

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

# Starting a Student Drug-Testing Program

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

**“In my budget, I proposed new funding to continue our aggressive, community-based strategy to reduce demand for illegal drugs. Drug testing in our schools has proven to be an effective part of this effort. ...The aim here is not to punish children, but to send them this message: We love you, and we don’t want to lose you.”**

**President George W. Bush**  
**STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS**  
**JANUARY 20, 2004**

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# Acknowledgements

The Office of National Drug Control Policy extends thanks to the following individuals and organizations for their help in producing this document:

Stephenie Colston, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); Bob Stephenson, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, SAMHSA; Charles LoDico and Walt Vogl, Division of Workplace Programs, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, SAMHSA; Deborah Price, Robyn Disselkoen, Bill Modzeleski, and Helene Deramond, U.S. Department of Education; and Jacqueline Mazza.

# Foreword

In his 2004 State of the Union speech, President George W. Bush reminded Congress and the Nation of our responsibility to help children make the right choices. “One of the worst decisions children can make,” he said, “is to gamble their lives and futures on drugs.”

The President directed our attention to recent good news: survey results showing that drug use among American teenagers has dropped 11 percent in the past two years. This achievement not only marked improvement not seen in a decade, it also met the national goal the President set in February 2002 to reduce drug use among 12- to 17-year-olds by 10 percent within two years.



**JOHN P. WALTERS**

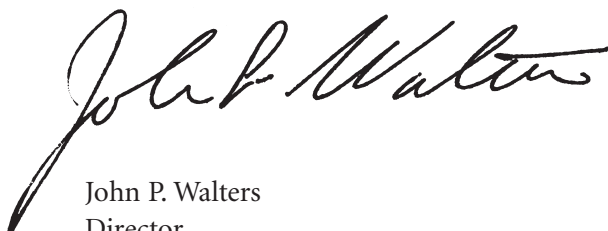
Our progress demonstrated that, when we push back against drug use, it will recede. And now that effort has been given an added boost. In his speech, the President pledged \$23 million in additional funding to support one of the most powerful tools for preventing youth substance abuse: school-based drug testing.

In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court broadened the authority of public schools to test students for illegal drugs, thereby making this powerful tool available to any school battling drug problems. Since that historic ruling, a number of schools across the country have seized this opportunity to implement drug-testing programs of their own.

Parents and educators have a responsibility to keep children and teens safe from drug use. We have made important progress. Our task is now to move further. We must identify and use the best tools at our disposal to protect kids from a behavior that destroys bodies and minds, impedes academic performance, and creates barriers to success and happiness. Drug testing is just such a tool—powerful, safe, and effective. It is

available to any school, public or private, that understands the devastation of drug use and is determined to confront it. Many schools urgently need effective ways to reinforce their anti-drug efforts. Drug testing can help them.

I hope that schools considering adding a testing program to their current prevention efforts will find reassurance in knowing that drug testing can be done effectively and compassionately. Testing, after all, cannot be used to punish kids who use drugs. Its purpose is to prevent use in the first place, and to make sure users get the help they need to stop placing themselves and their friends at risk. Random drug testing is not a substitute for all our other efforts to reduce drug use by young people, but it does make all those efforts much stronger and more effective.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John P. Walters". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

John P. Walters  
Director  
Office of National Drug Control Policy  
October 2004

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# Introduction

School administrators faced with the task of keeping their students drug-free have used a variety of prevention and education programs. A precipitating event—a tragic drug-overdose death or an alarming escalation in the level of drug use, for example—will often spur a school to seek additional means of reducing the drug problem. Now, as a result of a 2002 Supreme Court decision (*Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County vs. Earls*), public middle and high schools are free to use a powerful new tool for deterring and detecting drug use: random drug tests. Drug testing previously was available only for students involved in sports. In the 2002 ruling, however, the Court broadened the scope of testing to include all students who take part in after-school activities—teams, clubs, and other organizations—in which the participants compete against students at other schools.



Student drug testing is but one part of a comprehensive drug and alcohol prevention, intervention, and treatment program. Prevention messages will keep many students from using drugs, and they may also prompt some who experiment with drugs to stop. There are others, however, who have begun using alcohol or drugs and who are not responsive to prevention messages. Many of these users have not yet experienced adverse health effects of their drug use, nor have they faced criminal or social sanctions. It is through this group of users that a serious community drug problem spreads.



