

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

New Report Describes Experiences of Nine Student Drug Testing Programs

In June 2002 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “testing students who participate in extracurricular activities is a reasonably effective means of addressing the School District’s legitimate concerns in preventing, deterring, and detecting drug use” (p. 14). School districts now considering implementing student drug testing programs may benefit from the results of a recent survey of nine schools that have been pioneers in the field of student drug testing. During the 2001-2002 school year seven public schools and two private schools with successful student drug testing programs were surveyed about their program’s policies, procedures, history, and results. Following are some of the survey findings.

- In every school the student drug testing program’s purpose is the prevention of drug use rather than punishment and the program is part of a larger, comprehensive drug education and prevention initiative.
- All of the drug testing programs include random testing, typically by urinalysis. All of the schools routinely test for marijuana and cocaine and eight schools also test for heroin/codeine, amphetamine/methamphetamine, and PCP. The average program cost per student is \$19 per year.
- The groups of students most commonly tested by the schools are 1) athletes, 2) those participating in extracurricular activities, and 3) students who drive to school. All students are eligible for drug testing in three of the schools surveyed.
- The consequences of a student’s first positive drug test vary from school to school, but generally result in parental notification, loss of playing time for athletes, drug education, counseling/therapy for the student/family, and follow-up drug testing. None of the schools report students with positive drug tests to the police.
- The programs demonstrated their success by reduced number of positive tests, lowered levels of disciplinary problems and self reported drug use.

The major piece of advice offered to other schools interested in starting their own drug testing program was to involve parents, law enforcement, and other community members in the planning process and to make sure they understand that the program is intended to help students say no to drugs.

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from United States Department of Education, *Report of a Preliminary Study: Elements of a Successful School-Based Student Drug Testing Program*, 2002; and Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County v. Earls, 122 S. Ct. 2559 (2002).

“What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools” Report Now Available From ONDCP

The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) recently released a report that answers common questions about school drug testing. The report is available online at www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/pdf/drug_testing.pdf