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SSDP CAMPAIGN: DRUG EDUCATION & COUNSELING



DRUG EDUCATION AND COUNSELING

Be the Sensible Voice on Campus. Just Say Know to Drug Education.

Summary

Drug abuse and addiction are real problems in many schools throughout the country. Clearly, students, parents, and educators need to work together to address the problems that drug abuse presents to schools and communities. Unfortunately, more often than not, the government-sponsored programs aimed at solving these problems actually make them worse, while alienating students in the process.

Currently, the largest such program is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program. While undoubtedly rooted in good intentions, the science shows that D.A.R.E. is not effective in achieving its stated goal of reducing student drug abuse. Even worse are reports of D.A.R.E. having a “boomerang” effect, actually increasing the prevalence of drug use among suburban children.

Perhaps it should be no wonder that a program that fosters a culture of fear and distrust between students and their drug counselors would be doomed to failure. As those of us know who went through it, the D.A.R.E program employs uniformed police officers – not health care professionals – to teach students about drugs. Rather than providing students with science-based information about drugs, the students are scared with horror stories about drug addiction.

Talking Points

Drug education programs should help students make safe and sensible lifestyle decisions.

D.A.R.E.

- Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) is the most widely used school-based drug prevention program, even though it has been called ineffective by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Surgeon General, National Academy of Sciences, and Government Accountability Office.
- To help them make safe and sensible lifestyle decisions, students need accurate, science-based, nonjudgmental drug education instead of the scare tactics provided by the 20-year-old D.A.R.E. program.
- Students should receive drug education from health professionals, not uniformed police officers.
- D.A.R.E.’s abstinence-only approach fails to effectively reach students who have used or are at high risk of using drugs. It doesn’t provide a fallback strategy for students who don’t “just say no.”
- One study revealed that D.A.R.E. may have a “boomerang” effect, actually increasing drug use among suburban students.
- The fundamentally flawed D.A.R.E. program can’t be improved by making superficial changes to its curriculum and calling it “New D.A.R.E.”|

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

- The federal government’s \$120 million a year anti-drug ad campaign has repeatedly been shown to be a failure in encouraging young people to stay away from drugs. One long-term federally funded evaluation reported that there is “little evidence” the ads reduce drug use and “some evidence for an increase in use.” The government pulled the study’s funding after the report was published.

- The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that federal anti-drug officials have resorted to “covert propaganda” to distribute their anti-drug messages by sending out prepackaged news stories for TV stations to air.
- The government was caught paying TV networks to incorporate anti-drug messages into the scripts of sitcoms and other programs

Legislative Guide

ISSUE

- Current federal law contains a number of provisions regarding student drug education and counseling which are, in fact, counterproductive in achieving their stated goals. For example, the single largest government-funded drug education program, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), has been repeatedly shown to be ineffective in reducing drug use among its participants. This fact is an unfortunate consequence of a number of provisions of law which, in reality, serve to alienate students from their teachers and drug education counselors and make them more susceptible to patterns of drug abuse.

BACKGROUND

- Most federal policy regarding student drug education and counseling is contained in what is now known as the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA). Originally enacted in 1986 as the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, its purpose was to expand and strengthen drug and alcohol abuse education and prevention programs in communities throughout the nation. In its current form, it mainly provides federal assistance to states for the distribution of grants supporting educational programs to prevent drug use and violence.

THE FAILURE OF D.A.R.E.

- The D.A.R.E. program is indicative of the fundamentally flawed drug education policy promoted by the SDFSCA. In creating a culture of fear and distrust between students and their drug counselors, it undermines the open relationship necessary for students to ask candid questions and learn about the consequences of drug use. For example, D.A.R.E. employs uniformed police officers not health care professionals to teach students about drugs. Rather than providing students with science-based information about drugs, the students are scared with horror stories about drug addiction. They are told to avoid drugs because of the legal and disciplinary consequences of their use by the same people who will send them to jail if they are caught.
- Not surprisingly, in recent years the General Accounting Office, the Department of Education, and the U.S. Surgeon General have come to recognize the ineffectiveness of the D.A.R.E. program. Yet local D.A.R.E. programs still receive federal funds (directly or indirectly) and the SDFSCA still promotes drug education policies which break down the crucial trust between students and their educators needed for effective drug education.