## Early intervention

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One of the best ways to block the spread of drug use is through an approach called early intervention, which encourages friends, family, care-givers, and others to get actively involved in the lives of drug users—and the sooner the better. The idea is to identify nondependent users, through drug testing and other means, then steer them from drugs and into counseling, if necessary, before they become addicted or entice others to use drugs. Kids whose drug use has already progressed to abuse and dependence may require more intense or clinical intervention, such as specialty treatment. Drug testing not only helps identify students who use drugs, it also creates a deterrent to use. It helps young people cope with peer pressure, giving them a convenient reason to say “no” to drugs, and it underscores the message that drugs are a barrier to achieving one’s full potential.

Student drug testing has proven to be effective in schools that have tried it. For example, Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington, New Jersey, experienced an overall decrease in student drug use between 1997 and 2000. The only change in the school’s substance-



abuse program during that three-year period was the implementation of random drug tests for student athletes. In September 2000, Hunterdon suspended all random drug testing after the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in New Jersey state court on behalf of students who claimed

their 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights were violated. Over the next two years, during which the school made no other changes in its substance-abuse program, the level of drug use at Hunterdon increased.

In a similar scenario, 85 percent of schools in Indiana that suspended their drug-testing programs during a court challenge by the Indiana Civil Liberties Union found that drug use increased during the suspension, then decreased when testing resumed.

Results such as this show the power and the promise of student drug testing. It is important to note, however, that drug testing may not be appropriate for every school. An earlier ONDCP publication, *What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools*, provided an overview of the complex issues involved in student drug testing, and it raised some important issues that parents and administrators must consider before starting such a program. For example: Will your school and community support such a program? What are the legal requirements? Which students should be tested? What kinds of tests are available, and which are best suited for your school?



As that booklet cautions, random drug testing should never be used to punish students. Rather, it should be used to deter young people from using drugs, or to identify current drug users so they may be referred to counseling or treatment. And because no two communities face exactly the same drug problem, each school must develop its own unique drug-testing program, carefully tailored to its particular needs and circumstances.

*What You Need to Know About Starting a Student Drug-Testing Program* is meant to complement and build on the information provided in the earlier publication. This booklet assumes that you, as a school administrator, staff member, or parent involved in the decision, have considered all the issues, weighed the pros and cons, collected data, and are now ready to put together a plan for starting a drug-testing program in your school. It reviews the steps you need to take before implementing a testing program, such as conducting a needs assessment, consulting legal counsel, enlisting the support of both the school and the local community, developing a written policy, and providing access to student assistance. It offers guidance on how to find funding for your program, and it also includes a discussion of how some schools select students for testing and what types of tests they use. A list of resources includes Web sites and contact information for agencies and other organizations that can answer any further questions you may have about student drug testing.

## The benefits of drug testing

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Drug use can turn to dependence and addiction, trapping users in a vicious cycle that destroys families and ruins lives. Students who use drugs are statistically more likely to drop out of school than their peers who don't.

Drugs and alcohol not only interfere with a student's ability to learn, they also disrupt the orderly environment necessary for all students to succeed. Studies show that students who use drugs are more likely to bring guns and knives to school, and that the more marijuana a student smokes, the



greater the chances he or she will be involved in physical attacks, property destruction, stealing, and cutting classes. Parents and students expect schools to offer protection from violence, racism, and other forms of abuse. It is likewise their right to expect a learning environment free from the influence of illegal drugs.

As a parent or school administrator, you have a responsibility to ensure that student drug use does not become a barrier to learning. *What You Need to Know About Starting a Student Drug-Testing Program* can help you meet that responsibility. If you conclude that drug testing would be an effective method of detecting, confirming, and deterring drug use among the young people under your care, this booklet offers valuable advice and information that can guide you in the development of a program that is effective, confidential, and compassionate.

# Before You Begin

A great deal of preparation goes into developing a successful drug-testing program. Before you begin testing, it is important that you cover all the bases and take these necessary first steps:

- Collect data to determine the scope and nature of your school's drug problem
- Consult legal counsel
- Enlist support within the school and local community
- Develop a clear, written policy
- Obtain the approval of an Institutional Review Board, if necessary
- Provide access to student assistance

## Collect data

Would your school really benefit from a drug-testing program? For some schools, prevention and education programs may be sufficient responses to the drug threat. For others, more powerful tools are needed to help reduce student drug use.

