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The New  
**D.A.R.E.<sup>®</sup>**  
Program

**Media Toolkit**

*for D.A.R.E. Officers  
and Community Members*

**Study conducted by  
The University of Akron**

**Funded by  
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

**Supported by  
D.A.R.E. America**

**Toolkit developed by  
Carnevale Associates, LLC**

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## ***Introduction***

The information and suggestions in this kit will help guide you as you engage with and instruct parents, teachers, members of the media, and members of the general public about the New D.A.R.E. program and the study that is currently taking place to develop and evaluate its effectiveness.

No community is immune to the risks and consequences of youth drug abuse—but if parents, mentors, and youth understand and support the New D.A.R.E. program, drug abuse and its devastating consequences can be prevented from affecting so many lives. Your efforts to study and share the information in this kit are a major step toward gaining community awareness and support.

## ***About the Study***

The University of Akron's Institute for Health and Social Policy, under a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and with the enthusiastic support of D.A.R.E. America, is developing and evaluating new curricula for the D.A.R.E. middle (7th grade) and high school (9th grade) programs. The goal of the project is to design and test the next generation of research-based school curricula for substance abuse and violence prevention.

This study, the Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Study, is the first national study to blend the latest in prevention science with the largest prevention delivery network in existence, D.A.R.E., which now operates in 80% of all school districts around the country and reaches 36 million young people each year. D.A.R.E. has evolved into the most extensive network for drug prevention education.

The new curricula incorporate the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for substance abuse prevention programming. The program is designed to reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and prevent violence among youth.

The Institute for Health and Social Policy was established in 1999 for the study of the delivery of effective health and social services. The goal of the Institute is to improve the quality of services delivered to specific target groups most at risk of health and social consequences.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grant making in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost; to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse -- tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

## **In this Kit:**

- ❖ What to do in your community
- ❖ Working with the Media
- ❖ Interviewing 101
- ❖ Working with Policymakers
- ❖ Communicating Effectively
- ❖ Fact Sheets
- ❖ Talking Points
- ❖ Sample Press Release
- ❖ Sample One-Pager
- ❖ Sample Letter
- ❖ Sample Article
- ❖ Resources

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## ***What you can do in your community...***

**Arrange a Newspaper, Radio or T.V. Interview:** The guidelines and sample questions in this toolkit can help you rally support by communicating with media representatives in your community. The media tips can help you gain coverage for the implementation and evaluation of the New D.A.R.E. program, and to insure that the coverage is both positive and substantive.

**Do your homework:** Make sure you are up-to-date on the details of the new curriculum and University of Akron study. Visit the study website at [www.asapstudy.org](http://www.asapstudy.org) for more information.

**Spread the Word about the Study:** Send a fax or email to colleagues and friends; reach out to organizations and share information about the New D.A.R.E. Program.

**Study the Talking Points:** Use the talking points in this kit to prepare for either print or broadcast interviews, as well as presentations you make to local organizations.

**Schedule a Briefing:** Organize a breakfast or meeting to brief key community members or constituent groups about the changes to D.A.R.E. and the results of the study.

**Modify and Send out the Sample Press Release:** The press release included here is a model for dissemination to local and state press agencies regarding new developments within the D.A.R.E. program.

**Mail or Fax the Sample Letter:** This letter can help you explain to media representatives and members of your community (parents, teachers, administrators, etc.) why they or their audience need to know about the New D.A.R.E. program and why it is being implemented.

**Tie in national statistics:** Use national statistics about adolescent drug use to highlight your D.A.R.E. program. Leading national surveys of substance use include the Monitoring the Future Study (released in December), the National Household Survey (released in September), and the annual PRIDE Survey (released in July).

**Partner with local prevention organizations:** Share knowledge with local prevention organizations. Join local community coalitions, or form a coalition to work on drug prevention issues across all community sectors.

**Make important leaders aware of the potential of the project:** Through meetings, briefings, letters, emails, faxes, and articles, educate all members of your community—especially key leaders—about the New D.A.R.E. program and the impact you are having on important local issues. Presentations, op-eds, letters and networking to key stakeholders are also effective ways of communicating your efforts and results. Remember, information about your community's programs and efforts is more powerful if it comes from you.

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## ***Working with the Media***

**Know the media in your area and establish a media list.** Ask yourself who writes the local columns for the newspapers, and who has written articles about D.A.R.E. or youth programs in the past. Similarly, consider radio talk show hosts who would be interested in learning more about the New D.A.R.E. program. Focus on media and networks that parents and kids are most likely to read, watch, or listen to.