REFORMS NEEDED IN SDFSCA

- The SDFSCA contains a number of provisions which foster the harmful environment typified by the D.A.R.E. program. The following are several of the principal flaws in the SDFSCA which hinder the realization of an effective program of student drug education and counseling:

The SDFSCA is based on false assumptions.

1. The law's language repeatedly links "drug use" and "violence." While violence is often associated with the black market trade of illicit drugs, drug use itself is nonviolent and should not be lumped together with the problem of school violence. Assertions of causal links between the two are tenuous at best. This attempt to combat drug use and violence simultaneously is intrinsically erroneous.
2. It mistakenly asserts that delinquency and serious discipline problems are "conditions and consequences" of drug use. It undermines students' relationships with authority figures.
3. It requires local education agencies that submit applications to assure that their programs will "convey a clear and consistent message that acts of violence and the illegal use of drugs are wrong and harmful." Such judgmental messages in a drug education course tend to

alienate students who may have already experimented with drugs from the teachers and counselors charged with helping them.

4. It authorizes grantees to use provided funds for the installation of metal detectors, electric locks, surveillance cameras, or other related equipment or technologies. Turning schools into prisons undermines the trust between students and teachers, making drug education and counseling all the more difficult.
5. It allows grantees to use provided funds to perform random drug tests on students and inspect students lockers for illegal drugs and paraphernalia. Again, such invasive measures only foster a culture of distrust and make effective drug education more difficult.
6. It creates a toll-free hotline in which students can report drug use in their schools to the authorities. This cultivates an environment in which students are not only afraid to ask candid questions to their school drug counselors, but their peers as well.
7. It confuses the goal of effective drug education with that of law enforcement.
8. It requires the Secretary of Education to consult with the Attorney General and the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy when using funds for national drug education programs. Again, such a link between drug education and law enforcement corrodes the trust between students and drug educators/counselors.
9. It puts the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and the Office of National Drug Control Policy on the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee. (See above.)
10. It requires that states develop their grant applications in coordination with the head of the State criminal justice planning agency (among others). Mixing drug education and counseling programs with law enforcement agencies reduces the effectiveness of the programs. In doing so, it undermines the trust of students who may be afraid to approach teachers or counselors with candid questions about drugs or their drug problems for fear that they might be reported to law enforcement authorities.
11. It diverts funds needed for drug education into programs that punish at-risk students.
12. It authorizes grantees to use funds for systems to transferring suspension and expulsion records. This is not only a misplacement of funds needed for real drug education and counseling, but it may even frustrate a student's attempts to move beyond a previous expulsion and start fresh at a new school.
13. It provides funds for programs in which expelled students are required to perform community service. Once again, this raises serious questions about whether this law is intended to help educate and counsel children about drugs or simply or to find new ways of sanctioning children who break drug laws.

Grassroots Guide

OBJECTIVE

This is a grassroots guide to educating your chapter, community and legislators about the harms caused by abstinence-only drug education and the need for alternative drug education programs. There are two grassroots guides, one for High School Chapters and one for College Chapters. Both guides range from simple to more difficult, with the actions building off one another. Please consider this as a reference and plausible strategy for your chapter, not a fast-and-true guide.

Contact the National Staff if you have any questions relating to the strategy or resources found in the grassroots guides.

ACTION PLAN FOR COLLEGE CHAPTERS

1. **Devote one chapter meeting to educate chapter members on the impact of Drug Education and Counseling.** Knowing what kind of drug education and counseling programs your school offers, along with an understanding of the federal legislation on drug education, will help your chapter develop a sensible action plan for your campus.

Steps to a successful meeting:

- **Conduct Research.** What is your school's drug policy, what type of information does your school offer? Add this information to the Drug Education and Counseling PowerPoint presentation.
- **Brainstorm.** Allow enough time for chapter members to talk about issue and to decide what direction your chapter wants to go. Consider forming a committee to spearhead efforts.
- **Further Information.** Pass out copies of the SSDP materials on this issue, including the Legislative Guide, Talking Points, Grassroots Guide, and Position Paper.

2. **Understand the Media and Write a Letter To the Editor (LTE) about the Failures of D.A.R.E.** One of the easiest ways to get press is to write a Letter To the Editor (LTE). The Media Awareness Project is a clearing house for LTEs about the Drug War. It is user-friendly, Offers tips on how to write a LTE.