A school might begin a drug-testing program to confront an escalating drug problem, for example, or when overdose deaths among the student body prompt action to avert more tragedy. The Capistrano Unified School District in California launched a student drug-testing program after requests from the community for a program that would help students say “no” to drugs. The voluntary program, which started in 2002 at San Clemente High School with the support of the school board, principal, and parents, now has a participation rate of more than 50 percent.



The needs assessment should be done in the early stages, when you are considering whether your school's drug problem warrants a drug-testing program. Collecting data is important to help you determine the scope and characteristics of your drug problem and to establish a baseline from which to measure the effectiveness of your testing program later on. Some schools find it helpful to establish an advisory committee or task force. Such a group could be comprised of school administrators, students, teachers, parents, student assistance counselors, coaches, club advisors, and representatives from local treatment programs and police departments.

The advisory committee can be helpful in many ways, including the collection and assessment of data. Reports by teachers, staff, and parents can yield useful information about the nature and extent of your school's drug problem. Keep data about drug paraphernalia or residue found in or around the school. Look at indirect evidence, such as local police reports and overdose data in the aggregate, to help fill out the picture. Local treatment programs can also provide useful information about drug use by students without breaching the confidentiality of their individual patients.



Government-funded surveys such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Monitoring the Future, and The Youth Risk Behavior Survey all have questions regarding drug use that can be adapted for a school survey. A number of states, as well as several private, non-profit organizations, can also provide support and survey materials designed to reflect student drug and alcohol use. Student surveys can pinpoint which drugs your students are using and, in turn, can help you decide which drugs to target in your test panel.

## Consult legal counsel

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In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a drug-testing program for students involved in competitive extracurricular activities, thereby expanding the authority of public schools to test students for drugs. Although the ruling allows schools to drug-test greater numbers of students, it is not a blanket endorsement of drug testing for all students. Schools therefore should engage legal counsel familiar with Federal, State, and local law regarding drug testing before implementing a testing program. It is important to obtain a full legal review of your drug-testing policy and program before you begin testing.

## Enlist community support

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A key part of the development of an effective testing program is building partnerships and trust with those in the community who would be affected: parents, students, the Board of Education, the Superintendent, local health care agencies, local businesses, legal counsel, community coalitions, and others.

For some, student drug testing is an emotional and controversial issue—all the more reason to keep everyone informed and listen to every point of view, including the voices of opposition. Addressing concerns whenever possible will strengthen your program. Holding focus-group or town-hall meetings gives you an opportunity to share the information that led to your decision to implement a drug-testing program. You may find that some who were in denial about the drug problem will become convinced when they see the results of the data you have collected.

There's no guarantee that everyone will agree with the concept of random drug testing, of course. But with careful preparation—educating parents and students, and by assuring them that the program will not be punitive, that confidentiality will be closely maintained, and that they may freely voice their opinions—you can greatly improve your chances of success. For those who will not be swayed, point out that no student will be forced to submit to a drug test. Although children whose parents refuse to give their consent may lose the privilege of taking part in extracurricular activities, parents must always have the ability to opt out of the drug-testing program.

Once your school’s leadership has understood and agreed to implement a drug-testing program, and once parents, students, teachers, and other school personnel have been fully informed, widen the circle of influence by including local officials, merchants, and owners of area businesses. In some areas, companies give incentives, such as discounts or preferential employment status, to students who take part in student drug-testing programs.

## Develop a clear, written policy

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The committee or task force you have formed can help you decide whether the tests will be administered by school staff or by someone hired from outside the school. Many schools use the staff nurse to administer the tests. Others, including those in Polk County, Florida, hire staff from the local drug court who are trained in collection procedures and chain-of-custody issues. Your advisory committee can weigh the pros and cons of the various types of tests—urine, hair, sweat, and saliva—and also offer advice, based on the data you collected, on which drugs to include in your test panel. A test normally targets a standard group, or “panel,” of drugs—marijuana, cocaine, opiates, amphetamines, and PCP. If steroids or other drugs outside the standard panel are a problem in your school, you can decide to include them in your list of target drugs. Once such decisions are made, the committee can help you develop your school’s drug-testing policy.

There is no single model policy that will fit every school’s particular needs. However, effective policies do share a number of common elements that you should incorporate in yours. First of all, it should be a written policy, rendered in clear, concise language that allows no ambiguity in what you are proposing.

