

Communities In Schools Program Orientation

Communities In Schools of Houston provides student support specialists to work with students and their families within the campus community.

We provide or coordinate support services for students living in situations that place them at risk and/or have difficulty navigating the academic and non-academic barriers to stay on the path to graduation.

In addition, we engage community partners and volunteers to effectively and efficiently address both the academic and non-academic needs of students.

Communities In Schools **integrated student supports** approach connect the school and students with the following tiers of support:

Tier I – School-Wide or large group services designed to foster positive school climate and address school-level needs that impact students within the campus community.

Tier II – Targeted Programs are services offered to students and/or families with common needs, often received in a group setting within the campus community.

Tier III – Individualized Support services offered to students and/or families with multiple-complex needs most often provided in one-on-one setting within the campus community.

The **CIS Program Model** is a comprehensive holistic approach to service delivery built on these **Five Basics we believe** that every child needs and deserves:

1. A one-on-one relationship with a caring adult;
2. A safe place to learn and grow;
3. A healthy start and a healthy future;
4. A marketable skill to use upon graduation; and
5. A chance to give back to peers and community.

Communities In Schools offers services and activities in the following **Six Components**:

- Supportive Guidance and Counseling
- Health and Human Services
- Academic Support and Educational Enhancement
- Parental and Family Engagement
- College and Career Awareness
- Cultural Enrichment

*The mission of Communities In Schools is to surround students with a community of support,
empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life.*

Recommendation To Communities In Schools

What specific challenges or issues should I look for before referring a student for services with Communities In Schools?

Since teachers have daily contact with students, oftentimes a teacher will be the person who observes any significant changes in a student's "normal" grades, behavior, and/or attitudes.

There are numerous behaviors and/or situations that indicate a recommendation to Communities In Schools might be helpful to a student.

Below are some reasons for recommendation, but feel free to refer students who exhibit behaviors not listed –

Grades

Student consistently fails to get passing grades, expresses a lack of interest in academic subjects and/or persistently fails to complete daily homework assignments. Grades or GPA show a marked decline from previous performance.

Attendance

Student has difficulty with regular attendance to school and/or on-time reporting to either class or school. Student can't make it to early morning classes or is always late for classes.

Disruptive Behavior

Student's behavior commands a large portion of your attention daily. Student tends to be consistently disruptive and/or is often sleeping in class.

Disciplinary System Involvement

Student remains continually in trouble and/or is thrown out of class for unacceptable classroom behavior.

Financial Problems

Student lets you know there are financial difficulties/challenges such as parental job loss or food insecurity in the home.

Legal Problems

Student misses class because of court appearances or because his/her family is currently experiencing legal problems. Student indicates that a parent or member of his/her household has been incarcerated or deported in recent months.

Emotional Issues

Student is dealing with loss, abuse, strained relationships at home or with his/her peers. Student appears distraught, irritable, moody, or depressed.

Social Challenges

Student exhibits low self-esteem, early sexual involvement, body image issues, or is struggling with questions regarding sexual orientation. Student bullies others, is the victim of bullying or digital aggression through social media.

Health Problems

Student is constantly out ill, has special health needs – asthma, vision problems, or need for medical and dental services.

Need For Enrichment

Student expresses interest in volunteerism. Student needs a positive outlet for stress, has an interest in mentoring, or community service.

Need For Skills Enhancement

Student needs motivation, career exploration opportunities or college access guidance. Student could benefit from pre-employment skills and/or building leadership skills.

Referral Process

Who can make a referral?

A teacher, an administrator, a parent, a friend or the student (self-referral) can choose to refer to the Communities In Schools program on campus.

How do I make a referral?

Complete the attached **Communities In Schools Recommendation Form**.

What does Communities In Schools do with your referral?

1. CIS will review your recommendation/referral and contact you for follow-up consultation.
2. CIS will then meet with the student to discuss the referral and explain the Communities In Schools program services.
3. The student will receive a Parent Consent Form to take to his/her parent or primary guardian. *Student MUST bring back the Parent Consent Form before we are able to complete a Formal Assessment.*
4. Once the assessment is complete, an individualized service plan is completed with student. The student will meet with the Communities In Schools staff for services.
5. As a follow-up you will be updated on the student's progress verbally or in writing using our Referral Acknowledgment Form.
6. Please do not expect an overnight change in student's behavior and/or performance – change is a process! Sometimes things may appear to get worse before they get better.

Will a student's participation disrupt class time?

Communities In Schools take the students' academic success very seriously. Our individual and group services are conducted during office hours, during lunch or before and after school. CIS will only schedule appointments or allow walk-ins with students during those times or with special permission from the teacher. In the rare case of a crisis situation that must be handled immediately in collaboration with campus administration.

There are some students with more intense needs who may spend a little more time with their Communities In Schools staff – please trust that this time is considered valuable by CIS and is spent working with the student so that he/she can improve behavior and/or performance in school, thus needing less and less the Communities In Schools program.

Program Guidelines

Communities In Schools of Houston student support specialists act as agent of CIS and as a member of the school team at the assigned campus site. Staff must follow the policies and procedures of Communities In Schools and the assigned Independent School District.

In addition, CIS staff are required to follow the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in obtaining student information and the Federal Child Abuse and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the Texas Family Code 261.101 that requires any person who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health, or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect to report that abuse or neglect.

The services provided by Communities In Schools are confidential, specifics of cases are not discussed without permission from the student and/or primary caregiver.

Are CIS services voluntary?

There are occasions when some students who are referred to CIS do not want services and/or do not show up for their appointments. The Communities In Schools staff usually attempts to meet with the student 3 times before discarding the referral for services.

You will be notified about your referral whether the referred student and/or family choose to use or choose not to use the services provided by Communities In Schools.

When does confidentiality not apply?

There are a few situations where Communities In Schools staff is required by law to break confidentiality and seek outside help to support students. These situations are where (a) a student might be a danger to himself/herself; (b) a student might be a danger to someone else; or (c) a student reports having been hurt by someone else.

Texas law requires any person who believes that a child is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report the circumstances to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Abuse Hotline at 1 (800) 252-5400. The reporting web site is: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>