th grade Ventura County youth reported feelings of School Connectedness
- 29% of 9th graders and 34% of 11th grade Ventura County youth reported Caring Relationships with adults at school
- 12% of 9th graders and 14% of 11th grade Ventura County youth reported Meaningful Participation at school
- 33% of 9th graders and 36% of 11th grade Ventura County youth reported sustained feelings of sadness and hopelessness during the past 12 months
- More than 40% of BreakThrough students reporting 'ditching' at least one day of school during the past four weeks
- Over 50% of BreakThrough students report stressors within their nuclear family

Program Operations: BreakThrough is a unique program in which district administration, program counselors, and families collaborate to address student needs. Key components of the BreakThrough are described below.

- Referral (mandatory or voluntary) to program. If a student attending the CVUSD is suspended for alcohol, tobacco, drug use and/or violence, district policy stipulates that the student must be referred to the BreakThrough. Additionally, voluntary program referrals can be made by CVUSD administrators or staff, parents, and other concerned individuals who believe the student will benefit from the services provided by the BreakThrough.
- Structured Family Conference, which uses the Brief Risk Reduction Interview and Intervention Model (BRRIM). Once students are referred to the program, the student and his/her parents are scheduled to participate in a 90-minute BRRIM Family Conference. This conference is identified as an indicated prevention strategy used to assess strengths, risks, and needs of each individual student. Based on the Family Conference, a *Family Plan* is developed in collaboration with the BreakThrough counselor, family, and student, and her family with a focus on building upon the student's strengths and with clear responsibilities identified for each member of the team. The *Family Plan* is based on each student's unique circumstances and aims to address specific family concerns that impact the student's success, enhance the student's support system, connect the student and/or family to appropriate school- and community-based services.
- Insight Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Group. The Insight Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Group is provided to students who have alcohol, marijuana, and other drug problems. Group members are instructed using the *Brief Intervention: An Approach for Substance Using Adolescents* curriculum, endorsed by Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS). The *Insight Group* consists of

six weekly 90-minute interactive group meetings during which students are asked evaluate their drug use, consider the consequences, and taught to make better decisions about future drug use.

- *Insight Class Program Curriculum Guidebook/Survey*. The Insight curriculum includes a survey booklet containing a pre- and post- intervention survey about student's drug use, coping mechanisms, and other issues, and was administered before the program adopted the *Brief Intervention* curriculum.
- *Other Services*. Depending on student and family needs, other services may be provided by BreakThrough staff members or partners from other agencies. Such services include academic and school counseling, tobacco prevention or intervention, community service opportunities, career development, and parenting classes (e.g., Parent Project, Interface's evidence-based parenting classes).

Activities and Cultural Sensitivity: Attaining and maintaining the genuine support of the district staff is a critical part of sustaining the SAP. Initially Redleaf Resources co-facilitated discussions with individual administrators and groups of school resource officers to send a consistent message that every adult is expected to identify and refer a student who may be at risk for involvement in substance use or violence or any other issue that may be a barrier to their education. District administration, the SAP Coordinator and staff meet with new administrators to ensure full access to services for every secondary school student. SAP staff maintains site specific referral data as well as site specific suspensions as an ongoing formative evaluation to ensure that all students are being served equally and program and process adjustments can be made accordingly.

Working side-by-side, BreakThrough staff and Redleaf Resources ensure fidelity to the model. By design, the BRRIM interview questions and Prevention Plan format remain the same, yet every student's and family's strengths, needs, resources, and priorities are different. Each family teaches the whole team and the trainers more about what it is to be a student in CVUSD. Each plan is entirely unique to reflect the strengths and use them to address the needs. Each plan creates an immediate and ongoing portal that links the prevention partners with the district. By definition, Indicated Prevention with youth at higher risk is challenging; this model acknowledges this challenge to turn a crisis into an opportunity to prevent further harm.