**Don't leave multiple phone messages.** Be persistent in trying to reach someone and call repeatedly if necessary, but don't leave more than one message. Ask an operator or junior staff person when the individual you are trying to reach is usually in his or her office. If the media representative prefers to communicate via email, ask for his or her address and make contact that way as well.

**Always provide a contact at the top of all media correspondence,** including the contact's name, email address, and fax number. Preferably use the name of the person making the phone calls.

**Follow through with phone calls before and after you send material.** Don't give up: if the first media representative you contact isn't interested, try another contact at that media outlet. Different shows and departments do not usually coordinate. Some newspaper departments or television segments may be more interested in your story than others. Keep trying until you find someone who wants to give you coverage.

**Time your contacts.** Mail and call well in advance and send a reminder with any updates via fax or email before any major event.

**Keep a good record with your Media Contact Sheets.** Whenever you get a call from a member of the media, make a note of all the information concerning the caller, including his or her contact information, and who else he or she is planning to interview. Make notes of questions you had difficulty answering, and even write down particularly good responses that you might want to use again in the future.

**Use your letterhead and follow the standard format for press releases.**

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# ***Interviewing 101***

The interview. Whether you are meeting with a policymaker, doing a live TV interview, or conducting a phone interview with a local reporter, there are several basic hints to help you through the experience. Chief among them: remember that an interview is an opportunity to tell your story as you want it to be told

## **The Basics**

- ❖ Know the reporter. Ask questions (who else they are interviewing, when is their deadline). Who does the reporter work for (TV, national newspaper, local newspaper, magazine)? Who is the audience?
- ❖ Be prepared
- ❖ Know your facts
- ❖ Stay in control
- ❖ Bridge to your key messages
- ❖ Be yourself!

Rule #1 in working with the media is to be prepared. Know your key messages. Do your homework.

## **Use Quotable Language**

- ❖ Be concise
- ❖ Don't use jargon - be aware of your audience
- ❖ Define terms as you go: "Am I getting too technical for you?"
- ❖ Use analogies, metaphors, comparisons, contrasts
- ❖ Use examples and supporting materials as transitions

## **Take Control**

- ❖ Know the process
- ❖ Be Prepared
- ❖ Fine-Tune Your Story
- ❖ Anticipate Tough Questions
- ❖ Be aware of emotional responses
- ❖ Admit if you don't know something
- ❖ Know who to refer reporters to for information you don't have

## **Useful Hints and Reminders**

- ❖ Admit if you don't know the answer to a question;
- ❖ Nothing is off the record;
- ❖ Don't use jargon;
- ❖ Don't volunteer negatives;
- ❖ Know your key messages; and
- ❖ Know how to pivot from a tough question back to your key messages.

### **Bridging: Turning negatives into positives**

- But what's more important..
  - Let me add..
  - That's not my area of expertise, but what I can tell you is...
  - Let me put that in perspective...
  - That reminds me...
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# ***Working with Policymakers***

## **How to Begin**

It is essential that lawmakers and key policymakers hear about substance abuse prevention efforts and priorities from constituents and experts. Advocacy is as simple as a letter or phone call. And with preparation and knowledge your advocacy efforts can be very effective.

In beginning your advocacy efforts it is important to know your issue, know the facts about the University of Akron study, and educate yourself on the legislative process. Involve your policymaker in your organization's activities. Educate your member and other important decision makers about your issue and your successes. Build strong working relationships with key staff members. Put them on the mailing list for your publications, newsletters, reports evaluations, press releases, etc.

## **Sample Goals**

1. Familiarize the policymaker with your programs goals and activities.
2. Take the opportunity to educate them on the unique issues facing your community.
3. Highlight the study and other special initiatives.
4. Ask for specific ways the policymaker can support your cause. Examples include attending a meeting or youth forum, writing an article in your next newsletter, helping your community address a specific issue, or promoting D.A.R.E. through his/her work.

## **What is Advocacy?**

A vast majority of important social changes have been driven by the advocacy efforts of charitable organizations. Civil rights, women's suffrage, drunk driving laws, and clean air initiatives have all been advanced by the efforts of charitable groups. In fact, charitable organizations are among the most effective at affecting social change. D.A.R.E. officers and prevention organizations have the ability to promote their comprehensive, collaborative approaches to address substance abuse and violence in their communities through advocacy.