There are four primary areas of concern that should be addressed in a school drug-testing policy: First, the policy should contain a statement about the need for a drug-free school. Second, it should have an introduction/position statement on substance use and student health, safety, confidentiality, and implementation of your student drug-testing program. Third, the policy should address the key components of the drug-testing program, such as which categories of students will be tested, how they will be selected for a drug test, what drugs will be tested for, specimen collection and chain-of-custody issues, how consent for

testing will be obtained, how confidentiality of student information will be maintained, how drug-test results will be protected, and what consequences will follow a positive test result or refusal to take the test. Finally, the policy should provide a list of student rights, as well as an explanation of the school's responsibilities to the students.

Those who read your policy should be able to understand the testing procedure, and that positive test results will undergo further review by qualified medical personnel to determine the likelihood of legitimate medications causing the positive reading. Make sure your policy indicates whether the school or the parents will pay for the confirmation test.



The policy should explain what recourses are available to a student if he or she believes a positive result was an error, and it must articulate the consequences of a true positive test. If students who test positive are suspended from extracurricular activities until they provide a negative test, the policy should make this clear, as well as whether graduated sanctions will be imposed with repeated positive tests.

By the same token, the policy should state clearly that no academic consequences will follow as a result of a positive drug test. Your drug-testing policy should clearly state the permissible use of test results, indicating precisely who may (and may not) see them, and it should underscore, above all, that school administrators will maintain strict confidentiality.

Working with your advisory committee, develop consent forms for parents and students to sign indicating they have read your policy, understand it, and agree to take part in the drug-testing program. Announce the policy at least 90 days before testing begins. When collecting information from students on drug use, be mindful of the



U.S. Department of Education’s regulations on confidentiality and release of information. The two primary regulations are the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA). See the Resources section for more information. Also listed among the Resources are links to Internet sites offering samples of student drug-testing policies, as well as contact information for non-profit organizations that can provide technical assistance on developing a policy.

## Obtain the approval of an Institutional Review Board, if necessary

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If your school district receives Federal funds to develop, enhance, or implement a student drug-testing program, the project may be subject to the approval of an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a special panel charged with protecting the rights and welfare of human research



subjects. Projects that are designed to test or demonstrate the effectiveness of drug testing are considered “research” by some agencies under a Federal policy governing human subjects. Not all student drug-testing programs fall within the scope of this policy. But it is essential

that you determine early in the process, before you begin drug-testing students, whether your project requires IRB review. Check with your funding agency to see if it has adopted the Federal policy for the protection of human subjects. Some agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, offer guidance to grant recipients on finding an IRB and obtaining the necessary approval. (See the Resources section for more information, including lists of IRBs and a complete list of agencies that have adopted the Federal policy regarding the protection of human subjects.)

## Provide access to student assistance

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Some schools may be reluctant to initiate a testing program for lack of understanding what to do with those students who test positive for drugs. Indeed, it is essential for any school contemplating a student drug-testing program to have some sort of mechanism in place for working with students whose test results are positive. For those who have just started using drugs or use them only occasionally, a few words from a counselor and/or parents—coupled with the prospect of future drug tests—may be enough to discourage further use. The counselor may refer the student for recovery support services, which can be an intermediary step for those not requiring clinical treatment services. Frequent users or those in danger of becoming chemically dependent will likely need clinical treatment.

One good way to assure these young people receive the appropriate level of counseling or treatment is to provide access to a student assistance program. Operating in much the same way as employee assistance programs in the workplace, student assistance programs have a long history of helping schools remove barriers to learning. Some schools use a core team of trained staff to provide student assistance services. Others designate a single counselor as the student assistance counselor, while still others contract with outside non-profit mental health or substance abuse agencies to provide student assistance services. Whatever the arrangement, student assistance programs help young people improve their success in school by connecting them with the most appropriate resources for the many issues that interfere with learning, such as family problems, peer conflicts, depression, isolation, illness, and substance abuse.

Student assistance services typically include linking students and their families to appropriate community resources and school-based support services. A positive drug test may result in referral to ongoing drug testing, educational classes, attendance in a chemical awareness group, or treatment for chemical dependency. Some students with positive test results are referred through the student assistance program to a behavioral health assessor, a professional counselor who specializes in working with chemically dependent youth. Maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process, the assessor can determine whether the student's alcohol or drug use requires recovery support or clinical treatment

services, or can be dealt with in less intrusive ways. For students who have completed treatment and who are in recovery striving to stay “clean,” returning to the school environment can be a difficult experience. Student assistance eases the re-entry process by offering aftercare and other support services, then stays in touch with the students to monitor their progress over time.

