

Archived Information

Objective 1.3: Schools are strong, safe, disciplined, and drug-free.

National Need

National Concerns. Schools must provide an orderly, safe, and drug-free environment if students are to learn effectively. The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by young people is a continuing problem for our society, although rates of use in schools remain much lower than use outside of school. Schools nationally are comparatively safe places, and students in school today are not significantly more likely to be victimized than in previous years. Crime in school facilities or on the way to school has fallen and most school crime is theft, not serious violent crime. However, a small proportion of schools experience high rates of crime and violence. Similarly, while many schools experience few or minor discipline problems, many others have moderate or severe problems. Drug and violence prevention play a critical role in helping schools establish and maintain drug-free, safe, and orderly learning environments.

Our Role. The Department of Education's main mechanism for supporting safe, drug-free, and orderly learning environments is the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Community Act program (SDFSCA). SDFSCA is the Federal government's major school-based initiative to prevent youth drug use and school violence. The SDFSCA State Grants Program provides funds to governors and state education agencies to support a broad range of drug and violence prevention strategies. Governors' program funds go to local grantees, mainly community groups and organizations, and the state education agency funds flow to school districts, primarily by a formula based on enrollment. All states and more than 97 percent of school districts participate in the program. SDFS also has a national program component, a broad discretionary authority that funds programs to prevent drug use and violence, such as training, demonstrations, direct services to districts with severe drug and violence problems, information dissemination, and program evaluation. The Department also makes grants to postsecondary institutions to fund drug and violence prevention programs on their campuses.

The Department of Education is pursuing various strategies to foster school safety and drug prevention, including efforts to identify, evaluate, and disseminate effective approaches; technical assistance to states and school districts; support for after-school programs; and the hiring of staff to assist schools with implementing effective programs.

ED is setting high standards to promote the use of effective strategies by grant recipients. Together with the Department of Justice, ED issues the *Annual Report on School Safety* to encourage awareness of school safety issues and improvement of prevention efforts. In addition, ED continues to coordinate and collaborate extensively with the efforts of other Federal agencies related to youth drug and violence prevention. Finally, ED has proposed legislative changes to improve the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program. Through all these means, ED supports and encourages effective action at the Federal, state, and local levels.

Our Performance

How We Measure. ED is monitoring progress on this objective in terms of national trends in student drug and alcohol use, including in-school use, as well as national trends in student victimization and violent incidents in schools. Generally, ED selected indicators from existing nationally representative data sets that could be used without incurring additional costs or imposing an additional data collection

burden. “In-school drug use” has been selected as an indicator because it is most directly related to conditions that SDFSCA grant recipients are most likely to be able to change. The 30-day youth drug use indicator was selected because it aligns with a comparable indicator in the National Drug Control Strategy’s Performance Measures of Effectiveness. Serious violent crime is included as an indicator because, although rare, these events are of great concern and have significant implications for public policy. Rates of fighting are included as an indicator as the best available proxy for school disorder and discipline problems. Generally, the list of indicators for the program has been streamlined over the past 2 years to focus on indicators with existing, nationally representative data sources.

Indicator 1.3.a. By 2000, the prevalence of past-month use of illicit drugs and alcohol among school-aged children will decrease by 20 percent as measured against the 1996 base year [Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) target].

Assessment of Progress. Alcohol—no change. Drugs—no change. This indicator provides a national context for the school-based prevention efforts supported by ED. Rates of alcohol use for all grade levels have remained relatively steady for many years. Drug use rates have recently been relatively steady and may have leveled off. Targets for 1999 and 2000 were established by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to reflect a desired 20 percent decline from 1996 rates. It is unlikely that the ambitious targets for students in grades 10–12 will be achieved.

