

Student Survey Results

What's The Good News?

The results are in from two important student surveys, PRIDE and Communities That Care, administered in Abington schools in the fall of 1998. The good news is that substance use among Abington students has decreased in many areas compared with four years ago, the time of the last survey. Also in most cases, the data are considerably below national averages for 1998.

PRIDE is the national Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education. The nationally normed PRIDE questionnaire surveyed students in grades seven, nine, and eleven. Communities That Care (CTC) is a cooperative effort between the Abington Police Department and School District. The CTC survey is part of a project geared to mobilize the community to initiate prevention programs that protect its youth. This survey was administered to Abington School District students and some students in independent Abington schools in grades six, eight, ten, and twelve.

Both the PRIDE and CTC surveys are self-report assessments, which mean students are asked to indicate individually their experiences with and attitudes toward school safety and substance abuse.

A rewarding finding from the PRIDE survey is that across all grade levels, cigarette use has decreased monthly and annually. Seventh and eleventh grade results were significant, indicating respectively a 62.6% and a 75% decrease since 1994 in substance abuse on a monthly and annual basis. At the same time, the national sample showed a 70 % and an 80% increase in the same comparisons for such substances as cigarettes, beer, wine coolers, liquor, marijuana, cocaine, uppers, downers, inhalants, hallucinogens, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

The ninth grade data--only a 29.2% decrease--indicate a need for more preventative work at the seventh and eighth grade levels. This result mirrored the national data.

When seventh, ninth, and eleventh graders were asked when they use beer, liquor, etc, results clearly indicated that substance use is notably less in school and on weekdays than on the weekends. This finding is significant because it stresses the need for active parent and community involvement in prevention efforts. Other findings indicate that 80-90% of the Abington students surveyed reported that substance abuse is "harmful" or "very harmful" to their health, and fewer students noted participation in violence-related activities when compared to 1994 findings.

In the CTC survey, students are compared with a six-state matched sample. The data indicated that alcohol is the most widely used substance, with 30% of students in all grades surveyed reporting use of alcohol within the past 30 days. However, Abington student use is the same or lower at each grade level when compared to the matched sample.

Tobacco is the next most widely used substance, with 19% of sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders reporting use. The level of delinquent behavior during the past year was the same or less than the matched sample in 75% of the cases.

The CTC survey also measures risk and protective factors. Risk factors are characteristics of the individual, family environment, school, and community that are known to predict drug use, delinquency, and gang involvement. Protective factors are characteristics that help prevent student involvement in negative activities. Again,