Studies have found that students who were referred through a student assistance program to behavioral health specialists show improved attendance, fewer discipline problems, and better performance in school. For more information, call the National Student Assistance Association at 800-257-6310 or visit the group’s Web site at [www.nsaa.us](http://www.nsaa.us).

# Conducting the Test

Just as the drug problem differs from one school to another, so do the mechanisms by which various schools conduct drug tests. You should work closely with your advisory committee and legal counsel to map out a strategy and set clear guidelines for the nuts-and-bolts operation of the testing program. Your plan should cover, in detail, every step from beginning to end, including procedures for choosing which students can be tested, when and how they are summoned to the collection area, how the tests are performed and analyzed, and what happens in the event of a positive test.

Although there is no “one size fits all” approach to drug testing, there are strategies and techniques that have proven to be effective. Understanding these, and knowing how other schools have tackled some of the same issues you are facing, can be immensely valuable in helping you develop a plan for your school. Key issues, questions, and topic areas include:

- Whom to test, and when
- The procedure
  - Specimen collection
  - Certified labs
  - Point-of-collection urine tests
  - The confirmation test
  - Medical review officer
- Alternative testing methods
- Consequences of a positive test

## Whom to test, and when

Methods and procedures vary widely, but on average, schools with drug-testing programs submit approximately 10-25 percent of their eligible students to drug tests each month. Typically, a school will test some students weekly, but there are those that test bi-weekly or even monthly. Most schools use a computerized system to select students randomly for drug testing. Others rely on a lottery system and pull names out of a “pool” of eligible students. On test days, schools often select a few alternate candidates to account for absences.

## The procedure

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For years, urine has been the only specimen collected for many federally regulated and most private-sector drug-testing programs. Today, the majority of schools with drug-testing programs continue to use urine tests because of the proven reliability, accuracy, and fairness of this method. However, schools are increasingly using tests of hair and oral fluids because both are easier to collect and more resistant to cheating.

**Specimen collection.** For urine tests, a school staff member usually escorts those chosen from the testing pool to the collection site. Here, students typically are given a specimen cup and sent to the lavatory unobserved. Blue dye has been placed in the toilets, and the water to the sink has been shut off or the faucets taped shut to lessen the risk of having the specimen adulterated. The person overseeing the collection procedure also checks the temperature of the specimen to make sure it is valid and that no substitution has occurred.

Once the specimen is determined to be valid, the cup is sealed and then initialed by the student, and the proper chain of custody is applied. To preserve confidentiality, an identification number rather than the student's name or initials may be used for marking the specimens and test results. Many schools send the specimens to a laboratory, where they are analyzed by sensitive and carefully calibrated instruments. Laboratory analysis gives the most accurate reading, but the test results may not be known for 24 to 48 hours from the time the lab receives the specimen.

At the laboratory, technicians check every specimen for possible substitution or adulteration by substances that the student may have ingested or put in the specimen afterward to “cleanse” it. (Specimen tampering or adulteration is less of a concern in hair or saliva testing.) Even if it turns out that an adulterated specimen does not reveal the presence of drugs or drug metabolites, the fact that it has been tampered with should bring on the same consequences as positive drug test.

**Certified labs.** Drug testing is mandated for Federal employees in safety- or security-sensitive positions. Because a positive drug test could cost someone in such a position his or her job, every possible precaution is in place to assure test accuracy. All specimens, for example, must be sent to laboratories certified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health

Services Administration (SAMHSA). Although school drug-testing programs are not bound by the same strict procedures, many schools use SAMHSA-certified labs to ensure a high level of accuracy. (For more information about the Federal drug-testing program, as well as a list of certified labs, see <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/ResourceCenter/lablist.htm>.) This certification procedure is currently only for urine testing, but Federal guidelines under development will extend the process to hair, oral fluids, and sweat-patch testing.

**Point-of-collection urine tests.** Some schools perform a screening test of the collected specimens on-site, in a procedure known as point-of-collection testing. For urine testing, the collection procedure is the same as that for specimens being sent to a laboratory. The difference is that, in point-of-collection screening, the specimen is read by the test administrator, not by laboratory instruments. A variety of testing devices are available that allow the tester to “dip and read,” “tilt and read,” or “drop and read” the test results. This on-site collection test yields immediate results, most of which will be negative. However, because of the human involvement in reading the tests, it is imperative that the tester be properly trained. If a point-of-collection specimen tests positive, it is then sent to a laboratory, using proper chain-of-custody procedures, for a confirmation test.