Figure 1.3.a.1

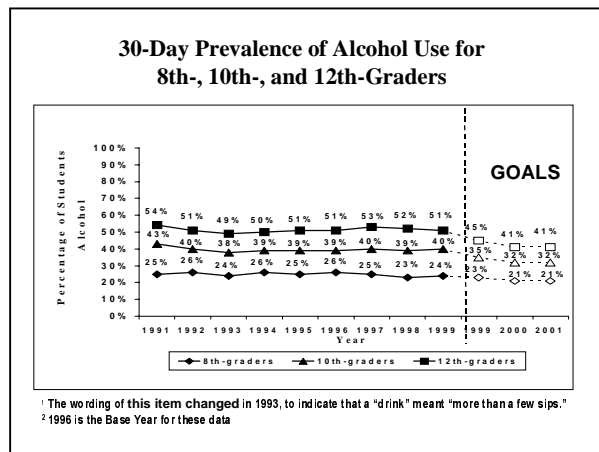
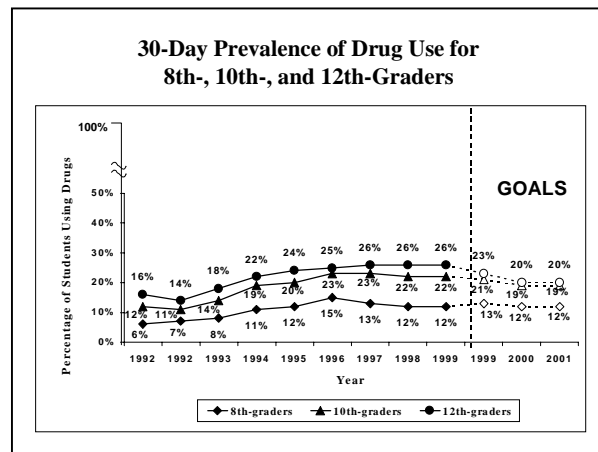


Figure 1.3.a.2

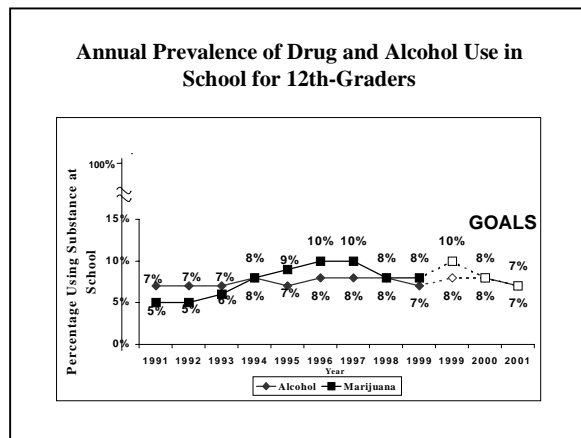


Source: *Monitoring the Future (MTF)*, 1999. **Frequency:** Annual. **Next Update:** 2000. **Validation Procedure:** Data validated by University of Michigan Institute for Social Research and National Institute on Drug Abuse procedures. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** According to NCES calculations, the total response rate for this survey has varied between 46 percent and 67 percent since 1976.

Indicator 1.3.b. Rates of alcohol and drug use in schools will begin to fall by 2001.

Assessment of Progress. Alcohol—target exceeded. Marijuana—target exceeded. Rates of substance use *in schools* (see Figure 1.3.b.1) parallel, but are much lower than, *overall* use rates (i.e., use in any location). *Overall annual* grade 12 use rates (not shown in figure) for 1999: alcohol, 74 percent; marijuana, 38 percent. Rates of alcohol use in school have remained relatively steady for many years. Marijuana use rates increased in the mid-1990s, but recently they have been relatively steady and may have leveled off.

Figure 1.3.b.1

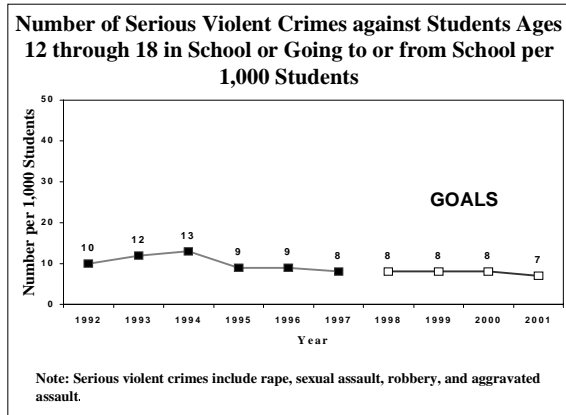


Source: *Monitoring the Future* (MTF), 1999 (special analysis, 2000). *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2000 (special analysis, 2001).
Validation procedure: Data validated by University of Michigan Institute for Social Research and National Institute on Drug Abuse procedures.
Limitations of data and planned improvements: Figure 1.3.b.1 shows annual use rates, which are not comparable with the 30-day rates shown in Figures 1.3.a.1 and 1.3.a.2. According to NCES calculations, the total response rate for this survey has varied between 46 percent and 67 percent since 1976. MTF does not publicly release its data on in-school use, so special runs must be requested. For grade 12 students, MTF has separate items for certain drugs, including marijuana, but no combined item asking about all drug use in school.

