



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Senator Fred Akshar and Lourdes Bring Addiction Prevention Counseling Back Into the Classroom

FRED AKSHAR October 12, 2016

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Senator Fred Akshar joined Jill Alford-Hammit from Lourdes Hospital's Substance Abuse Prevention Center to announce state aid to help bring addiction prevention counseling back into school districts in the 52nd Senate District.

"It is critically important that we continue to educate our youth and explore new options when it comes to addiction prevention," said Senator Fred Askhar. "If we can prevent young people from becoming substance dependent by educating our kids about the risks of

addiction and bringing prevention counseling services back into our schools, we will be one step closer to overcoming this epidemic”.

Approximately \$175,000 in funding has been secured and will be administered through the New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), to bring addiction prevention counseling services to on site locations at local schools. Counselors will begin their coordinated community efforts on December 1st of 2016.

“ I want to thank Senator Akshar for his tireless efforts to find funding to expand prevention services in the Southern Tier,” said Jill Alford-Hammit, Student Assistance Program Manager for Lourdes Hospital. “The Lourdes Student Assistance Program offers prevention counseling and services to students who are at risk of drug and alcohol use. This expansion will provide for increased prevention efforts in schools to aid in the early identification and intervention of students at risk for substance abuse. Research has shown that early identification and intervention is key to improving outcomes with adolescents.”

Currently, Binghamton, Maine-Endwell, Chenango Forks, BOCES, and Deposit’s Central School Districts have decided to add addiction prevention counseling services to their educational criterion. Two other school districts are currently in the process of finalizing their commitment.

“Many families that have battled with substance abuse addiction say that if their children had access to more educational resources, it might have prevented them from ever trying a drug for the first time,” said Akshar. “If we continue focusing on prevention, we will be able to spare our families the countless struggles that come with substance abuse addition and recovery.

Prevention counselors will use unique strategies based on each individual school district while implementing the addiction prevention counseling services. Each counselor will be using evidence based initiatives such as Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Coordinated Community Efforts to Strengthen Students) and Teen Intervene.

“The Lourdes Student Assistance Program is looking forward to increasing our community, parent, and school partnerships through this funding, and acting as a resource for youth who may be struggling with personal, school, or peer issues, or may have begun experimenting with alcohol or drugs” said Alford-Hammit. “The 2014 Prevention Needs Assessment shows that our community’s prevention efforts are working as evidenced by the increase in positive attitudes about the risk of substance use. There are still issues to be addressed and we will continue working with our community partners to reduce adolescent substance use and abuse.”

Project SUCCESS is designed to prevent and reduce substance use among students 12 to 18 years of age, whereas Teen Intervene targets teens ages 12 to 19 years old who display early signs of alcohol and drug abuse problems but are not currently displaying a substance dependency.

Senator Akshar's partnership with Lourdes includes the YES! Safe Choices program, which provides peer leadership training and substance abuse prevention for students in over a dozen school districts across Broome, Tioga and Chenango Counties.

For more information on how to receive prevention counseling please contact: Lourdes Hospital's Student Assistance Program Manager, Jill Alford-Hammit at (607)-584-3110.