The BreakThrough program utilizes monthly on-site training days with flexible phone/email consultation with Redleaf Resources. Staff competencies include the six CSAP strategies: information dissemination, education, alternatives, community-based, environmental and problem identification and referral. Through fidelity to training and implementation, BreakThrough staff is trained to avoid cultural bias during the BRRIM dynamic. Discipline to process addresses the cultural needs of the target population from the onset of service. Dialogue, openness, trust, confidentiality, and individualized direction typify interactions with BreakThrough counselors. The result is a sense of belonging and connectedness that begins with cultural contextualization and reorientation within the family unit and extends into the school system and community.

Infrastructure and Implementation Support: Initially CVUSD district leadership and BreakThrough staff used the Redleaf Resource key setup training materials to structure the program. Subsequently, BreakThrough staff developed unique board policy, job descriptions, program brochures, staff

presentations, administrator *QuickLook*, and *research-based* evaluation instruments. Contract development and monthly reporting systems were aligned with VCBH reporting system called California Prevention Outcome Measurements System (CalOMS). Because BreakThrough was the first time VCBH piloted SAP in a district, Redleaf Resources helped problem-solve reporting initial challenges encountered by school and county fiscal departments.

Changing Community Norms: In addition to 2014-15 exit survey findings indicating broad parent and student support of the program, indicators of systems change are now evident. In the words of Dr. Jeffrey Baarstad, recently retired Superintendent of Conejo Valley Unified School District, *“The BreakThrough Program is truly changing the culture of consequences in our school district. Instead of excluding students from school as a consequence for bad decisions, we are offering targeted and effective intervention and support, and not just to the student, but to their families as well. The success of the program has spurred us to focus more of our attention on system-wide approaches to social/emotional intervention, and this new effort is one of the major goals in our 2014-15 Local Control Accountability Plan.”*

Community Impact:

Increased Access to Prevention in Schools		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
How many students /families did BreakThrough serve?		143	125	241
Concerned Person Referral	How many students/families were referred by concerned staff, parents, peers or community– based agencies?	76	58	86
Consistent policy implementation is improving the compliance rate				
Policy Mandated Referrals	How many Alcohol and other Drug Suspensions occurred in MS and HS?	100	100	143
	How many Alcohol and other Drug Referrals received BRRIMM Family Conference?	43	50	99
	How many Violence Suspensions occurred in MS and HS?	193	133	387*
	How many Violence Suspensions received the BRRIMM Family Conference?	24	17	56

As program developed, district increased the number of schools served and targeted more of the serious 3-5 day suspensions for violence

Increasing access to prevention in schools is improving in CVUSD. Now there is a systematic response to all referrals and targeted suspensions at the middle and high schools. Each year shows more students referred and served.

Program Replication: As previously stated BreakThrough is positioned to serve as an innovative and unique, evidence-based AOD prevention program in a public school setting. CVUSD is currently serving as a model program for another district in Ventura County. The program has hosted visiting staff from

that neighboring district. Qualities and process prepared for replication include board policy, methods for data collection and analysis, job descriptions, training materials, program philosophy, and suggestions for community agency collaboration.

G. Evaluation

Evaluation Methods: EvalCorp Research and Consulting was contracted by the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, Alcohol and Drug Programs Prevention Services to conduct a formative evaluation of BreakThrough in its initial year of implementation in the Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD) beginning in 2012 and continuing through current day. The evaluation purpose is to document program implementation and to determine the extent to which Year One objectives for BreakThrough were met. EvalCorp staff meets with the VCBH Prevention Services Manager, RedLeaf Resources staff and BreakThrough program administrator to annually review the formal evaluation plan.

Key Stakeholder Interviews. Key stakeholder interviews with program staff, district administrators, and VCBH were conducted to address the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent have the Year One objectives for BreakThrough been met?
2. What have been the challenges/barriers experienced to date in implementing the program?
3. What have been the primary successes of the program to date?
4. What are the perceptions about BreakThrough among relevant CVUSD Administrators and other key stakeholders?

