



Title IV Intervention and Prevention Assets Santa Ana Unified School District

The Santa Ana Unified Schools District administered the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) in Spring of 2008, in order to assist in providing a thorough understanding of the scope and nature of youth behaviors in the district. The random representative district sample was designated by WestEd. The total number of high school students surveyed in 7th, 9th, and 11th grades was 1,517. In the elementary 5th grade representative random sample there were 836 students surveyed. The survey data is essential in guiding decision making and in developing effective prevention, health, and youth development programs. The results are also essential for raising public awareness and fostering program support. The Santa Ana Unified School District uses CHKS results to assist schools in preventing youth health-risk behaviors and in promoting positive youth development, resilience, and wellbeing.

The CHKS asks students several questions that help determine the level and risk of substance use as a guide for programs targeting serious involvement. Data was provided that showed the percent of students who drank alcohol or smoked marijuana on school property, had been sick after drinking, had been high in their lifetime, and drank excessively in the past month. 8% of 7th grade students, 15% of 9th grade students, and 18% of 11th grade students reported being drunk on school property. Adolescent binge drinkers open themselves up to many alcohol related problems, such as losing control over their actions, making poor choices, and taking part in high-risk activities such as unprotected sex or driving while intoxicated. Driving under the influence is one of the main causes of traffic accidents and death among youth. To gauge the overall risk to students from drinking and driving, high school students were asked how often they had ever driven after drinking or been driven by a friend under the influence. 27% of 9th graders and 37% of 11th graders indicated they had either driven a car after drinking or been a passenger in a car driven by a friend who had been drinking. 55% of 7th graders reported riding in a car with a driver who had been drinking. At the intermediate school level, these drivers are mainly parents and guardians. 11% of 7th grade students, 25% of 9th grade students, and 30% 11th grade students reported using drugs and being high. 8% 7th graders, 15% ninth graders, and 17% eleventh graders reported current (within the previous 30 days) marijuana use. Because marijuana is long lasting, easily concealed, and consumed quickly, its use has been particularly associated with attending school "high." Special attention was given to alcohol and other drug use at school, as this is a key indicator of serious involvement, as well as a lack of attachment or sense of belonging to the school. These behaviors interfere with students' educational development.

Findings from the CHKS are used to assess student needs, as well as to develop and evaluate programs that address those needs. Data collected from the survey was an integral part of efforts to promote school reform and improve student academic performance. Research consistently demonstrates that many of the health risks and school environment factors assessed by the CHKS are fundamental barriers to learning.

The following programs met selection criteria with input from staff and parent groups including the Santa Ana Unified District Advisory Committee. They met stringent requirements of the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSC), as contained in the No Child Left Behind Act, state Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) program, and the U.S. Department of Education's Principals of Effectiveness. These programs send a positive message to students, schools, and communities about the importance of healthy behaviors and environments that foster well-being. They encourage students to become resilient and competent in seeking positive alternatives to at-risk behaviors.

Project Alert

Project ALERT is a drug prevention curriculum for students 11 to 14 years old, which has been scientifically proven to dramatically reduce both the onset of substance abuse and their regular use. The two-year, fourteen lesson program has been taught in all science classes for five years by all intermediate schools in the district. It focuses on substances that adolescents are most likely to use: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants. Project ALERT uses participatory activities and strategies to help motivate adolescents against drug use by teaching them the skills and strategies needed to resist pro-drug pressures, and by establishing non-drug using norms. Guided classroom discussions and small group activities stimulate peer interaction and challenge student beliefs and perceptions, while intensive role-playing activities help students learn and master resistance skills. Homework assignments also facilitate parent-child discussions of drugs and how to resist using them.