Link to Map: <http://www.mapinc.org/>

Tip for getting published:

- **Make it Local.** Relate it to an article recently published in the source.
- **Find an Angle.** Is your school thinking about implementing D.A.R.E.? Did you find some startling news through your research? Hook your readers.
- **Make it Timely.** News is now. Respond to a published article within a day or two.
- **Follow Directions.** Different newspapers have different deadlines and word requirements.
- **Simple is Best.** Make one argument. Third grade reading level is standard.
- **Use your Resources.** Check Map Inc and the resources page on this site for sample LTEs on D.A.R.E. Contact SSDP's Media Director if you have any questions.
- **Spread the Word.** When your lte is published, be sure to post it to SSDPTalk and News Hawk it through MAP Inc.

Make media a cornerstone of your chapter's actions. Think about it every time your chapter does anything. The Media Survival Guide, located in SSDP Chapter Start-up kits, breaks down different types of media tools. Contact SSDP's Media Director for press lists and talking points.

Additional Resources:

- **Tips to Writing a LTE**
- **More Tips**
- **A Sample LTE**

3. **Invite an Expert to Your Campus.** If your chapter plans on passing a student government resolution or lobbying the university administration on this issue, build support and awareness on campus by inviting a speaker to your campus.

Steps to a successful event:

- **Find a Good Speaker.** Good speakers convey enthusiasm, build a sense of community, and impart important information. As a general rule, don't pay for an honorarium unless your student government funds it. Enough drug policy experts are stoked for the opportunity. Check out the resources page for a list of speakers, or ask for recommendations on SSDPTalk. The National Office can

connect you to good speakers and help you book them.

- **Book the event.** Two or three people should organize the event. The core organizer should nail down a date that works for chapter members, the speaker, and the university. Check your school's calendar to make sure your event won't have to compete with the same audience. Allow at least one month to plan for the event.
- **Pack the House.** Find a few TAs to offer extra credit for students attending the event. Blast chapter lists, personal lists, and SSDPTalk. Advertise in the school newspaper, flier, and chalk the sidewalks/classroom boards. Make announcements in related classes. Invite the SGA, professors and key administrators.
- **Press.** Designate one person as the media spokesperson, fax out a media advisory, and follow-up. See the media guide for details and contact SSDP's Media Director for press lists and talking points.
- **Advance Work.** Call and confirm your invited speaker's arrival time, equipment needs, and lodging. Arrive early at the airport to pick them up. Have a back-up plan: what will you do if the speaker is late? What if the room has no chairs?
- **Bang for your Buck.** Collect name, email address and phone from attendees. Unless they opt-out, add them to your chapter list. Promote your organization before the event, table, and stick around for questions.
- **Follow-up.** Be sure to send the speaker a thank-you note, and add attendees to your chapter list.

4. **Persuade Student Government and Faculty Government to Support Reality Based Drug Education Programs or to end Zero-Tolerance Policies on Campus.** More than 110 student governments have passed resolutions calling for the repeal of the Higher Education Act Drug Provision. Those resolutions continue to be a powerful way to exemplify student support for repeal to community members, media and legislators. SSDP plans to replicate this strategy to address the lack of reality-based drug education programs or to reform campus drug policies. The resolutions will be helpful when SSDP members meet with community members, university administration or the media.

How to Lobby your Student Government and Faculty Government::

- **Find a Champion.** Do your research, and find a student government representative that will help you pass the resolution. Contact the person and e-mail them the Legislative Paper and request a meeting.
- **Know the Process.** Ask your champion what you need to do to get the resolution passed. It will probably involve presenting your argument at a meeting and educating other members.
- **Garner Media.** This is a great time to write an opinion-editorial about why it is important for the student government to pass the resolution. Positive press will help. Notify the press when you pass the resolution.
- **Use your Resources.** Keep the national office updated on your progress. The Outreach Coordinator, Media Director and Legislative Director are here to help you with logistics, talking points and legislative questions. SSDPTalk is another great resource.

Additional Resources:

- **A Sample Resolution**
- **Schools with Resolutions**

5. **Lobby University Administration to Improve University Drug Policy or Drug Education and Counseling Programs.** SSDP chapters are working to improve drug education and counseling programs in three different ways. Some SSDP chapters are working to improve university drug policies. Other SSDP chapters start drug resource centers on campus. A growing number of activists are working to utilize academia by coordinating large-scale studies on drug education or drug use behavior. SSDP's Outreach Coordinator can connect you to chapters and members with experience on these actions.