Indicator 1.3.c. The number of criminal and violent incidents in schools by students will continually decrease between now and 2001.

Assessment of Progress. No 1999 data available, but progress toward target likely. According to 1997 survey data—released in 1999—the 1999 target has been met. Rates of violent crime victimization at school, like other measures of juvenile crime and violence, have been dropping in recent years and are likely to continue to decline. Student-reported rates of victimization provide one measure of school safety; these rates may differ from incident reports provided by administrators.

Figure 1.3.c.1

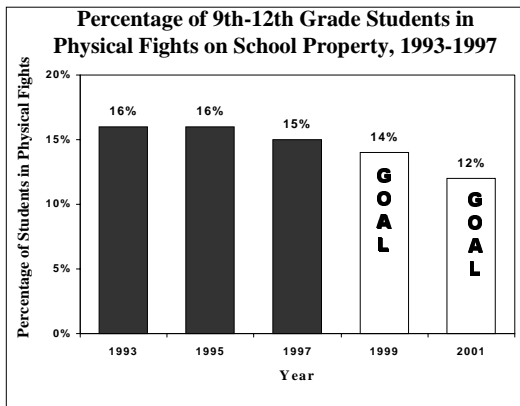


Source: *National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)*, 1997 (special analysis, 1999). **Frequency:** Annual. **Next Update:** 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by Census Bureau and Bureau of Justice Statistics procedures. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Most NCVS data are reported the year after collection, but in-school victimization data is a special analysis with a delayed release, so the 1998 data will be available in 2000 and the 1999 data (collection of which is not yet completed) will be available in 2001.

Indicator 1.3.d. By 2001, the level of disorder in schools will decrease.

Assessment of Progress. No 1999 data available, but progress toward target is likely. The percentage of students reporting involvement in a fight at school has declined since 1995, and overall juvenile crime and violence rates are down; therefore, it seems likely that the percentage of students in a fight at school will continue to decline. The 1999 data will become available later this year.

Figure 1.3.d.1



Source: *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, (YRBS)* 1997. **Frequency:** Biennial. **Next Update:** 2000. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by Westat and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) procedures. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** YRBS data are collected biennially and reported the year after collection; 1999 data will be reported in 2000. While the most recent data show the indicator moving in the right direction, the change from 1993 to 1997 is not statistically significant.

How We Plan to Achieve Our Objective

How ED's Activities Support the Achievement of this Objective. ED is implementing a significant list of activities designed to help create safe, disciplined, and drug-free learning environments. These activities are designed to support high-quality prevention programming, either through providing direct assistance or improving the availability, quantity, and quality of information about effective approaches to preventing youth drug use and violence. These strategies include the following:

- **Program improvement and technical assistance.** Through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools State Grant program (for which the fiscal year 2001 budget request is \$439 million), ED is promoting the program's Principles of Effectiveness through evaluations and technical assistance to ensure state and district use of effective prevention strategies and monitoring state implementation of the Principles, highlighting the activities of states that are particularly successful in implementing the Principles. ED is also using an Expert Review Panel to identify effective drug and violence prevention programs, and conducting the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Recognition Program to identify schools that are implementing exemplary and promising drug and violence prevention programs. ED is also providing grants to numerous sites to replicate effective prevention programming and to test model drug and violence prevention programs using rigorous evaluation strategies.
- **Information for the public.** ED is collaborating with the Department of Justice to continue to issue the *Annual Report on School Safety* to encourage public awareness of school safety issues and to encourage schools and communities to monitor safety and improve prevention strategies. ED is also developing a companion document to its *Early Warning, Timely Response* guide, designed to provide technical assistance to educators in preventing violent behavior by identifying and providing early help to troubled students.
- **Direct support for high quality programs.**
 - ED is providing support to organizations around the country to support implementation of high-quality programs designed to create safe, disciplined, and drug-free environments, including the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative, supported jointly by ED, HHS, and the Departments of Justice and Labor. This initiative helps schools and communities develop and implement comprehensive, community-wide strategies so that students can grow and thrive without resorting to violence or other destructive behaviors. ED's fiscal year 2001 budget request for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) includes \$122 million for Safe Schools/Healthy Students projects—\$40 million for a new cohort of grants in addition to \$82 million in continuation costs for projects originally funded in 1999 and 2000.
 - The SDFSCA Middle School Coordinators initiative supports the hiring of program coordinators to assess drug and violence problems, and identify effective, research-based strategies to address youth drug use and violence; the Department's fiscal year 2001 budget request includes level funding of \$50 million for this initiative. Other SDFSCA grant programs include a multiyear mentoring initiative with the Department of Justice to recruit and train adult mentors to help at-risk youth avoid drug use and violence, and ED's new Effective Alternative Strategies initiative, which will provide \$10 million in fiscal year 2001 to support projects to reduce suspensions and expulsions and ensure continued educational progress for students who are suspended or expelled.
 - ED is continuing to expand the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program with its fiscal year 2001 budget request of \$1 billion to serve almost 2.5 million students, to keep schools open as safe havens and to provide extended learning opportunities for the whole community.