Project Toward No Drug Abuse (TND)

Project TND is a highly interactive program designed to help high school youth (14 to 19 years old) resist substance use. A school-based program, TND consists of twelve classroom lessons that include motivational activities, social skills training, and decision-making components that are delivered through group discussions, games, role-playing exercise, videos, and student worksheets. Project TND teaches participants increased coping and self-control skills that allow them to do the following:

- Grasp the cognitive misperceptions that may lead to substance use (e.g., substance use myths, denial) and express a desire not to abuse substances
- Understand the sequence of substance abuse and the consequences of using substances
- Correct myths concerning substance use

- Demonstrate effective communication, coping, and self-control skills
- State a commitment to discuss substance abuse with others

Project TND involves teacher-led student participation in interactive program components that include:

- Education on the progression of substance use to substance abuse; exercises to motivate against substance abuse (e.g., exercises include a mock “Talk Show” that provides empathy lessons,
- Discussions on stereotyping, and the effects of being labeled a substance abuser) interpersonal skills development (e.g., communication, active listening)
- Coping skills development (e.g., learning the value of personal health in daily living and life goals)
- Self-control training (e.g., social self-control skills, understanding positive and negative thought and behavior loops, violence prevention)
- Cognitive misperception correction
- Tobacco cessation strategies
- Decision-making skills development; and commitment building.

Too Good for Drugs Program (TGFD)

Too Good for Drugs (TGFD) is a school-based prevention program designed to reduce the intention to use alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs in elementary school students. Developed by the Mendez Foundation for use with students in kindergarten through fifth grades, TGFD has a separate, developmentally appropriate curriculum for each grade level, and is designed to develop: personal and interpersonal skills relating to alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use; appropriate attitudes toward alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use; knowledge of the negative consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use and the benefits of a drug-free lifestyle; and positive peer norms. It builds children’s resiliency by teaching them how to be socially competent and autonomous problem solvers. It focuses on five skills to increase children’s sense of control, responsibility and self-efficacy, goal setting, decision-making, bonding with others, identifying and managing emotions, and communicating effectively. The program’s highly interactive teaching methods encourage students to bond with pro-social peers, and engages students through role-play, cooperative learning, games, small group activities and class discussions. Students have many opportunities to participate and receive recognition for involvement. TGFD also impacts students through a family component used in each grade level: “Home Workouts” is available for use with families to further support the attainment of valuable resiliency skills.

Safe and Civil Schools

Violence and safety are among the American public's biggest concerns about youth, especially in regard to the schools. Much of public concern has focused on guns and acts of serious violence in the schools. In recent years, a series of tragic school shootings across the country have shocked the nation into recognizing that the specter of violence can apparently visit any school. The CHKS Core collects data relating to violence in five general areas, most in regard to the school environment in the twelve months prior to the survey.

These are:

- Experiences from victimization and harassment
- Reasons for harassment
- Engagement in fighting and property damage
- Weapons possession, use, and visibility; and
- Perceived safety

The Santa Ana Unified School District uses CHKS to assess school-related violence not only because this is a major public concern but also because of the adverse effects it can have on students' health and learning. While most of the concerns over violence are focused on preventing physical injury, the importance of a safe school environment extends beyond. Violence—and the fear of it—can have devastating, long-lasting effects. It not only puts students at risk of physical injury but also interferes with their successful completion of normal developmental processes. It reduces their ability to concentrate and learn, and thereby their chances for healthy development and school success. Indeed, emerging evidence suggests exposure to violence has lifelong effects on students' health and learning. Equally disruptive are the uncounted acts of bullying, teasing, and nonviolent misbehavior among youth. As research has shown:

- Youth experiencing coping difficulties associated with stress-related violence both at school and at home have exhibited lack of interest in academics, behavior problems at school, low grades, low self-esteem, and a high dropout rate. Children who witness chronic violence have exhibited poor concentration, shorter attention spans, and a general decline in academic performance.
- Exposure to neighborhood and school violence predict school attendance, behavior, and grades among a sample of secondary school students.

The concept of safety is more than the antithesis of violence. The threat to safety through physical harm carries with it the psychological harm of anxiety and apprehension. In this sense, school safety is psychological as well as physical. Safety is a basic need that must be met in order for a child to succeed in school and life. Safe environments enhance creativity, cooperative behavior, exploration, and positive risk-taking. Research has also well documented the potential protective role that educators and school staff can play in nurturing, caring for, and helping youth realize their potential. Students who are well connected with their schools are less likely to engage in various high-risk behaviors, including AOD use and aggressive/violent behavior. Some students are more at risk of

being injured at school than others, and the personal and educational toll from school violence and harassment make violence prevention a top priority.