Lobbying and advocacy are often confused. As a result, a great percentage of U.S. nonprofits do not actively advocate out of intimidation and fear of losing their 501(c)3 status. Lobbying involves taking specific positions on legislation, whereas advocacy is much broader. What many don't realize is that most advocacy activities are not considered lobbying at all.

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Advocacy means educating your policymakers and their staff about your organization and issue through letters, meetings, and testimony at a hearing. These activities are not considered lobbying. Lobbying includes any communication or activities with legislators, government offices, or government employees about pending or proposed legislation, including encouragement of your members or the general public to contact legislators regarding such legislation.

## **Permissible Activities**

You are permitted to “educate” their policymakers about your activities. For example, invite them to visit your site, highlight the work you are doing, and discuss the impact of your work on drug abuse. Rules are in place, however, to prohibit the use of federal funds to “lobby” for more federal funds. To ensure you remain in compliance with these rules, we provide the following guidelines below:

- ✓ You cannot communicate with legislators, government officials, or government employees with respect to pending or proposed legislation.
  - ✓ You cannot encourage the public to contact legislators or otherwise take action with respect to pending or proposed legislation.
  - ✓ You cannot endorse political candidates in any way.
  - ✓ You cannot align your site with political parties. You must be nonpartisan, not bipartisan.
  - ✓ You cannot use federal funds to lobby. If your organization received a combination of federal and non-federal funds, then federal funds must be segregated and not used for lobbying activities. If you only receive federal funds, then your organization cannot lobby. Organizations that do not adhere to lobbying guidelines and do not elect to come under the 501(c)(h) law risk losing their tax-exempt status.
  - ✓ Also remember that when you meet with policymakers you represent your organization, not the University of Akron, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, or D.A.R.E. America.
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## ***Communicating Your Message***

There are a variety of ways to communicate with your policymakers: letters, scheduling meetings, providing testimony at a hearing, and electronic communication either through email or fax machines. Which ever way you decide to communicate, it is essential that you start to build a relationship with your policymakers.

### **Preparation**

- Prepare your key messages and materials.
- Prepare for questions that may be asked.
- Get to know your policymakers. What are their interests? Priorities? Background?

### **Letter Checklist**

- Write on personal or business letterhead.
- Keep your letter to one page and personalize. Use the letter found in this toolkit to guide you.
- Include your key messages and make sure your goals are clearly communicated.
- Be absolutely sure you spelled their name correctly and have the correct title.
- Ask for a reply.

### **Meetings with Policymakers: Checklist**

- Make an appointment. Be on time.
- Prepare.
- Be brief (5-10 minutes).
- Leave a one-page fact sheet on the New D.A.R.E. Program and your program.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, don't bluff. Go home and do your research and provide the answer as soon as possible.
- Send a Thank-You
- Follow-up.

### **Sample Meeting Agenda**

1. Introduce yourself and any staff that have come with you.
  2. Give background on your organization.
  3. Explain your program and the study.
  4. Summarize the accomplishments and challenges of your local D.A.R.E. program.
  5. Explain how they can help your program, including support at local events, letters in your newsletter, or attending a forum to hear the concerns of youth in the community.
  6. Stress the importance of drug prevention to the community.
  7. Leave your one-pager.
  8. Be grateful for their time and support.
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## Communicating Effectively with Policymakers

- ❖ It is essential to build a strong relationship with staff members. Find out which assistants cover education and health issues.
  - ❖ Put key leaders and policymakers on the mailing list for your publications, newsletters, and press releases.
  - ❖ Include them in award ceremonies, breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, press conferences, community events, award ceremonies, and other community activities. Invite them to present awards or make remarks. Invite them to neighborhood events, like youth activities, and community forums. Take pictures. Feature their participation in your newsletters.
  - ❖ Involve policymakers in press conferences related to D.A.R.E.. Major enforcement efforts, such as sting operations, the award of new funds, or the release of evaluation results are examples of potential press conferences.
  - ❖ Include Member and/or staff in any D.A.R.E. related initiative, such as graduations and the announcement of program results.
  - ❖ Invite your policymakers to contribute articles to your newsletter and other publications.
  - ❖ Policymakers are eager to hear what young people have to say. Have youth that your organization works with write letters to policymakers about their successes and challenges.
  - ❖ Set up regular briefings (15 minute updates).
  - ❖ Schedule time with your Member of Congress and/or key staff members when you are in Washington.
  - ❖ Interact! Meet face-to-face with your policymakers. Use the telephone, write letters, testify before Congress or your state legislature, provide useful information about drug prevention and the study to members, and build relationships.
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# Substance Abuse Fact Sheet

The leading surveys indicate a serious drug problem among today's youth. Though trends of illicit drug use have leveled off in the last ten years, efforts to prevent substance abuse are still imperative. Successes such as the recent decline in youth tobacco use are important milestones for the prevention community.