Interviews were conducted either in person or by phone with all BreakThrough staff; current and former Conejo Valley Unified School District Administrators; and the VCBH Prevention Services Manager. Within each area of interest, a qualitative content analysis was conducted in which coding categories were derived from interview data. In order to protect confidentiality, the source type for interview data quoted is not provided. Differences between administrator, staff and other respondents' perspectives (if any) are noted in the summary results below.

Summary Data. Program staff provided the evaluation team with summary program participation and demographic data compiled from participation logs and program records, return to program numbers, and sample data from the Family Conference Exit Surveys. Program staff and VCBH were asked about the extent to which their objectives for the first year of the program had been met. Responses are categorized in two main objectives: 1) deliver the program well and with fidelity, and 2) develop collaborations that advance the goals of BreakThrough.

Deliver the Program Well and with Fidelity. All respondents spoke about the importance of getting BreakThrough established well in the first year, and/or with adherence to the program model. Staff members' responses also suggest that one of the objectives was to learn what worked and what didn't work, and adapt program activities accordingly (this strategy is consistent with some inherent flexibility of the program model).

Each of the following essential elements were implemented during the first year of BreakThrough, helping to build an infrastructure for successful initiation of the program:

- Board Policy was written incorporating mandated BreakThrough referrals
- Centralized BreakThrough office was created
- BreakThrough Coordinator job description written

- SAP awareness training was provided to district school counselors and administrators
- Experienced and well respected BreakThrough Coordinator was hired
- SAP Coordinator supervised interns who helped provide AOD education
- Spanish-speaking translator was provided, as needed, for Spanish-speaking students and their families
- Clerical staff was provided to the BreakThrough
- CalOMS reporting was successfully integrated into the program
- CVUSD coordinated fiscal services with VCBH

Evidence of Success: Key stakeholders were asked about the greatest accomplishments and successes of the BreakThrough in its first year. Four prevalent themes emerged: 1) student and family success, 2) BreakThrough viewed as a trusted resource by students and families, 3) BreakThrough adds a valuable resource to schools and the district, and 4) collaborations forged with agencies and individuals outside the school district.

- Student and Family Success. Most respondents said that the success of students and families who have been in the program was the most significant program success. One respondent stated: *I'm a big believer in second chances, and students who would normally be expelled are able to have a second chance. The youth and their families, by "contract" are required to be accountable – to follow through on their end – and ultimately to continue being educated.*
- BreakThrough Seen as Trusted Resource by Students and Families. All BreakThrough staff members and three CVUSD administrators indicated that a great success was the trust that students and their families placed in the program and the staff. As one respondent stated: *I am really amazed at how the parents and kids buy into this. We actually have kids who finish the Insight classes and they come back! I've never seen that before. There is the connection there – it address the whole thing on school connectedness...I've never seen that before, that in itself is a victory.*
- BreakThrough Adds a Valuable Resource to Schools and the District. All CVUSD administrators and one BreakThrough staff member commented on the value of the program as an additional resource for schools, school staff members, and the school district as a whole. One respondent stated: *Families that need the most help; at a physical resource level or emotional level, don't always follow-up with referrals because they either don't have a means to get there or are emotionally unable to do so. Expecting the most damaged and compromised families to follow through is a big leap... BreakThrough is so important because it is a district program that is accessible to families and reaches out to enroll them when there is a suspension or referral; it's not a referral to an outside agency that never gets acted upon.*
- Collaborations with Agencies and Individuals Outside the School District. Those interviewed identified external collaborations as a great success of BreakThrough. Collaboration with a number of agencies is seen as serving to expand the network of resources available to individuals and the district as a whole. As one respondent stated: *One key accomplishment was having an active multi-agency collaboration to focus on student well-being. It's having a focus on prevention and not disease. Everyone is looking through the lens of keeping kids in school.*

Outcome Measures: BreakThrough staff maintains site specific referral data as well as site specific suspensions as an ongoing formative evaluation to ensure that all students are being served equally and program and process adjustments can be made accordingly.

