

Assessing your program's effectiveness

One important measure of success for a student drug-testing program is whether drug use at your school declines over time. Launching the program is only part of the process. It is essential that you also monitor the program closely and regularly by conducting surveys, watching for signs of progress, and making any necessary fine-tuning adjustments along the way, such as modifying the list of drugs in your test panel. On a continuing basis, you should collect as much information as you can about the amount and extent of drug use at your school.



Anecdotal evidence of the sort collected before starting the program, together with signs of changes in overall student productivity and incidents of disruption and detention, will give you a fairly good idea of how the program is working. However, quantitative data—including the results of student surveys compared to your baseline data and the percentage of positive test results found each year during the course of your program—will allow you to more definitively gauge your program's success. In some cases, schools have hired outside evaluators to review the progress of their programs.

A recent survey of student athletes underscores the preventative power of drug testing. As part of the Student Athlete Testing Using Random Notification (SATURN) study, researchers compared rates of drug use among student athletes at one Oregon high school with those at another Oregon school that did not have a testing policy. At the start of the year, 7 percent of student athletes at both schools reported past-month use of illicit drugs. By the end of the school year, however, drug use by student athletes in the school with a testing program had decreased to 5 percent,

while use among athletes at the non-testing school had jumped to 19 percent. (This increase was due in part to the fact that the school did not have a drug-testing program that would have provided students the opportunity to say “no” to drugs.)

Funding your program

In a survey conducted recently by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, more than 37 percent of respondents said they did not consider implementing a drug-testing program in their public school because of concern it would be too expensive.

While cost is certainly an important factor when weighing the pros and cons of drug testing, it should not be viewed as an insurmountable hurdle for schools eager to start a program. Depending on the type of test used and the range of target drugs, individual tests can cost between \$10 and \$50. Funds for drug-testing programs can come from any number of Federal, State, local, or private sources, including those listed below.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Program. The *No Child Left Behind Act* states that funds from the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program can be used for student drug testing as part of a comprehensive program. It is important that schools follow the procedures set forth in *No Child Left Behind* for using state formula money. To view or download the *No Child Left Behind Act*, visit <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html>

Grants for Student Drug Testing. Each year, Congress provides funds through the Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, National Programs, for a variety of activities related to alcohol, drug, and violence prevention. In FY 2003, \$2 million was provided to eight grantees nationally for student drug testing. The grants were available to local education agencies and to other public and private entities for implementing, enhancing, or evaluating school-based drug-testing programs.

Faith-based organizations are eligible to apply for these grants. Confidentiality of student identities must be preserved, and the grant must contain a comprehensive plan for referral to treatment or counseling of those students who have been identified in the student drug-testing program. More information can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html#national>

Asset Forfeiture Funds. In some jurisdictions, asset-forfeiture statutes require that a percentage of funds forfeited be used for drug-prevention programs. Because the primary purpose of student drug testing is to deter drug use, some jurisdictions have used forfeiture funds for their school drug-testing programs.

Community Foundations. Tax-exempt, non-profit organizations called community foundations are the fastest growing sector of American philanthropy. Usually found in areas with a population of over 100,000, these foundations are autonomous and publicly supported, operating from an endowed permanent asset base that has been created by local residents over a period of years. For more information, see the Web site for the Council on Foundations at <http://www.cof.org>

Local Businesses. Many businesses today have drug-testing programs of their own. Companies in your community can provide expertise in conducting drug tests and devising strategies for assessment and referral. Local businesses may also provide financial and other kinds of support for your school's drug-testing program.

Activity Fees. Some schools add the cost of drug testing to the student activity fees charged to parents or allocate a portion of athletic booster-club funds to pay for drug tests.

Existing Contracts. Some schools have reduced the cost of drug tests by linking up with city or state agencies that already have contracts with drug-testing companies. Small schools, in particular, can make testing more affordable by "piggybacking" on existing contracts.