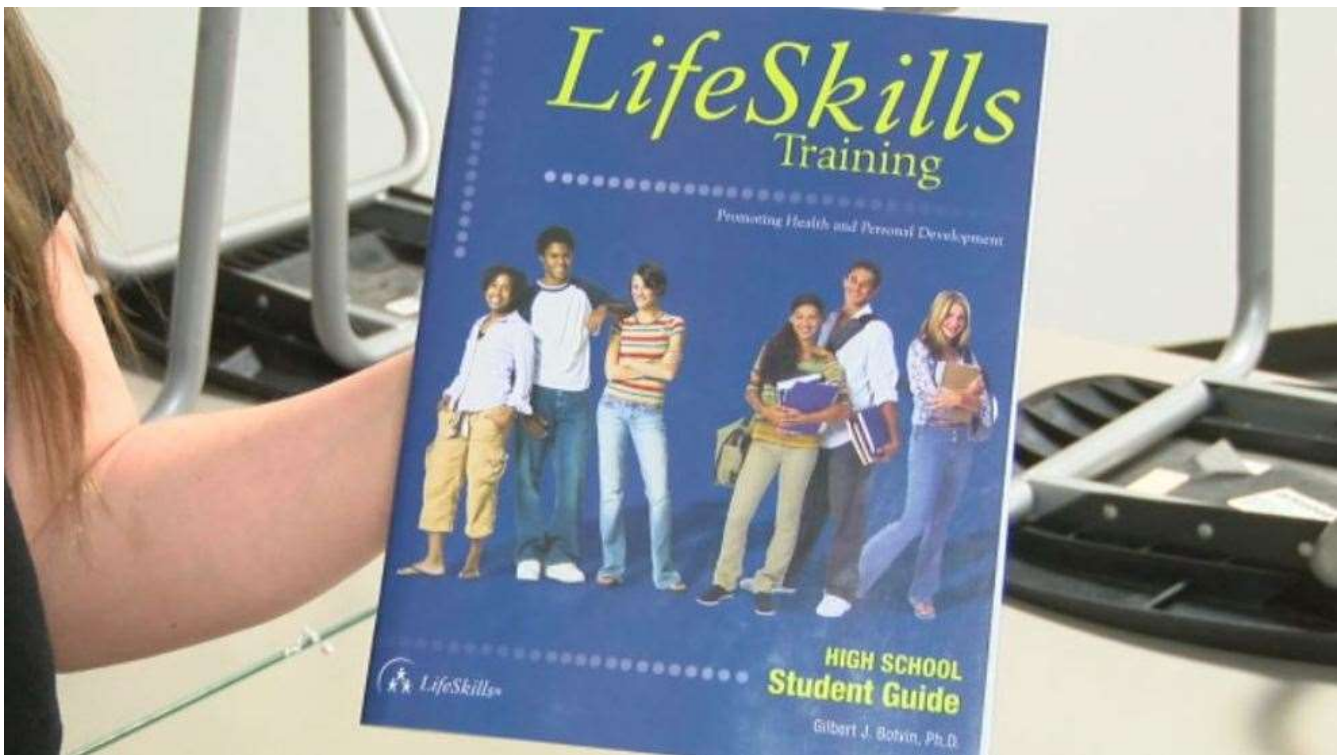


High school students learn 'Life Skills' to prevent drug and alcohol abuse

by Ashley Gooden



High school students learn Life Skills to prevent drug and alcohol abuse (Photo: WPDE)

Conway, S.C. (WPDE) — There's a new program in town to prevent high school students from getting wrapped up in drug and alcohol abuse. It's called Life Skills.

Shoreline Behavioral Health Services has paid for the program, and now it's up to people in the community to get trained and teach it.

Some Coastal Leadership Academy students are already taking the Life Skills courses each Friday.

Shoreline received funding from the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. To fulfill the requirements for the grant, they have to implement certain strategies in the community.

One of those strategies is an evidence-based program, and Life Skills is what they decided to go with.

The right outfit, the right crowd, and the right answers on that multiple choice test are just a few thoughts for teens. When you throw in drug and alcohol offers, life gets even more difficult.

"They have told me, I actually stayed away from this. Instead I stayed home and watched a movie and a few of my close friends came over just because I didn't want to be put in that type of situation where those results could have resulted negatively for me," said Ashley Johnson, teacher at CLA. She teaches social studies, but teaches the Life Skills course during her Leadership and Personal Development class.

Those situations are why Shoreline is taking action.

"Our data shows that the earlier someone starts using drugs or alcohol, the more likely they are to become dependent on it and need more services in the future. So if we can keep kids from using drugs or alcohol and delaying the age of first use, the less likely they will develop a substance use disorder," said Jessie Marlowe, prevention director at Shoreline.

Johnson has been teaching from the workbooks for seven weeks now.

"I love Fridays because it's almost like a therapy session for us. We just openly discuss it while we're working through the unit," she said.

This program is different from the D.A.R.E program. Johnson says Life Skills shows teens how to build up courage, be assertive and respectfully decline offers of drugs and alcohol.

"It teaches a great message and allows for a steady flow of conversation. The topic may be setting goals and talking about health, however, it opens up the door for 'you set this goal, why is that important to you,'" said Johnson.

Marlowe says because there are several units, students retain information better. "This program is multi-session so they have more opportunities to gain information and they'll have more that sticks."

Johnson says at first, the students thought learning out of a workbook would be lame, but once they got started, they enjoyed it, "It actually ended up being awesome and it's touched each individually and differently."

Parents can also get involved. There are units where students are required to interview their parents to see what they would do in certain situations.

Any organization with high school students is welcome to take advantage of Life Skills, whether it's a high school, church group or community group.

The program is free, and if you're interested in bringing the program to teens in your neighborhood or community groups, you can reach out to Jessie Marlowe at Shoreline. The number for the Prevention Department is 843.365.8884 ext. 244.

For more on Shoreline Behavioral Health Services [click here](#).