All key stakeholders interviewed indicated their belief in the program and support to keep the program running long after the County contract has expired. As one respondent stated: *My hope is that BreakThrough becomes a district-level resource that is positioned so that the resourcing matches the district need for these services.*

Evaluation Results: Based on the high voluntary referral rate (about half of all referrals) stemming across the district, there is awareness of the program among district staff and the community. This is a positive finding and speaks strongly to the great potential of the program's success in the CVUSD. In implementations of BreakThrough in other districts, voluntary and even mandatory referral process can take several years to function as intended. Given the indicated population's high risk for substance abuse, the BreakThrough is designed to meet the higher level of risk using a one-person-at-a-time approach. The program draws on the evidence-based practices of Screening and Brief Intervention, Motivational Interviewing, Risk and Protective Factors, Stages of Change, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Using evidence-based prevention practices to connect students and families with services designed to meet their unique needs and challenges means there is an increased likelihood that program elements will lead to anticipated outcomes such as preventing or reducing substance abuse and increasing protective factors. During the past three school years, over 500 students and their families completed BreakThrough Family Conferences. Two hundred parents and two BreakThrough counselors completed Parent Project classes, over 250 parents attended six Reality Parties, 37 county youth attended a Drug Facts Chat Day seminar, and 42 parents and their teens attended two Social Change Theater workshops where they examined social norms pertaining to underage drinking and drug use at teen parties.

The average number of discipline incidents decreased significantly after students completed the BreakThrough program. 96% of mandatory participants were never cited a second time for the behavior that originally brought them to BreakThrough. In addition, there has been an 87% decrease in the number of students expelled from the CVUSD since BreakThrough began in 2012-13.

Student Surveys

- 81% of students reported their drug use was reduced or stayed the same after completing the six week Insight curriculum.
- 60% see BreakThrough as a resource for future problems
- 56% would refer a troubled friend to BreakThrough
- 34% changed their group of friends to those who were less likely to use alcohol, marijuana or other drugs
- 54% reported better relationships with teachers or other trusted adults at school after completing BreakThrough