- By the time a youth graduates from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, there is a fifty percent chance that he or she has tried an illicit substance at least once.
- Adolescents who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, experience school failure, or be seriously injured from driving while impaired.
- Adolescents who use alcohol or illegal drugs are more likely to be at risk for suicide.
- Students who drink alcohol during adolescence have a reduced ability to learn, compared with those youth who do not drink until adulthood. (*Age-Dependent Inhibition Study*)
- Alcohol and drug use are associated with poor academic performance, impaired development, mental health issues, and many other problems that affect youth.
- Recent findings regarding adolescent drug and alcohol use reveal that: 1) marijuana remains the most widely used illicit drug; 2) the illegal use of alcohol by minors is common; and 3) the use of drugs such as Ecstasy and steroids are rising. (*2001 Monitoring the Future*)

## Monitoring the Future Survey<sup>1</sup>

- According to the 2001 Study, at least half of all youth have at least tried illicit drugs, alcohol, or tobacco **by the time they finish high school**.
- Six of ten 12<sup>th</sup> grade students report having been **drunk** at least once in their lifetime.
- One out of every four graduating high school seniors uses an illicit substance on a current or past month basis. One in five use marijuana regularly.
- More than one quarter of 8<sup>th</sup> graders has used an **illicit drug in their lifetime**; about half of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 12<sup>th</sup> grades have done so.
- **Marijuana** is the most commonly used illicit drug among all three grades, 9.2% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, 19.8% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 22.4% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders are current users.
- **MDMA (ecstasy)** has been one of the most rapidly rising drugs of abuse among youth in recent years – lifetime use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders doubled from 1998 to 2001.
- Unlike other drugs, **inhalants** are more frequently used by the youngest students, 4.0% percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are current users of inhalants, compared with 2.4% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 1.7% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders.

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<sup>1</sup> The Monitoring the Future (MTF) study, a school-based survey of 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, is an important source of information on drug use among youth. The MTF has been collecting detailed information on drug use, drug-related attitudes and beliefs, and related factors on 12<sup>th</sup> graders since 1975 and on 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders since 1991. Selected findings from the 2001 survey are presented.

- The most commonly used substance among all three grades is **alcohol**. More than 21.5% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders are current users of alcohol, increasing to 39.0% for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 49.8% for 12<sup>th</sup> graders. And almost 30% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported they had consumed five or more drinks in a row in the last two weeks (**binge drinking**).
- In 2001, the declining trend observed over the past several years in **teen smoking** continued.
- Student's **perceptions of the risk of smoking marijuana** have weakened in recent years. Nearly three-quarters (72.2%) of 8<sup>th</sup> graders perceive great risk in smoking marijuana regularly – this is down 2.5% from 2000.

## National Household Survey on Drug Abuse<sup>2</sup>

- In 2001, an estimated 15.9 million Americans age 12 years or older used an **illicit drug** during the month immediately prior to the Survey. This estimate represents 7.1 percent of the household population. These users are identified as "current drug users."
- **Marijuana** is the most commonly used illicit drug--77 percent of current illicit drug users used marijuana, and approximately 56 percent consumed only marijuana. There were 12.2 million current users of marijuana in 2001.
- The Survey reports that 10.8 percent of **youth between the ages of 12 and 17** were current users of illicit drugs in 2001. This represents an increase of 11 percent over the rate of 9.7 percent in 2000.
- An estimated 2.4 million Americans used **marijuana** for the **first time** in 2000, relatively unchanged from 2.3 million in 1999 and 2.5 million in 1998. The average age at first use was 17.5 years.
- **Youth** aged 12 to 17 have constituted **about two-thirds of the new users of marijuana** in recent years, with young adults aged 18 to 25 constituting most of the remaining third.
- Even more concerning is that the several measures of youth perception of risks of drug use declined significantly from 2000 to 2001. The percentage of youth reporting **great risk** in smoking **marijuana** once or twice a week declined from 56.0 percent to 53.5 percent, as did those reporting **great risk** of using **cocaine** once a month (from 55.4 percent to 54.1 percent), and those reporting great risk of trying heroin once or twice a week (from 84.1 to 83.1 percent).
- About 10.1 million individuals between the ages of 12 and 20 years reported current use of alcohol. This represents 28.5 percent of this age group for which alcohol is an illegal substance. About 19 percent of this population reported binge drinking.
- Youth cigarette use in 2001 declined slightly in 2001 compared to 2000 (13 % and 13.4 %, respectively).
- Youth perceiving great risk from using marijuana once or twice a week were less likely to use substances that youth perceiving moderate, slight, or no risk. 2001 Household Survey

