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PEER PRESSURE AND THE TEENAGE DRUG EPIDEMIC

WHEN JUST SAYING “NO” IS NOT ENOUGH

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is epidemic in Fresno County. Parents, families and communities are torn apart by the illegal use of drugs by their young. The Community Health Committee recognizes the need for a program that responds to the negative effects of peer pressure.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This investigation looked for resources available to high schools for the prevention of drug use among teens.

SUMMARY

To determine the scope of teenage drug abuse and the effects of peer pressure, the Health Committee examined national, state and local surveys, attended a drug abuse seminar, interviewed school administrators and found a prevention program with a high rate of success.

I DISCUSSION

The Health Committee recognizes that drug abuse is epidemic with our youth, who desperately need a program which gives them more clout than to just say “NO”!

A. A national survey of high school students found the following results:

1. Drug use negatively affects student achievement.
2. Regular drug use may lead to early sexual activity.
3. Drug use is associated with an increased risk of suicide.
4. The earlier that drug use begins, the more likely it will be a lifelong problem.
5. Youth who are heavy alcohol consumers are more likely to use drugs.

- B. The Fowler High School Healthy Kids Survey of 2004 showed the following:
 - 1. 8% of seventh grade students were using or had used drugs
 - 2. 21% of ninth grade students were using or had used drugs
 - 3. 48% of eleventh grade students were using or had used drugs
 - 4. That 93% of students surveyed believed use of drugs was harmful.
- C. San Clemente High School reported the following:
 - 1. The percentage of students that were offered drugs at school was 45%.
 - 2. The percentage of students that were offered drugs off campus was 62%.

II EFFECTS OF PEER PRESSURE

- A. Adolescent psychologists report that:
 - 1. Teenagers are highly susceptible to peer pressure.
 - 2. Teenagers ego systems are in a fragile state of development.
 - 3. Adequate parenting does not always overcome the negative suggestions of peers.
- B. A relatively new program, VOLUNTARY DRUG TESTING PROGRAM (VDTP), which is readily available at no cost, is helping many students to say "NO" to offers of drugs. Locally, four high schools are using this program: Fowler, Kingsburg, Clovis and Washington Union. Parents agree for their student to participate in random testing. The results of a positive test are sent directly to the parent with suggestions for help. The names of these students are NEVER given to the school.

III POSITIVE ASPECTS OF VDTP

- A. San Clemente High School in Southern California has offered VDTP for the past four years.
- B. Their recent survey showed the following results from the program:
 - 1. 60% responded that VDTP did prompt a conversation about drugs

2. 26% responded that VDTP reduced the frequency of drug use and among freshmen it was 40%
 3. 26% responded that they used VDPT as a reason to say “NO” to drugs
 4. 48% responded that VDTP made it easier to avoid using drugs when confronted by peer pressure
 5. 57% responded that they wanted the program to continue
 6. Participation has increased significantly from 924 in 2002 to 1607 in 2005.
- C. During the past four years, the participation in the VDTP at San Clemente High School has increased significantly each year.
- D. The principal and athletic director stated the program has had a positive effect on student attendance, dropout rates and academic achievement.
- E. The American Civil Liberties Union has reviewed the program and found no legal grounds to challenge it.

IV ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF VDTP

- A. The school participation is limited to the following:
1. Explaining the program to parents and students
 2. Obtaining the parent-student consent form
 3. Providing a test site
- B. No legal liability for the school district
- C. The Fresno County Office of Education will assist in obtaining grants from the state and federal programs for “Safe and Drug Free Schools”.
- D. The National Student Assistance Association provides a “how to” booklet entitled “What You Need To Know About Starting a Student Drug-Testing Program”. They can be reached at 1-800-257-6310 or visit their web site at <www.nasaa.us>.

V THE COST OF DRUG ADDICTION

- A. If a student starts using drugs in high school and becomes an addict, society not only loses their ideas and energy, but pays a huge price for treating their physical problems and a greater price for their criminal acts, often necessary to support their habit.
- B. The cost of incarceration in Juvenile Hall is \$170 per day.