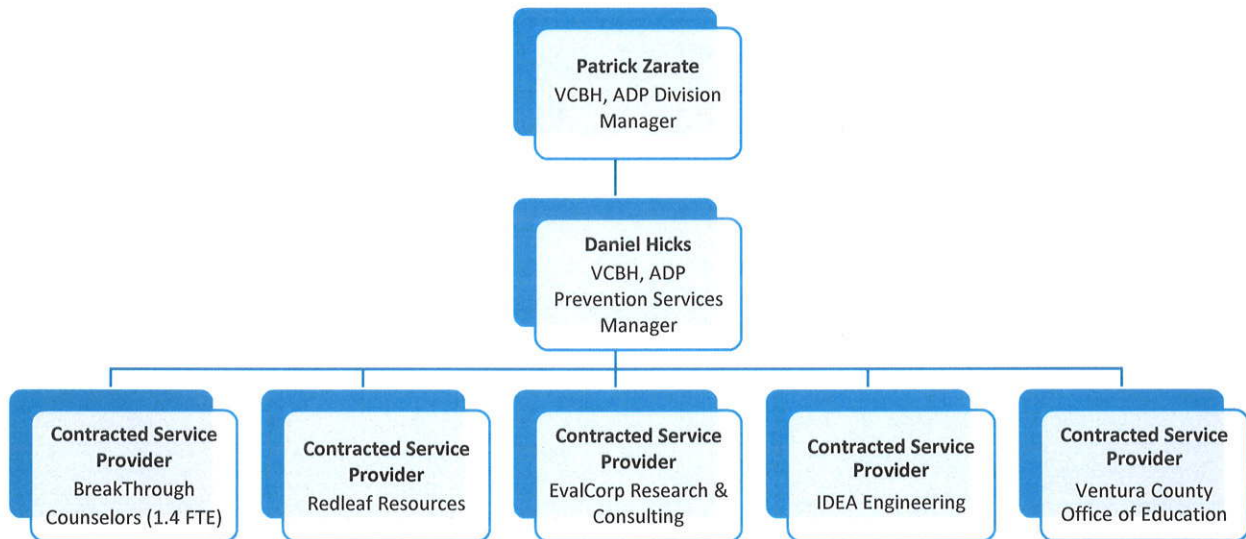
H. Program Management

Organizational Structure: Conejo Valley Unified School District received funding over a three-year period (2012-2015) from Ventura County Behavioral Health to develop and implement BreakThrough, an AOD and violence reduction-focused SAP. As VCBH reduced BreakThrough funding from 2012-2015, CVUSD allocated general fund resources to continue the program. BreakThrough operates as a contracted service provider within the structure of VCBH AOD Programs Prevention Services network. While not an exhaustive list of all AOD contracted service providers, the chart illustrates VCBH program administrators and partnered key agencies accessible to BreakThrough staff.

Program Resources: CVUSD employs two counselors to serve BreakThrough program referrals. One counselor serves the program full-time (1.0 FTE) and the bilingual counselor serves two days per week (0.4 FTE). As previously mentioned BreakThrough is staffed with full-time bilingual clerical support. It is important to note that BreakThrough partners with a local university for the placement of counseling interns at no cost to the district. In addition, BreakThrough also partners with credentialed volunteers to provide additional support services to program participants.

Communication and Coordination: VCBH Prevention Providers meet quarterly to collaborate, strategize and share collective prevention efforts within Ventura County. The ADP Prevention Services Manager facilitates presentations from current and potential service providers as well as inviting practicing medical and legal professionals. Through this venue all service providers have access to VCBH interdepartmental personnel, timely scholarly research, pending legislation, evidence-based best practices, and interagency collaboration for AOD prevention efforts. Prevention Providers plan regional conferences and make overt efforts to maximize intellectual and financial resources. The CVUSD Director of Student Support Services supervises the BreakThrough program, attends quarterly Prevention Provider meetings, meets regularly with BreakThrough staff, oversees budgets and works collaboratively with VCBH administrators to promote AOD programs in CVUSD secondary schools. One such recent collaboration resulted in CVUSD facilitating regional support for the rollout of *How High Ventura County*, "a platform designed to educate residents about marijuana's impact ... on teen health."

**Ventura County Behavioral Health - Alcohol & Drug Program (ADP)
Organizational Chart for BreakThrough SAP 2012-2015**



Budget Narrative: During the program implementation phase (2012-13) VCBH allocated \$180,000 for the BreakThrough program. In 2013-14 VCBH funding was reduced to \$160,000. The final year of VCBH funding, an allocation of \$140,000, was in 2014-15. CVUSD will allocate a minimum of \$160,000 for total BreakThrough program operating costs beginning in the 2015-16 school year. As previously discussed BreakThrough is now embedded within the CVUSD LCAP and will receive a LCFF budget allocation. As evidence of community support for the program, BreakThrough has received 10 nonprofit donations and personal gifts totaling \$18,250.

VCBH Funding for BreakThrough SAP (2012 - 2015)			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
SCHOOL COUNSELOR			
Salary	96,218	92,547	94,399
Benefits	24,548	20,000	25,013
Subtotal	120,766	112,547	119,412
CLERICAL STAFF			
Salary	10,679	11,199	District Cost
Benefits	15,019	12,572	District Cost
Subtotal	25,698	23,771	District Cost
SUPPLIES	8,100	6,044	764
OPERATIONS	15,499	9,455	3,480
INDIRECT COSTS	10,936	8,183	6,344
Total	\$180,000	\$160,000	\$140,000