



CSPV POSITION SUMMARY

PS-001

2010

D.A.R.E. Program

As of February 2010, three programming components incorporated under the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) umbrella have been evaluated: the original D.A.R.E. program; Take Charge of Your Life; and keepin' it REAL.

Both the evaluations of D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) on individual sites, and the meta-analyses involving multiple sites report little or no evidence of deterrent effects. Overall, the research indicates that children who participate in the traditional D.A.R.E. curriculum (which is implemented in the fifth or sixth grades) are just as likely to use drugs as are children who do not participate in the program. This same set of studies indicates there are some beneficial attitudinal outcomes of the D.A.R.E. program, which includes replacing negative stereotypes of police with positive attitudes toward police, as well as collective and unified support of and involvement in the program by parents, teachers and police. But, in general, participation in D.A.R.E. does not reduce the risk of future drug use.

After the evaluations of the original D.A.R.E. program revealed it was ineffective as a drug prevention program, the national offices of D.A.R.E. developed a new middle school program called Take Charge of Your Life (or New D.A.R.E.). This program has been evaluated in a national randomized control trial. The effects of this evaluation were:

- No difference found for any substance used in the past 12 months
- No difference for marijuana use during the past 30 days
- For those not using any substance at the start of the study, higher rates of smoking and alcohol use for those in the Take Charge of Your Life program
- For those already using marijuana at the start of the study, greater reductions in subsequent use than for those in the control group (11th graders only; no other grades)

Overall, the program had no effect on general substance use, and, in fact, participation in the program was associated with higher levels of alcohol and cigarette use.

Recently, D.A.R.E. began offering the program keepin' it REAL. An evaluation of the elementary school version of the program found no evidence of effectiveness. There is also a middle school version of this program which has been evaluated and found mixed effects. However, there were serious methodological limitations in this study which make any conclusions about its effectiveness difficult. Keepin' it REAL may or may not reduce substance use, but for the present, the research evidence is insufficient to establish it as an effective or evidence-based program.

The D.A.R.E. organization has changed the name of its program several times in response to the negative findings from evaluations and the newer versions target middle school youth rather than elementary school youth. It is important to note, however, that many of the components of the current versions of D.A.R.E. are very similar to their original versions. Any additions that D.A.R.E. has made to its curriculum that have been

subject to evaluation were either found not to be effective, as in the case of Take Charge of Your Life, or do not have consistently beneficial effects, as in the case of keepin' it REAL. In short, none of these D.A.R.E. programs meet the scientific standard for being an evidence-based drug prevention program.

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