Parents should be notified each time their child is tested, and the results—positive or negative—should be shared with them. It is up to each school to determine which staff members, if any, are permitted to see the test results. High schools generally allow at least one staff member access to the results. A middle school, on the other hand, might send the results to the parents only, along with literature on what to do if the test is positive.

**The confirmation test.** If the results of the screening test are negative, no further action is necessary. However, if the specimen tests positive, regardless of the testing method, a confirmation test should be done. In the case of urine testing, the confirmation test involves an analytical process known as gas chromatography/mass spectrometry (GC/MS). Technicians use gas chromatography to separate the various substances in the specimen, and then make a positive identification through mass spectrometry. Some schools automatically authorize a confirmation test

in the event of a positive screening; others do so only at a parent's request. If the confirmation test also comes up positive, a qualified "medical review officer" should determine whether the positive reading was caused by illicit drugs or by proper prescription medication.

**Medical review officer.** A medical review officer is a licensed physician who is also an expert in drug and alcohol testing and the Federal regulations governing such testing. It is the job of a medical review officer to ensure the integrity of the drug test. If a test is positive, the medical review officer consults with the student and/or the student's family and gives them an opportunity to supply evidence that there was a justifiable reason for the positive test, such as a properly prescribed drug. If the medical review officer determines that the positive test was not the result of illegal drug use, the test is reported as negative. Having a medical review officer on board helps protect the rights of students and can have the added benefit of strengthening the school's position if the test results are ever challenged.

Most laboratories can provide a list of available medical review officers. To verify the certification status of medical review officers, see the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Web site at <http://www.asam.org/search/search4.html>. For more information about certified labs, visit the Web site for SAMHSA's Division of Workplace Programs at <http://workplace.samhsa.gov/DrugTesting/MedicalReviewOfficers>

## Alternative testing methods

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Drugs or drug metabolites can be detected in hair, oral fluids, and sweat. Several factors, including the stigma of wearing a sweat patch, make sweat testing more suited for use in the criminal justice system and for follow-up testing after drug treatment.

Hair testing is less intrusive and has a longer detection window than urine testing, but it may present some special problems. If, for example, a student athlete shaves his head, where would you take a sample? (In this case, a urine test could be used as an alternative.) Moreover, hair specimens can be analyzed only in a laboratory.

Another less-intrusive alternative involves the testing of oral fluids, the generic term for saliva and other material collected from the mouth. Due to the sensitivity of testing devices required to detect marijuana and cocaine in oral fluids, specimens should be sent to a laboratory to ensure the most accurate readings. Although drugs and drug metabolites do not remain in oral fluids as long as they do in urine, oral-fluids testing offers a number of advantages. For example, specimens can be collected relatively easily—a swab of the inner cheek is the most common way—and in virtually any environment. Oral fluids are also harder to adulterate or substitute, and collection is less invasive than in urine or hair testing.

## Consequences of a positive test

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Depending on the school's policy, students who test positive for drug use may be suspended from their extracurricular activities for a period of time. They may also be required to attend drug education classes, undergo counseling, or seek treatment for clinical dependency. These students usually must submit to follow-up drug tests as well. What's most important, once users have been identified through drug testing, is for those involved in their lives—family, friends, counselors, treatment providers—to practice early intervention and do all they can to dissuade these students from using drugs. Recovery support services can be especially helpful at this time.



If subsequent tests also yield positive results, students might face graduated sanctions, such as a longer suspension from an extracurricular activity. On the other hand, when a student admits drug use and shows a willingness to come to grips with the problem, this is usually seen as a positive step toward stopping the use, in which case sanctions may be much lighter or lifted altogether. Whatever the consequences, it is essential that students who test positive for drugs, particularly those who are in recovery after treatment for chemical dependency, get all the help and support they need, whether through student assistance or other services.



# Drug testing in schools will let students be accountable

By Kyle Brown

*Reprinted here, in part, is an opinion piece published June 23, 2004, in the Fort Wayne, Indiana, Journal Gazette. Its author, then a rising senior at Homestead High School, wrote the article in response to an editorial in the newspaper urging Southwest Allen County Schools to reject drug testing.*

I applaud Southwest Allen County Schools for taking the initiative to stop drug and alcohol use in my school. The party atmosphere at Homestead continues to grow every year, and the present methods of education and prevention are proving to be ineffective. A new way of thinking has to be developed to curb the trend, and that's what Superintendent Brian Smith and his administration have put together: a well-thought-out program designed to help students rather than punish them.

