



# Collier School Therapeutic Services

For students with anxiety, school phobia, school avoidance, difficulty reaching or maintaining the standard of behavior and attendance expected.

## Shepherding Program

For students who have anxiety about school or a history of school avoidance.

## S.T.A.R. Program

For students who have difficulty reaching or maintaining a standard of behavior and attendance expected at school.

The S.T.A.R. program (Skills Training and Retention) is a two week therapeutic intensive program tailored to Collier High School and Middle School students who are highly motivated to be at Collier, but **have difficulty reaching or maintaining the standard of behavior and attendance expected at the school.**

Overseen by Ira Hays, LCSW, S.T.A.R. is designed to take the place of a traditional school day at Collier School. The S.T.A.R. program takes students out of the classroom and into a separate facility on Collier's 260-acre campus. Students are identified and recommended for the program by their social worker, teachers, or administration. Acceptance into the program is strictly voluntary for the student.

While in S.T.A.R., students and counselors will address the student's underlying needs such as (but not limited to) **school phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, substance use, suicidal thoughts.** By engaging students in a group-based setting that provides them with an assortment of skills including **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT),** and assertive communication, students gain the skills necessary to become and remain healthy and productive members of the Collier community.

Students start their day with two morning groups that provide them with skills training. Students will also engage in an academic program designed to keep them up to date in their current core class curriculum. The educational period also acts as a way to re-engage students into the educational process with significant support from both education and counseling staff. The third and final group therapy session addresses students' communication and assists them in transferring their newly learned skills into the school setting. This group will incorporate **psychotherapy, assertiveness training, and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP).**

To date, S.T.A.R has worked with over 100 students and has an 80% success rate which is well above industry standards.

Although it is not uncommon for students to be anxious about school, many Collier students struggle with **exceptionally high levels of anxiety** that prevent them from actually attending. To help mitigate this **school avoidance**, Collier School created the Shepherding program to help ease students back to school. This service is overseen by Ashley Staggard, LAC, Certified Teacher of students with disabilities, and Outreach Counselor, with the collaboration of Collier High School counselors, teachers, and administration.

The Shepherding Program identifies students who have a history of **school avoidance** or those who have **reached 15 absences.** Ashley reaches out to these students and their families to arrange an initial home visit during which the student's particular avoidance issues are assessed. A treatment plan is developed to help ease their anxiety through **exposure therapy** (brief visits to school), additional therapy sessions once they begin attending, and/or engagement in activities that peak their interest. Incentives are tailored to the student to increase their motivation to break out of their comfort zone, change their maladaptive behaviors and challenge the negative thoughts surrounding school. By teaching students skills to manage their anxiety, and incorporating a class/activity about which they are passionate, Shepherding provides the therapeutic support and motivation that student needs to get on the bus.

In addition to individualized treatment plans, students are invited to attend weekly anxiety groups that use **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Motivational Interviewing** to provide continued support. We have also identified long breaks from school to be difficult for students with school avoidance. A Pre/Post Vacation Break group is offered twice a year during Winter and Spring break. Students who have attended both the pre and post groups have achieved a 100% success rate in attending school the first day after break.

The Shepherding Program also provides support and involvement of parents or guardians. Using principles of **Kazdin Parent Management Training**, Collier provides parents with the tools they need to address their child's **oppositional behaviors.** Ashley also runs a parent support group once a month to address the needs of parent's attending.

To date, the Shepherding Program has seen significant results with a success rate of 82%.