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<sup>2</sup> The NHSDA is the Federal Government's primary source of information on drug use among the general U.S. noninstitutionalized population. Data are collected each year on individuals aged 12 and older from a nationally representative sample. Key findings from the 2001 Survey are presented.

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## ***Prevention Fact Sheet***

Drug use is preventable. If children reach adulthood without using tobacco, alcohol, inhalants and illicit drugs they are unlikely to develop a chemical-dependency problem. Prevention is the ultimate key to addressing the initiation and progression of drug use while empowering communities to address their drug problems. Research has clearly shown that school-based substance abuse prevention is effective.

### **Principles of Effective Substance Abuse Prevention**

The research, theories, and values which guided the selection and organization of content and the learning activities across the New D.A.R.E. curriculum include:

- The health, social and legal consequences involved in experimenting with and using tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, and illegal drugs;
- Understanding of the actual extent of use by peers;
- Communications, assertiveness, refusal strategies, and other resistance skills are central to being able to cope with the pressures to use substances.
- The development of a set of beliefs and understandings, which support their development of and use of resistance skills;
- The involvement of parents and community leaders;
- Multi-year interventions;
- Activities that students view as realistic and engaging; and
- Sufficient time to support extensive practice and in-depth classroom discussions.

### **Research on adolescent development shows that:**

- Adolescents want to feel that they belong and are respected by their peers.
  - They are influenced by many internal and external sources including their families, significant adults, peers and media.
  - Many have a strongly held sense of invincibility and accordingly many have a tendency to experiment, to find out for themselves, to test the limits set by adults and society.
  - Most adolescents respect adults who listen to them, model adulthood, and respect teens as people.
  - Most want to please their parents and significant other adults in their lives.
  - Many adolescents want to “try on” what they view as adult behaviors.
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# ***Program Fact Sheet***

## **The Study**

- This state-of-the-art substance abuse prevention program will be tested and evaluated for a large cohort of students in six U.S. cities— Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, and St. Louis.
- A total of 84 high schools and their approximately 200 feeder middle schools from these six large cities and their surrounding areas will participate in the study.
- Students in urban, suburban, and rural environments will be involved in the study.
- Half of these high school and middle school clusters will be randomly assigned to receive the new program.
- The impact of the revised program will be assessed through a rigorous, scientific evaluation.
- The drug use patterns of these students will be followed for 5 years to determine the impact of the curricula.

## **The 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Curriculum**

- The University of Akron incorporated the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for drug abuse prevention programming into the new curricula.
  - The primary goals of the curricula are to prevent the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and inhalants, as well as the occurrence of violence in the lives of these students.
  - The new school-based substance abuse prevention program builds on the existing D.A.R.E. middle and high school curricula.
  - The new D.A.R.E. middle school curriculum, entitled “Take Charge of Your Life,” uses research and principle-based content and activities that are authentic, life-like and problem-based.
  - The curriculum addresses the complex reasoning behind decisions and actions in 10 lessons.
  - Similar to previous D.A.R.E. programs, the curriculum will be taught by specially-trained D.A.R.E. officers who will act as facilitators in the classroom—lead discussions, model desired behavior, encourage interaction and problem solving, and keep students involved.
  - The main areas of focus in the new middle school curriculum are:
    - ❖ Normative beliefs among adolescents;
    - ❖ Perceptions of risks of substance use/abuse on adolescents; and
    - ❖ Social problem solving skills, including: communication skills, decision making skills, and resistance/assertiveness skills.
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## ***Talking Points***

- 1) With funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the University of Akron has drawn from the most successful prevention approaches to design this new substance use and violence prevention curriculum, which will be delivered through the D.A.R.E. middle and high school programs.
- 2) This is a unique opportunity to improve the effectiveness of drug prevention efforts in communities across America.
- 3) With the full cooperation of D.A.R.E. America, this curriculum was specifically designed to be delivered by D.A.R.E. officers.
- 4) D.A.R.E.'s cooperation is critically important because of its unique and extensive ability to deliver drug prevention programs throughout our nation's schools. D.A.R.E. is the largest drug prevention delivery system in the country, reaching approximately 80% of all school districts.
- 5) If the curriculum proves to be effective in this large-scale test, D.A.R.E. America has committed to making the widespread delivery of this curriculum its highest priority.