Monday's editorial stated that random drug tests are too expensive, of questionable deterrent value and a violation of privacy rights. Let me dispense with those objections quickly. My school is considering drug tests that cost \$15 each. The first three years of this program will be financed entirely from private donations, local foundations and government grants. If drug testing works during its three-year trial, then the tests would cost my school and the two middle schools \$54,000 annually. That's just \$18,000 per school per year. When you consider the costs of students missing school because of drugs and alcohol and the lost revenue to the school system resulting from their absences, this is a no-brainer.

Monday's editorial said drug testing violates my privacy rights. This assumes that my fellow students and I value our privacy over the lives of our friends. I would assert that it is just the opposite: We want accountability. It seems the only reason to deny drug testing in the schools is to protect underage drinking and drug use. And, frankly, I give up my privacy every time I change clothes in the locker room.

Let me give you three reasons why I support drug testing in my school. First, the program will encourage students to make constructive decisions rather than destructive ones. Second, it gives teeth to the drug-free promise that athletes and other students participating in extracurricular activities currently sign. (Currently, most of my peers just consider that promise a joke; there's simply no means to keep students accountable to it.) Finally, the new drug testing program will give students a reason to say no to drugs and alcohol. It will give students an opportunity to say “no” to drugs and alcohol and “yes” to athletics, band, show choir, journalism and all the activities that make school a complete experience.

The program Dr. Smith and other members of the community have developed will make the schools safer and stronger. Students will knowingly or even unknowingly help themselves by participating. Grades will increase, athletes will perform better and students will be able to learn in a safer environment.

Furthermore, the program will keep students and athletes accountable for their actions. The contractual promise every athlete and extracurricular participant signs will no longer be worthless. By establishing this program, we may never know all the good that will come from it because of all the bad that is stopped before it gets started.

As a member of a new generation who embraces accountability rather than the gross indulgences of personal freedoms that previous generations have embraced, I would urge you as a reader of this paper to lend your support for a safer and stronger school community by becoming a vocal advocate for random drug testing.

## 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

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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.

# Conclusion

Drugs are a significant barrier to learning, and the use of drugs by even a small number of students can affect the entire atmosphere of a school. Recognizing this, many administrators, parents, and students appreciate having a tool as powerful as student drug testing available as an additional component in their school's comprehensive drug-and-alcohol prevention and early intervention program.

Drug testing may not always be the solution to drug use by young people, nor is it right for every school. But for those schools that have determined that drug use is a significant problem and that testing is an appropriate response, it is



important to keep in mind that the purpose is not to punish students who use drugs. The goals are to deter non-using students from ever using drugs, to encourage non-dependent users to stop before they get into more serious trouble with drugs or encourage others to follow suit, and to identify those who need early intervention, recovery support, and/or clinical treatment services.

Drug testing reinforces all other drug-prevention strategies and is a vital part of a comprehensive approach to preventing adolescent drug use. Because drug testing detects use at every level, it can identify not only those users who are dependent on drugs, but also those who have just begun using or who have not yet experienced the negative effects of their use. Knowing which students are using drugs makes it much easier for parents, counselors, and others to step in with early intervention, provide the care these kids need, and put them on the road to better health.

Student drug testing should not be used just on a hunch or the assumption that drug use is a problem. Rather, it should be implemented only when a specific threat has been identified, and when the evidence, carefully collected over time, reveals a genuine need. A successful testing program involves extensive pre-planning, which must include every effort to enlist the support of school officials, parents, students, and anyone else who would be affected by it. Before testing begins, some sort of student assistance program should be in place to provide help to students who test positive for drugs. Every step of the program should be designed to ensure fairness, accuracy, and respect for confidentiality.

For schools with successful drug-testing programs, the rewards can be abundant. With declining drug use comes less disruption in the classroom and in the community, fewer health problems, higher productivity, better academic performance, and, for students, the promise of a healthier, brighter future.

## Government Agencies and Services

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

SAMHSA offers information on prevention, treatment, and mental health services, as well as free literature, topical searches, and identification of model programs and approaches for preventing and treating substance abuse.

### **National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**

U.S. Department of Human Services/SAMHSA

Phone: 1-800-729-6686

TDD (Hearing Impaired): 1-800-487-4889

Fax: 301-468-6433

Spanish Line: 1-877-767-8432

E-mail: [info@health.org](mailto:info@health.org)

<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov>

The clearinghouse is a one-stop resource for the most current and comprehensive information about substance abuse prevention and treatment.