FINDINGS

- F1 Drug use negatively affects student achievement.¹
- F2 Regular drug use may lead to early sexual activity.²
- F3 Drug use is associated with an increased risk of suicide.³
- F4 The earlier drug use begins, the more likely it will be a lifelong problem.⁴
- F5 Youth who are heavy alcohol consumers are more likely to use drugs.⁵
- F6 Drug use and experimentation with drugs is prevalent in high schools.⁶
- F7 Teenagers are highly susceptible to peer pressure.⁷
- F8 The “Voluntary Drug Test Program” (VDTP) is a successful random drug testing program.⁸
- F9 VDTP prompts conversation about drug usage between parents and students.⁹
- F10 VDTP reduces frequency of drug use among participants.¹⁰
- F11 VDTP has a positive effect on academic achievement and drop out rates in high schools.¹¹

¹ I A 1

² I A 2

³ I A 3

⁴ I A 4

⁵ I A 5

⁶ I B & C

⁷ II A 1

⁸ II B

⁹ III B 1

¹⁰ III B 2

¹¹ III D

- F12 There are no legal obstacles to the VDTP.¹²
- F13 Grants are available for the cost of testing.¹³
- F14 The office of Fresno County Schools can assist in obtaining grants and implementing the program.¹⁴
- F15 Four Fresno County schools are successfully using VDTP.¹⁵
- F16 San Clemente High School has had four years of positive success in the VDTP.¹⁶
- F17 The cost of drug treatment and incarceration is enormous.¹⁷
- F18 Preventing the onset of drug use is the most effective and cost-effective measure.¹⁸

CONCLUSIONS

- C1 Drug use has many detrimental long-term effects.
- C2 Prevention saves lives and taxpayer money.
- C3 The Voluntary Drug Testing Program has proven to be a successful prevention Program.
- C4 The VDTP can be cost-free.
- C5 Help is available to start a VDTP.

COMMENDATIONS

The Office of the Fresno County Schools is to be commended for their efforts in addressing the drug epidemic rampant in the Fresno County High Schools.

The Fresno County high schools of Fowler, Washington Union, Kingsburg and Clovis are to be commended for their implementation of the VDTP.

¹² III E IV B

¹³ IV C & D

¹⁴ IV C

¹⁵ II B

¹⁶ A, B, C, D

¹⁷ V A & B

¹⁸ V A

RECOMMENDATION

R1 The Health Committee of the Fresno County Grand Jury recommends that the Voluntary Drug Testing Program be instituted in every Fresno County high school by the 2007-08 school year.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code §933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses within 60 days of the receipt of this report:

RESPONDENTS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CARUTHERS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
NO. 1 TILLER ST.
CARUTHERS, CA 93609

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
CENTRAL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
4605 N. POLK AVE.
FRESNO, CA 93722

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
COALINGA-HURON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
657 SUNSET ST.
COALINGA, CA 93210

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FIREBAUGH-LAS DELTAS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
1976 MORRIS KYLE DR.
FIREBAUGH, CA 93622

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
2309 TULARE ST.
FRESNO, CA 93721

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
GOLDEN PLAINS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
22000 NEVADA ST.
SAN JOAQUIN, CA 93660

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
KERMAN UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
151 S. FIRST ST.
KERMAN, CA 93630

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
KINGS CANYON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
675 W. MANNING AVE.
REEDLEY, CA 93654

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
LATON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
P.O.BOX 248
LATON, CA 93242

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MENDOTA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
115 MCCABE AVE.
MENDOTA, CA 93640

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PARLIER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
900 NEWMARK AVE.
PARLIER, CA 93648

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
RIVERDALE JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
3086 W. MT. WHITNEY
RIVERDALE, CA 93656

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SANGER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
1905 7TH ST.
SANGER, CA 93657

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SELMA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
30036 THOMPSON AVE.
SELMA, CA 93662

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SIERRA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
29143 AUBERRY ROAD
PRATHER, CA 93651

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURES EMPLOYED

The Health Committee:

1. Attended a drug seminar hosted by MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC. The speakers included a nationally known Medical Director of a drug treatment center, The coordinator of the National Methamphetamine & Chemicals Initiative, a Fresno County Superior Court Judge and the administrator of the Fresno County Alcohol & Drug Program.
2. Met with the Community Health Committee of the Fresno Madera Medical Society
3. Interviewed the following:
 - a. Fowler Unified School District
 - b. Office of the Fresno County Schools
 - c. Fresno County Office of Education Drug Program
 - d. Office of Fresno County Probation Department
 - e. A Juvenile Court Judge
 - f. Psychologists specializing in adolescent drug treatment
4. Reviewed the following documents:
 - a. "CUSD Starts Drug Testing" Clovis Independent Newspaper, 2-17-06
 - b. Fresno Bee Editorials
 - c. Fowler High School Drug Survey, Spring 2004
 - d. San Clemente High School VDTP Report, Fall 2005
 - e. California Adolescent Health Collaborative Newsletter, 10-22-05
5. Obtained statistics from the following sources:
 - a. Fresno County Juvenile Hall
 - b. www.nsaa.us
 - c. www.fcoe.k12.ca.us

**THE
COUNTY OF FRESNO COMMITTEE**