### Ten Words That Describe the Program

1. New
2. Research-based
3. DARE
4. Science
5. Tested
6. Evaluated
7. State-of-the-art
8. Comprehensive
9. Collaborative
10. Drug and violence prevention

## ***Top Five Questions About the Program***

### **1) What is the difference between the old curriculum and the new one?**

In the new 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum:

- Content is evidence-based, using information from the prevention and education research literature;
- Activities are authentic, life-like and problem-based;
- Active learning principles and "best teaching" practices are used;
- Curriculum focuses on the complex reasoning behind decisions and actions;
- Police Officers used as facilitators in the classroom; and
- A longitudinal evaluation will test the effectiveness of the new curricula.

### **2) Why is the D.A.R.E. program being used in this study?**

No other prevention curriculum has a nationwide delivery system designed for widespread implementation by highly trained staff. This research will couple a new curriculum with the nations' largest prevention delivery system. It is important to remember that D.A.R.E. is both (1) a specific drug abuse prevention curriculum and (2)

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a school-based distribution channel that currently reaches 80% of all school districts. By combining the best prevention science with the most efficient delivery, it is hoped that the study will result in a state-of-the-art drug prevention program for our nation's young people.

3) **Is this study necessary?**

This study is not only necessary, but critical to the future and well-being of our nation's adolescents. Rates of drug use among adolescents, although down slightly in the past two years, are near an all-time high. D.A.R.E. has created an unparalleled delivery channel for drug education curricula. If the study succeeds in developing a highly effective curriculum for diffusion through D.A.R.E., and if D.A.R.E. succeeds in delivering that curriculum in a large number of communities around the country, it will play a major role in reducing rates of adolescent drug use for many years to come.

4) **Historically D.A.R.E. has been primarily delivered to 5th graders. Why the change to middle and high school?**

The study will focus on middle school and early high school, because previous research has shown this age group to be closer to the age of initiation.

5) **What cities will be using the new curricula? How many students are involved in the study?**

The study involves 122 middle schools and 45 high schools in and around six large U.S. cities—Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, and St. Louis. The study will involve approximately 25,000 students in the selected cities and surrounding areas. Students in urban, suburban, and rural environments will be involved in the study. The drug use patterns of these students and a comparison group of students will be followed for 5 years to determine the impact of the curricula.

If you are involved in the study, be prepared with facts:

- The local schools involved are...
  - XX number of local students will be part of the test.
  - The D.A.R.E. officers implementing the program are from...
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# **Sample Press Release**

## **Your Involvement**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: (Local Contact)**  
**(Phone)**  
**(Web Site)**

### **National Study of the New D.A.R.E. Program Announced (Your City) to Test State-of-the-Art Prevention Curriculum**

(City and State of your Organization; Date)-- Students from (insert city) will be part of a nationwide study to test a new, state-of-the-art substance abuse prevention curriculum through their local D.A.R.E. program. The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron, which developed the curriculum based on the latest prevention research, is conducting the test. It is funded by a \$13.7 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson

Nationwide, a total of 83 high schools and their 122 middle schools will participate in the study. It is estimated that 25,000 students will take part. Working with D.A.R.E., the University of Akron will implement and evaluate the effectiveness of the new curriculum over the next five years. Locally, (insert number) students from (insert names of school district(s)) will be involved in the study. The curriculum will be delivered through the D.A.R.E. middle (7th grade) and high school (9th grade) program.

“We are pleased and excited that our students will have the opportunity to be part of this study,” said (insert name of an Education spokesperson). “Substance abuse among young people is increasing, and we need to avail ourselves of every tool we have to keep students drug-free.”

“Our local D.A.R.E. officers have received special training to prepare them to teach this new curriculum,” noted (insert name of Law Enforcement spokesperson). “It builds upon D.A.R.E.’s 20-year history of prevention efforts, enabling our officers to deepen and strengthen their relationships with the students they work with.”