### **Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator**

[www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov)

### **Division of Workplace Programs**

SAMHSA offers information about testing technologies, products, and services.

[www.drugfreeworkplace.gov](http://www.drugfreeworkplace.gov)



### **State list of certified labs**

SAMHSA's list of certified laboratories is updated every month.  
<http://workplace.samhsa.gov/ResourceCenter/lablist.htm>

### **Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**

U.S. Department of Education  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html>

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

[www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ferpa](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ferpa)

### **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)**

[www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ppra](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OM/fpco/ppra)

### **The Drug-Free Communities Program**

A program of the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Drug-Free Communities is designed to strengthen community-based coalition efforts to reduce youth substance abuse. The site provides a database of funded coalitions nationwide.  
[www.drugfreecommunities.samhsa.gov](http://www.drugfreecommunities.samhsa.gov)

### **Office of National Drug Control Policy**

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

### **The Anti-Drug.com**

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

### **Freevibe.com**

[www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)

### **National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign**

[mediacampaign.org](http://mediacampaign.org)  
[druganswer.com](http://druganswer.com) (Asian languages)

### **National Institute on Drug Abuse**

[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

## Medical Review Officers

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### **American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)**

<http://www.asam.org/search/search4.html>

### **Division of Workplace Programs (SAMHSA)**

<http://workplace.samhsa.gov/DrugTesting/MedicalReviewOfficers>

## Institutional Review Boards

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### **Institutional Review Board Registry**

Office for Human Research Protections

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

<http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search/asearch.asp#ASUR>

### **Agencies that have adopted the Federal policy for the protection of human subjects**

Department of Agriculture

Department of Energy

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Department of Commerce

Consumer Product Safety Commission

Agency for International Development

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Department of Justice

Department of Defense

Department of Education

Department of Veterans Affairs

Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Health and Human Services

National Science Foundation

Department of Transportation

## Grant Information

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### **U.S. Department of Education**

<http://www.ed.gov/fund/landing.jhtml>

### **Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**

Programs/Initiatives

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html#national>

### **What Should I Know about ED Grants?**

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/knowabtgrants/index.html>

### **Developing Competitive SAMHSA Grant Applications: Participants Manual**

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
(SAMHSA)

<http://alt.samhsa.gov/grants/TAManual/toc.htm>

## Student Surveys

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### **2005 State and Local Youth Risk Behavior Survey**

Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdfs/2005highschoolquestionnaire.pdf>

### **2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Middle School Questionnaire**

Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdfs/2005middleschoolquestionnaire.pdf>

## Drug-Testing Guidelines

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### **National Student Drug-Testing Coalition**

[www.studentdrugtesting.org](http://www.studentdrugtesting.org)

The booklet “Model Legislation For Student Drug-Testing Programs: State Bill and Insertion Language” is available online at <http://www.studentdrugtesting.org/model%20state%20bill%20web%20file.PDF>

### **Guidelines Concerning Student Drug Testing in Virginia Public Schools**

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/PC/DrugTestingGuidelines.pdf>

## Other Organizations

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### **Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America**

Phone: 1-800-54-CADCA (1-800-542-2322) or 703-706-0560

Fax: 703-706-0565

E-mail: [webmaster@cadca.org](mailto:webmaster@cadca.org), or [info@cadca.org](mailto:info@cadca.org)

[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

### **Drug-Free Schools Coalition, Inc.**

Phone: 908-284-5080

Fax: 908-284-5081

E-mail: [drugfreesc@aol.com](mailto:drugfreesc@aol.com)

### **National Student Assistance Association**

Phone: 800-257-6310

[www.nsaa.us](http://www.nsaa.us)

### **Recovery Network**

For information about substance abuse, addiction, and mental health problems.

[www.recoverynetwork.org](http://www.recoverynetwork.org)

**Monitoring the Future**

[www.isr.umich.edu/src/mtf](http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/mtf)

**American Medical Association**

[www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)

**American Society of Addiction Medicine**

[www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org)

**American Public Health Association**

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

## **HOW TO ORDER**

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This document is available online at [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov). Additional copies may be obtained from the ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse by calling 1-800-666-3332, or by sending an e-mail to [ondcp@ncjrs.org](mailto:ondcp@ncjrs.org).

