

**A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research**

University of Maryland at College Park\*

## ***Study Questions Effectiveness of DARE Program; NIJ Says Study Conclusions Are "Overstated"***

*"The results of this meta-analysis suggest that DARE's core curriculum effect on drug use relative to whatever drug education (if any) was offered in the control schools is slight and, except for tobacco use, is not statistically significant" (p.1398).*

This is one of the conclusions from a recently published study conducted by Research Triangle Institute (RTI) and funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The study synthesized the results of eight previously conducted studies in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program among fifth and sixth graders. Project DARE uses specially trained law enforcement officers to teach drug use prevention curriculum in schools across the nation. Other findings of the study were that:

- the DARE program had significant effects on students' drug knowledge and social skills, but that
- the DARE program was less effective than more interactive prevention programs on the measures of drug knowledge, drug attitudes, social skills, and drug use. (Interactive programs emphasize interpersonal factors and interactive teaching strategies such as peer-to-peer teaching.)

After having the study reviewed by three independent technical experts, NIJ concluded that these findings, particularly that the DARE program was less effective than more interactive programs, should be interpreted cautiously. Limitations cited by NIJ were the small number of studies used for analysis, the differences between the programs that were compared, and the low level of drug use among fifth-and sixth-graders.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from S.T. Ennett, N.S. Tobler, C.L. Ringwalt, and R.L. Flewelling. 1994. "How Effective is Drug Abuse Resistance Education? A Meta-Analysis of Project DARE Outcome Evaluations," *American Journal of Public Health* 84 (9):1394-1401 and National Institute of Justice. "The D.A.R.E. Program: A Review of Prevalence, User Satisfaction, and Effectiveness," *National Institute of Justice Update*, October 1994.

Reprints of the Journal of Public Health article can be requested from Susan T. Ennett, Ph.D., Center for Social Research and Policy Analysis, Research Triangle Institute, P.O. Box 12194, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-2194. A copy of the final RTI report and the NIJ Update can be requested from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 800-851-3420 or 301-251-5500. The full RTI report will also be available on the internet in the near future.

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