One key difference in the new curriculum is that D.A.R.E. officers serve as facilitators of classroom activities. The new D.A.R.E. curriculum also focuses on lifelike and problem-based activities, active learning by students, and examines the complex reasoning behind decisions and actions. This new program is designed to reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, as well as prevent violence among youth. If the national study shows that the new curriculum is effective, D.A.R.E. officials have pledged to make national implementation its highest priority.

D.A.R.E.—now operating in 80% of all school districts around the country and reaching over 36 million young people—is the most extensive substance abuse prevention delivery system in the country.

(Insert paragraph about your program/organization)

The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron was established in 1999 for the study of the delivery of effective health and social services. The goal of the Institute is to improve the quality of services delivered to communities and individuals nationwide in order to decrease negative health and social consequences. Dr. Zili Sloboda is the Principal Investigator of the project. The Director of the Institute, Dr. Richard C. Stephens is the Co-Principal Investigator of this study.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grant making in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to basic health care at reasonable cost; to improve care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse -- tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

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# Sample One-Pager

## The New **D.A.R.E.** Program

### **The Project**

The University of Akron's Institute for Health and Social Policy, under a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and with the enthusiastic support of D.A.R.E. America, is developing and evaluating new curricula for the D.A.R.E. middle (7th grade) and high school (9th grade) programs. The goal of the project is to design and test the next generation of research-based school curricula for substance abuse and violence prevention.

This study, the Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Study, is the first national study to blend the latest in prevention science with the largest prevention delivery network in existence, D.A.R.E., which now operates in 80% of all school districts around the country and reaches 36 million young people each year. D.A.R.E. has evolved into the most extensive network for drug prevention education.

The new curricula incorporate the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for substance abuse prevention programming. The program is designed to reduce the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and prevent violence among youth.

### **Testing in Six U.S. Cities**

This state-of-the-art substance abuse prevention program will be tested and evaluated for a large cohort of students in six U.S. cities—Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, and St. Louis. A total of 84 high schools and their approximately 200 feeder middle schools from these six large cities and their surrounding areas will participate in the study. Students in urban, suburban, and rural environments will be involved in the study. Half of these high school and middle school clusters will be randomly assigned to receive the new program. The impact of the revised program will be assessed through a rigorous, scientific evaluation.

### **The Problem**

The leading national survey of drug use among middle and high school students is the University of Michigan's *Monitoring the Future Study*. It reports a serious drug problem among youth today. According to the 2000 *Monitoring the Future Study*, half of all youth have at least tried an illicit substance by the time they finish high school, and about one-quarter of them say they use marijuana currently.

### **Prevention**

Drug use is preventable. If children reach adulthood without using tobacco, alcohol, inhalants and illicit drugs they are unlikely to develop a chemical-dependency problem. Prevention is the ultimate key to addressing the initiation and progression of drug use while empowering communities to address their drug problems. Research has clearly shown that school-based substance abuse prevention is effective.

### **The Program**

The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron incorporated the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for drug abuse prevention programming into the new curricula. The curricula will be delivered through the D.A.R.E. middle (7<sup>th</sup> grade) and high school (9<sup>th</sup> grade) programs.

The primary goals of the curricula are to prevent the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and inhalants, as well as the occurrence of violence in the lives of these students. In order to attain these goals, the curriculum focuses on developing and extending students' capacities to:

1. Understand the health, social, and legal consequences of using and abusing alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and inhalants and engaging in violent behavior;
2. Examine and understand their own beliefs related to alcohol, drug, tobacco, and inhalant use and consequences;
3. Develop and use communication and resistance skills when pressured to use or when confronting potentially violent situations; and
4. Make positive quality of life decisions about substance use and the avoidance of violence.

### **The University of Akron Institute for Health and Social Policy**

The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron was established in 1999 to study the delivery of effective health and social services. The goal of the Institute is to improve the quality of services delivered to specific target groups most at risk of health and social problems.

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# Sample Letter

(Date)

Name

Title

Organization

Address

City, State Zip

Dear (insert name):

We wanted to make you aware of an exciting new development that we believe will strengthen the effectiveness and support of D.A.R.E. in our schools and communities. As you are aware, D.A.R.E. is the single largest and most widely taught substance abuse prevention program in the world. It is working in all 50 states, 80% of school districts nationwide--benefiting over 36 million school children each year.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – one of the premiere foundations supporting drug abuse prevention -- has funded the development and evaluation of the new curricula for the D.A.R.E. middle (7th grade) and high school (9th grade) programs. The goal of the project is to design and test the next generation of research-based school curricula for substance abuse and violence prevention. The impact of the revised program will be assessed through a rigorous, scientific evaluation.