CHKS student self-report data are an important information sources. Such data can provide an indication of undetected or unreported behavior, of mutual conflict, of student experiences as victims of violence as well as perpetrators, and of their attitudes, perceptions, and concerns over safety—the psychological dimensions of violence. This establishes a much broader and fuller perspective on the school environment and its effect on students.

The Safe and Civil Schools Program attends to the day-to-day experiences and needs of students, and assists in improving the climate of the school and thereby will reduce the risk of future aggression on school campuses.

Safe and Civil Schools Program

The Safe and Civil Schools Program (SCS) was presented and approved by all intermediate school principals to address the need to reduce suspensions and discipline referrals while providing support for the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. The goal of the program is to help educators create positive and proactive behavior management techniques and strategies that are tailored to each classroom, school, and our district. The program will help schools improve safety and civility across all school settings utilizing instructional techniques to help all students behave responsibly and respectfully. Using data collected from each site, objective information will be used to organize and promote successful student behavior through student, teacher, and community collaboration. The reduction of behavioral and discipline issues will reduce the number of suspension and expulsion referrals.

Strengthening Families Program

There are three principle external assets known as “protective factors” because they have been found to mediate against involvement in risk behaviors such as substance use and violence. Analyses of aggregated CHKS data have consistently shown that high levels of perceived assets are inversely associated with lower levels of involvement in risk behaviors, suggesting a “protective” influence. Conversely, when students report lower levels of external assets they report higher levels of risk behaviors. This is true across such diverse high-risk behaviors as binge alcohol drinking, regular cigarette smoking, marijuana use at school, and carrying weapons at school. For example, 31% of the 11th graders taking the CHKS in 2002-03 classified as Low in external assets also reported binge drinking in the last 30 days compared to only 19% of those scoring High in external assets. In addition, students who reported higher levels of these external assets in their schools and communities were also more likely to perceive their schools and communities as safe places.

Similar results have been reported recently by the important National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) based on their survey of 90,000 youth in grades 7-12. This survey found that youth who felt “connected” to either their parents or school were unlikely to engage in problem behaviors ranging from alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use to emotional distress, unsafe sexual practices, and acts of violence towards others. These findings are co-relational, not causal. They strongly suggest that efforts to promote positive youth development early in a child’s life, before the critical years for the onset of risk behaviors (generally beginning in the 7th grade), is absolutely critical to any comprehensive prevention approach. Efforts in later years may help reduce involvement or “turn around” youth, but this prevention approach in educating parents and providing them with parenting and family management skills has benefits for schools in that it significantly impacts academic performance as a demonstrated outcome.

The Strengthening Families curriculum is designed to reduce environmental risk factors and strengthen protective factors with the ultimate objective of increasing personal resiliency to the negative influences that affect students’ academic performance such as, drug and alcohol use in at-risk youth. The program is scientifically proven to be effective in improving family relations, increasing parenting skills, and increasing children’s communication skills. Parent evaluations, focus group results, and administrator feedback validate its success in meeting the need for student intervention and parent education and training at these sites.

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is one of the most powerful programs for family change in the country. Both parents and their children are involved in a process that assists them in acquiring family management skills. The two and a half hour weekly sessions includes a family dinner provided by the program. Parents are taught family management and parenting skills while students learn skills to increase socially acceptable behaviors through work with a program therapist. In the second hour parents and children are united for family skills’ training that provides them with the opportunity to put into practice what they learned in their individual sessions.

Achievement Reinforcement Center (ARC)

The CHKS asked students about how many times they skipped school or cut classes during the past 12 months. 11% of 7th graders, 17% of 9th graders, and 23% of 11th graders reported skipping or cutting classes 1-2 times. In conjunction with the information on class grades, as well as on school connectedness provided by the resilience and youth development survey questions, this allowed us to analyze the correlations between health risk behaviors and school attendance, achievement, and attachment or commitment to school. Truancy has been identified as one of the most powerful predictors of not only poor achievement but also delinquency. Truants use drugs more often and have friends that are more deviant. U.S. Department of Education statistics show that two-thirds of male juveniles arrested while truant tested positive for drug use. Promoting school attachment will

help reduce risk behaviors, and reduce barriers to learning such as substance abuse, and should further promote attendance and higher levels of achievement.

