

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

***Experiment Shows Youth Who Participate in Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program
Less Likely to Initiate Drug and Alcohol Use***

A study of applicants to eight Big Brothers/Big Sisters (BB/BS) programs across the U.S. found that BB/BS participants were significantly less likely than nonparticipants to start using drugs and alcohol during the study period. BB/BS programs create one-to-one relationships between adult volunteers and youth living in single-parent households. Of the 959 10- to 16-year olds who applied to BB/BS programs in 1992 and 1993, half were randomly assigned to a treatment group for which BB/BS matches were made or attempted. The other half were assigned to BB/BS waiting lists for the period of the study. After 18 months the two groups were compared. Overall, BB/BS participants were 46% less likely to start using drugs and 27% less likely to start using alcohol during the study period. The impact was even greater among minority participants--male and female minority participants were approximately 70% less likely to initiate drug use while female minority participants were 54% less likely to initiate alcohol use. The use of random assignment in this study adds considerable scientific validity to these findings.

**Likelihood of Initiating Drug or Alcohol Use for Youth Participating in BB/BS,
Compared with Control Group of Youth Not Participating in BB/BS
(N=487 Participants and 472 Nonparticipants)**

	Drug Use	Alcohol Use
Overall	-46%**	-27%*
Gender		
Male	-55%**	-19%
Female	-27%	-39%
Race/Gender		
Minority Male	-68%**	-11%
Minority Female	-73%*	-54%*
White Male	-33%	-35%
White Female	50%	-8%

**Significant at the .05 level.

*Significant at the .10 level.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Joseph P. Tierney, Jean B. Grossman, and Nancy L. Resch, *Making A Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters* (Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures, November 1995). For more information, contact Public/Private Ventures at 215-557-4400.

DRUG STRATEGIES RELEASES GUIDE TO SCHOOL DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Making the Grade, published by Drug Strategies, assesses key prevention elements of 47 nationally available school drug education programs so that consumers can judge for themselves which programs will effectively reduce alcohol, drug and tobacco use among youth in their community. For more information, contact Drug Strategies at 202-663-6090 or 202-663-6110 (fax).

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