As you know, it is vitally important that we continue to move forward and not delay or cut back the delivery of our drug abuse prevention programs at the very time when they are expected to be further enhanced.

RWJ and the University of Akron have chosen DARE as the model to collectively create and maintain the gold standard of drug prevention. Combining the best prevention science with the most effective delivery system, the highlights include:

- 10 lessons.
- Drug use patterns and comparison group to be followed for five years.
- Content is based on the latest research and principles of prevention.
- Activities are authentic, life-like and problem based.
- Integrates active learning principles and “best teaching” practices.
- Focus on the complex reasoning behind decisions and actions.
- Police officers serve as facilitators in the class

I have additional information you may find useful and can be reached at (000) 111-2222. I look forward to speaking with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Your signature

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# Sample Article

The article below can be used in a variety of ways: send it with a cover letter to your local papers, print it in your organization's newsletter, or ask schools and parent organizations in your community to print it in upcoming materials.

## The New D.A.R.E. Program

The nation's largest drug prevention program is testing a new substance abuse prevention curriculum in six U.S. cities. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and led by prevention scientists at the University of Akron, the revised curricula will be delivered through the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) middle (7<sup>th</sup> grade) and high school (9<sup>th</sup> grade) programs

This study is the first national study to blend the latest in prevention science with the largest prevention delivery network in existence, D.A.R.E., which operates in 80% of all school districts around the country and reaches 36 million young people each year. The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron incorporated the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for drug abuse prevention programming into the new curricula.

According to Dr. Zili Sloboda, the principal investigator, "this is perhaps the most comprehensive prevention study ever conducted. More importantly, this curriculum and D.A.R.E.'s delivery system have the potential of becoming the gold standard in substance abuse prevention."

The new curricula will be tested and evaluated for a large cohort of students in six U.S. cities— Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, and St. Louis. A total of 84 high schools and their approximately 200 feeder middle schools in these six cities and their surrounding areas will participate in the study.

The University of Akron will assess the revised curricula through a rigorous, scientific evaluation over five years. Now in year two of the study, approximately 30,000 students from urban, suburban, and rural environments will be involved in the study. Half of these high school and middle school clusters will be randomly assigned to receive the new program.

The revised D.A.R.E. curriculum builds upon the earlier D.A.R.E. programs and infuses the latest in substance abuse prevention knowledge. The program envisions a new role for the specially-trained D.A.R.E. officers. Officers will act as facilitators in the classroom, leading discussions, modeling desired behavior, encouraging interaction and problem solving, and keeping students involved. The primary emphases of the revised program are to improve normative beliefs among adolescents; increase the perceptions of risks of substance abuse; and improve social problem solving skills, including communication skills, decision making skills, and resistance/assertiveness skills.

To address the problems associated with the major transition into middle and high school, the curricula focus on ways to deal with a specific real set of problematic life situations—namely those involving substances and potentially violent actions. The curriculum is designed to extend students' ability to take charge of their own lives by developing the following capacities:

1. Understand the health, social, and legal consequences of using and abusing alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and inhalants and engaging in violent behavior;
2. Examine and understand their own beliefs related to alcohol, drug, tobacco, and inhalant use and consequences;
3. Develop and use communication and resistance skills when pressured to use or when confronting potentially violent situations; and
4. Make positive quality of life decisions about substance use and the avoidance of violence.

"This is a major revision that should have an incredible impact on kids," says Glenn Levant, president of D.A.R.E. America. "This is a cutting-edge incorporation of the very latest science-based prevention techniques."

Early results from the study showed improved communications skills and beliefs about the prevalence of substance use -- two key indicators of whether they will use drugs. The feasibility study analyzed the short-term effects of the curriculum on student mastery of refusal skills, normative beliefs about peer substance use, and the physical, social and psychological effects of substance use on adolescents. Results were consistent across all participants in the study, regardless of their gender, sex, which school they attended, or which officer taught their class.

Additional results from the study will be released later this year.

For more information, call (202) 467-8844 or visit [www.asapstudy.org](http://www.asapstudy.org)

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## ***Resources***

This kit was authored and distributed by Carnevale Associates, LLC, which handles the communications for the University of Akron study of the New D.A.R.E. program. For more information, contact one of the partners below.

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Princeton, NJ 08543-2316  
1-888-631-9989  
[www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)

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