The Achievement Reinforcement Center works collaboratively with parents, district personnel, and law enforcement, to maintain truant, suspended, and expelled students in the educational mainstream and reinforces students' educational progress and achievement. Individualized assessments are given in order to determine appropriate services and intervention. The ARC provides a continuum of services, including meaningful incentives, consequences and referrals to community resources such as law enforcement, mental health, social services, and community agencies. Students attending the ARC receive academic, life skills - and drug, gang, and violence prevention lessons. Guest speakers and community colleges provide students with motivational messages and encourage students to continue with their education. A system for information sharing was developed between the ARC, schools and agencies to reduce the duplication of services for multiple-issue youth and their families. Parents are strongly encouraged to supervise and monitor their children so their child's behavior does not result in serious truancy violations, criminal, and other unacceptable behavior. Parents are informed that they will be held legally accountable for the supervision and control of their children. They are made aware of the legal penalties that may be imposed if they fail to ensure that their minors are in school.

In addition to enforcing California's truancy laws, the ARC is intended to be rehabilitative in scope. Legal sanctions will only be used to promote compliance with the law and encourage truant, suspended, and expelled students and their families to seek and follow through with ARC referrals to agencies and services that will reinforce the educational success of the student.

Resiliency and Youth Development Programs

Youth development researchers emphasize the importance of providing environmental supports and opportunities (external assets) in the form of Caring Relationships, High Expectations, and opportunities for Meaningful Participation, as measured by the CHKS Resilience and Youth Development Module. CHKS assessed school environment and the percentage of students scoring high in each external asset and total assets. Students scoring high in caring relationships in 7th grade were 36%, 56% in high expectations, 14% in meaningful participation, and 35 % total external assets. In the 9th grade students scoring high in caring relationships were 36%, 48% in high expectations, 14% in meaningful participation, and 31% total external assets. In the 11th grade students scoring high in caring relationships in were 40%, 50% in high expectations, 15% in meaningful participation, and 39% total external assets. The presence of high levels of these three external assets will help meet the fundamental developmental needs of youth for love, belonging, security, respect, identity, power, mastery, and meaning.

The following programs engage students' innate resilience, promote positive individual outcomes such as improved health and academic achievement, and protect against involvement in risk behaviors such as substance abuse and violence. Resilience research clearly documents the power of teachers and schools influences students' development from risk to resilience. For children growing up in overwhelmingly negative conditions, researchers have found that 70-80% of them have demonstrated healthy adjustment and achievement when schools are sensitive to them and their burdens and provide supportive activities. As Nel Noddings has observed: "It is obvious that children will work harder and do things...for people they love and trust." Similarly, Michael Rutter's classic research into effective schools in high poverty communities found that turnaround schools created a climate, an "ethos," grounded in the three Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) CHKS protective factors. A positive school climate was the critical variable differentiating between schools with high and low rates of delinquency, behavioral disturbance, attendance, and academic attainment. According to Rutter and his colleagues, schools that, "Provide students with opportunities for participation and with responsibilities provide one of the most effective protective factors for children under stress: a sense of success at a meaningful task." These positive people and places created an inviting asset-rich environment that met students' developmental needs for love and belonging, respect, accomplishment, challenge, identity, power, and meaning.

Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL)

This program is a peer-to-peer outreach program that empowers caring students to assist their peers in making healthy life choices. They help create a caring school environment that enhances students' sense of connectedness to their school. When students find their school environment to be supportive and caring they are less likely to become involved in substance abuse, violence, and other problem behaviors. The greater the number of developmental assets and protective factors a student develops the lower the high-risk behaviors.

Peer Mediation

Students are trained to be conflict mediators and gain confidence in their leadership and communication abilities. They provide models of effective communication and cooperation for fellow students, thereby reducing violence and other at risk behaviors that result in suspensions or expulsions.

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