

School Program Aims to Teach Early Skills to Prevent Teen Drug Use



Carteret County, North Carolina, has added a LifeSkills training to their school drug prevention curriculum. In an ongoing effort to discourage teen drug use, [officials and educators have agreed](#) that this evidence-based program provides useful messaging to teens who are introduced to drugs. These kinds of programs offer meaningful tools for teens to employ when they are exposed to drugs. The Botvin LifeSkills Training [program](#) works with schools, families, and communities. Teachers can be trained to present the curriculum to students. The program targets children from 3rd grade to 12th grade. Elementary age students have 24 class sessions, [middle school students](#) have 30 class sessions and [high school students](#) have 10 class sessions. Each year, a teacher manual and student guide are updated with the latest research. In addition to substance abuse prevention, the program incorporates prevention messages for physical and verbal aggression, fighting and delinquency.

Life Skills Training to Prevent Teen Drug Use

[Teen drug use](#) can be decreased with concerted prevention efforts. LifeSkills training for teens includes teaching teenagers life skills that will help them avoid drug use. Some of these skills include:

- Personal self-management: Experts at the Duke Center for Child and Family Policy for the Administration for Children and Families [explain](#) that intervention services for teens that promote self-management can help prevent adverse behaviors. Some techniques include soft skills, mentoring, coaching, mind-body practices, and emotional development.

- General social skills: The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry [explains](#) that some teens use drugs or alcohol as a way to self-medicate for issues of [anxiety](#), [depression](#) or a lack of social skills. Promoting healthy social skills through information, practices, and modeling is an opportunity to prevent drug and [alcohol abuse](#).
- Drug-resistant skills: Researchers writing in the Journal for Primary Prevention describe how [social influence modeling](#) is an important aspect of school substance abuse prevention programs. These include resistance strategies and confidence in applying those strategies. These skills play an important role in decreasing the likelihood of substance abuse in teens.

Teen Drug Use Statistics

Statistics on drug use in adolescence are [published](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Youth substance abuse statistics include the fact that:

- Two-thirds of 12th graders have tried alcohol
 - Marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol are the most frequently abused substances by teens
 - Roughly half of high school students have tried [marijuana](#)
 - Nearly 20% of seniors in high school have misused prescription medication
- The level of access and frequency of drugs and alcohol use in the teen years necessitates intervention strategies that work.

Success Rates of LifeSkills Training

Drug prevention programs for youth have long been a part of student education in public schools. Youth prevention programs have included messaging to deter drug and alcohol abuse. Teenage drug prevention programs are often hosted by teachers who are trained in the curriculum or by public health or law enforcement officials. According to [LifeSkills](#), their programs:

- Decrease drug use by up to 75%
- Decrease alcohol use by up to 60%
- Decrease tobacco use by up to 87%

This program is endorsed by multiple federal and state bodies, including the U.S. Department of Education and the American Medical Association.

Additional Tips for Prevention of Substance Abuse Among Youth

Teen substance abuse prevention is an important part of public health. Programs that promote messaging for the prevention of substance abuse among youth have long been a part of the school curriculum in both middle and high schools. According to [research](#) published in the Child And Adolescent Psychiatry Clinical Journal of North America, youth substance abuse prevention can be supported by multiple efforts, including:

- Normative education that addresses inaccurate ideas about drinking, smoking and taking illegal drugs
- Competence-enhancement that helps young people develop the social and personal skills that help them say no to drugs
- Life Skills Training (LST) programs that speak to the primary psychological and social factors that lead to substance abuse