Students and Substance Abuse

As we begin the 21st century, the problems of substance abuse remain widespread among American young people. According to the most recent results of The Monitoring the Future study, over half (54%) the students surveyed have tried an illicit drug by the time they finish high school. And the statistics for cigarettes and alcohol are also cause for considerable concern. Nearly two-thirds (61%) of American young people have tried cigarettes by the 12th grade. Alcohol use also remains extremely widespread among today's teenagers. Four out of every five students (80%) have consumed alcohol by the end of high school; and about half have done so by the 8th grade.

Alcohol is the most frequently used drug by high school seniors. Boys usually try alcohol for the first time at just 11 years old, while the average age of American girls' first drink is 13. These facts underscore why our nation's youth are flirting with disaster:

• Underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen automobile crashes.
• Alcohol use contributes to youth suicides, homicides and fatal injuries.
• Alcohol abuse is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes of teen students (American Medical Association, March 2002).

Even if drug use subsides, as it did by the early 1990s, our nation must make every effort to ensure that young people learn about the dangers of drugs through formal means—from schools, parents, and the media. And that formal prevention efforts are institutionalized so that the message about the dangers of drugs continues to impact students beliefs about the risks of drug use, and peer norms against drug use.

Blueprints Prevention Programs

Schools and communities around the country are well served by two substance abuse prevention programs identified as Model programs in the Blueprints for Violence Prevention series. The Midwestern Prevention Project and Life Skills Training are two research-based programs that show reductions in alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use among adolescents.

The Midwestern Prevention Project (MPP) provides training for students to recognize and resist the social pressures to use drugs and alcohol. It begins with a school-based program and extends to an outreach to parents, media, and community organizations for a three-year implementation phase. The program uses active social learning techniques like modeling, role playing, and discussion for use in the classroom and homework to engage family interaction.

Evaluations of the MPP have demonstrated:

• Reductions of up to 40% in daily smoking
• Similar reduction in marijuana use, and smaller reduction in alcohol use maintained through 12th grade
• Effects on daily smoking, heavy marijuana use, and some hard drug use have been shown through early adulthood (age 23)
• Increased parent-child communications about drug use.

Life Skills Training (LST) also uses a three-year implementation aimed at middle school students. Teachers present lessons in the classroom - 15 sessions the first year, 10 sessions the second year, and 5 sessions the third year. The sessions teach students (1) general self-management skills (2) social skills and (3) information and skills specifically related to drug use by using instruction, demonstration, feedback, and practice.

LST has been found to:

• Cut tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use 50% to 75%
• Cut polydrug use up to 66%
• Reduce pack-a-day smoking by 25%
• Decrease use of inhalants, narcotics, and hallucinogens.

For more information on these programs, visit our website at www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints or contact CSPV at 303-492-1032 with questions about the Blueprints series.
The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, in partnership with The Colorado Trust and the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, is pleased to announce its third conference for safe school planning - join us for two days of training regarding violence prevention and the many components necessary to safety planning.

**May 1-2, 2003**

**Omni Interlocken Resort**

No registration fee

Registration forms available by calling 303-492-0404 or at www.colorado.edu/cspv.

Possible Workshop Topics Include:

- Effective Violence Prevention Programs
- School Safety and the Law
- FBI Threat Assessment
- Bullying Prevention
- Information Sharing
- Colorado PTA
- Students and School Safety