- **Lobby University Administration to Change University Drug Policy.**
Many universities have draconian policies dealing with drug use on residence halls and/or campus. For example, if University of Iowa

students suspected of drug use are routinely arrested, kicked out of the dorms, and forced into drug treatment. University of Iowa SSDP is working to reform this counter-productive policy.

Several SSDP and NORML chapters have affected university drug policies. Several years ago, Ohio University SSDP prevented university administration from implementing zero-tolerance marijuana policy. NORML Alumni and Dancesafe.org Executive Director, Marc Brandl, used the media to embarrass American University administration for enforcing zero-tolerance policies.

- [Know the Process](#). Ask your champion what you need to do to get the resolution passed. It will probably involve presenting your argument at a meeting and educating other members.
- [Start a Drug Resource Center on Campus](#).
Scarlett Swerdlow, now SSDP's Executive Director, worked with UC Berkeley SSDP to procure funding and start a drug resource center on campus. The drug resource center provides free, factual, science-based drug education information to students. The center frequently educates fraternities and sororities about ways to drink responsibly. SSDP member Micah Daigle is working to start a drug resource center at the University of Rhode Island.
- [Work with a graduate department head to coordinate a large-scale drug education related study](#).
As students, we can utilize academia to fill the huge gap in drug education research. Credible, un-biased research from universities will help us to create sound, sensible drug policies. Some grant foundations, like the Robert Wood Foundation, is interested in funding large scale drug education related studies.

Contact SSDP's Outreach Coordinator for contact information for further information and contact information for experts in this area.

ACTION PLAN ACTION PLAN FOR HIGH SCHOOL SSDP CHAPTERS

As a High School student, you have a powerful opportunity to raise awareness about the ineffectiveness of D.A.R.E. and other abstinence-only drug education programs. The following actions are for High School SSDP chapters trying to replace D.A.R.E.-like programs with science-based, factual drug education and counseling programs.

1. **Devote one chapter meeting to educate chapter members on ineffectiveness of D.A.R.E. programs and the need to improve drug education and counseling programs in High Schools.** Knowing what kind of drug education and counseling programs your school offers, along with an understanding of the federal legislation on drug education, will help your chapter develop a sensible action plan to improve your school's drug education and counseling programs.

Steps to a successful meeting:

- [PowerPoint](#). SSDP National prepared a brief PowerPoint presentation on the ineffectiveness of D.A.R.E. programs and the legislative history of federal drug education and counseling legislation. SSDP encourages you to conduct your own research into your school's drug education and counseling programs, and to add it to the PowerPoint presentation.
- [Conduct Research](#). A few questions to answer: (1) Is there a center or room in your school with information about drugs and their effects? (2) If so, is the information accurate and up-to-date? (3) Does your school offer a full-time drug education counselor? (4) Is there D.A.R.E. in your high school or middle school?
- [Logistics](#). Set a meeting and advertise. Make sure you have the proper equipment to show PowerPoint. Go through the presentation a couple of times before the meeting.
- [Brainstorm](#). Allow enough time for chapter members to talk about issue and to decide what direction your chapter wants to go. Consider forming a committee to spearhead efforts.
- [Further Information](#). Pass out copies of the SSDP materials on this issue, including the Legislative Guide, Talking Points, Grassroots

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3. **Circulate a survey to evaluate your school's drug education and counseling programs.** Ask your peers to evaluate your school's drug education programs. The results will help gauge what is right about your school's drug education programs, and what types of reforms are needed.
 - **Develop a survey.** Brainstorm with your chapter members about the issues facing your school. Develop a set of questions to address these concerns. Use language that is objective as possible.
Sample Questions:
 - a. Do you feel that your school offers accurate and up-to-date information on drugs?
 - b. Did you go through a D.A.R.E. program?
 - c. If so, rate the program's effectiveness on a scale of 1-5
 - d. Do you think that drug use and violence go hand-in-hand?
 - e. Do you feel comfortable asking your drug education counselor about drugs?
 - f. What could your school do to improve drug education and counseling programs?
 - **Link to Surveys on drug use.**
 - a. <http://www.nida.nih.gov/Infobox/HSYouthtrends.html>
 - b. <http://www.nida.nih.gov/DrugPages/MTF.html>
 - **Pack the House.** Find a few TAs to offer extra credit for students attending the event. Blast chapter lists, personal lists, and SSDPTalk. Advertise in the school newspaper, flier, and chalk the sidewalks/classroom boards. Make announcements in related classes. Invite the SGA, professors and key administrators.
 - **Collect information.** Set a goal date and a goal for the number or percentage of participants. Allow students to answer anonymously.
4. **Give a presentation about alternatives to D.A.R.E. education to principal or Board of Education.** Open and rational communication

about drug education and counseling programs is essential to improving your school's programs. Educate your principal or Board of Education about alternatives to D.A.R.E. or D.A.R.E.-like education programs. If you are not comfortable meeting with the Board of Education, meet with your school's principal.

- **Set the Meeting.** Request time with your school principal or board of education.
- **Prepare.** Consider using part of the Power Point presentation. Have two or three members of your chapter go to the meeting. Contact SSDP's legislative director to help develop an agenda for the meeting.
- **Information.** Give your school principal a copy of the legislative guide titled: Reforms needed in Drug Education and Counseling and a copy of the monitoring the future study concluding that D.A.R.E. is ineffective. Also give your principal a copy of Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens, Drugs, and Drug Education, found at: <http://www.safety1st.org/>
- **Follow-Up.** Send your principal a brief thank-you note for his/her time, and offer to help answer any questions he/she may have.

5. Lobby school officials to remove D.A.R.E. from high school or middle school curriculum. If your High School or middle school offers D.A.R.E. programs, you can spearhead an effort to remove the program. Contact SSDP's Legislative Director if you are interested in this action.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SSDP STAFF

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Washington, D.C. 20009
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F: 202.293-8344

RESOURCES FOR CHAPTERS:

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK ON DRUG EDUCATION AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

D.A.R.E.

<http://www.dare.com/home/default.asp>

D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is a collaborative program in which local law enforcement and local schools join together to educate students about the personal and social consequences of substance abuse and violence. The D.A.R.E. curricula is designed to be delivered sequentially from grades K-12. First developed in 1983, D.A.R.E. has undergone multiple revisions as research findings increased knowledge of effective substance abuse prevention among school-aged youth.

D.A.R.E.'s primary mission is to provide children with the information and skills they need to live drug-and-violence-free lives. Additionally, it establishes positive relationships between students and law enforcement, teachers, parents, and other community leaders.

Safety First

<http://www.safety1st.org/>

To improve outreach to parents, the Drug Policy Alliance created the Safety First project in 2002. Safety First is dedicated to providing parents of adolescents with honest, science-based information about drugs and drug education. In 1999, Dr. Marsha Rosenbaum wrote Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens, Drugs, and Drug Education to provide parents with the tools needed to evaluate and discuss strategies for protecting their teens from drug abuse. Since the original publication of the booklet, more than 100,000 copies have been distributed worldwide. Staff for other organizations who work on the topic.

Marsha Rosenbaum

Marsha Rosenbaum is the mother of an 20-year-old son, a 26-year-old daughter and two adult stepdaughters. She currently directs the Safety First Project of the Drug Policy Alliance. In 1979, she earned her PhD in medical sociology at University of California, San Francisco and was a National Institute on Drug Abuse grantee for eighteen years; completing studies of heroin addiction, crack cocaine, Ecstasy, and drug treatment.

She authored *Pursuit of Ecstasy: The MDMA Experience* (with Jerome Beck); *Pregnant Women on Drugs: Combining Stereotypes and Stigma* (with Sheigla Murphy); *Women on Heroin*; *Safety First: A Reality-Based Approach to Teens, Drugs and Drug Education* and numerous scholarly articles about drug use, drug abuse, drug treatment and drug policy.

In addition, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Oakland Tribune, the San Diego Tribune, the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Detroit News, and Newsday have published her drug-related opinion pieces.

Monitoring the Future

<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

Monitoring the Future is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of American secondary school students, college students, and young adults

American Council for Drug Education

<http://www.acde.org>

The American Council for Drug Education is a substance abuse prevention and education agency that develops programs and materials based on the most current scientific research on drug use and its impact on society.

The Robert Wood Foundation

<http://www.rwjf.org/index.jsp>

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeks to improve the health and health care of all Americans. One of their funding priorities is to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse, tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. Tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs inflict an enormous toll on Americans, especially among our youth.



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