- The Department's FY 2001 Budget Request also includes \$120 million for the *Small, Safe, and Successful High Schools* program, which would assist high schools to create smaller, more intimate learning environments with stronger bonds between teachers and students, and thereby promote a safer and improved school climate; and an increase of \$1.5 million for *Arts in Education* to expand a program launched in fiscal year 2000 to help at-risk youth interpret media images as a way of preventing youth violence, delinquency, and substance abuse.
- **Reauthorization proposal.** The Department's SDFSCA reauthorization proposal is designed to improve accountability for program funds and encourage adoption of comprehensive, research-based programs by:
 - Establishing core performance indicators for the program
 - Targeting funds to local education agencies (LEAs) with significant need and high-quality plans to use funding
 - Focusing both state education agency (SEA)/LEA and Governor's Program on the creation of safe, disciplined, and drug-free learning environments
 - Requiring development of comprehensive school safety plans that address key strategies
 - Including elements related to school safety and drug use in state, district, and school report cards
 - Strengthening the Department's capacity to provide resources to districts and communities that experience a major crisis in a school to help meet unanticipated needs, such as crisis counseling for students and staff. The Department's fiscal year 2001 budget request includes \$10 million for this purpose.

How We Coordinate with Other Federal Agencies

Youth drug use and violence are significant problems of broad concern to and linked with the mission of many federal agencies. Existing mechanisms for coordination, including the role played by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, have led to strong relationships between many of these agencies. As a result of these relationships, coordinated activities have been implemented in the following areas:

- **Data.** Support and coordinate data collection activities through consultation in the development of instruments to improve usefulness and avoid duplication of effort (e.g., Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Monitoring the Future, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control); Health Behaviors of School Children (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development); School Violent Death Study (CDC)] and Department of Justice [National Crime Victimization Survey]).
- **Evaluation.** Continue to cooperate on evaluation projects such as the National Study on School Violence being conducted in cooperation with the National Institute of Justice-sponsored National Study of Delinquency Prevention in schools; a national evaluation of the impact of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative; and the School Health Policies and Programs Study with HHS, for which ED is providing consultation.
- **Information Dissemination and Technical Assistance.** Support various initiatives to provide information and technical assistance to the field (e.g., with the Department of Justice, continue to produce the *Annual Report on School Safety* and an implementation guide to *Early Warning: Timely Response*; with the Department of Justice and HHS, support technical assistance to Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative grantees and continue to produce satellite training sessions on violence prevention strategies; with the Department of Justice, support the National Center for Conflict Resolution, the National Resource Center for Safe Schools, and the Youth Court Training

and Technical Assistance Programs; with HHS, support the National Coordinating Committee on School Health).

- **Program Improvement Initiatives.** Support activities designed to enhance the quality and rigor of prevention programs in schools and communities (e.g., with HHS and the Department of Justice, support the Safe Schools/Healthy Students initiative to provide comprehensive services that promote healthy childhood development and prevent violence and alcohol and other drug abuse; with HHS and the National Institute of Mental Health, support implementation and evaluation of a developmentally appropriate intervention (Fast Track) for high-risk youth in grades 6 through 10 and their families; with NIDA, National Institute on Drug Abuse, support a study of the diffusion of risk/protective focused drug prevention for adolescents at the state and community levels; with the Department of Justice, support one-to-one mentoring programs for youth at risk of educational failure, dropping out of school, or involvement in delinquent activities, including gangs and drug abuse; with the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Project SHOUT, which supports effective approaches to the prevention of youth substance abuse through public education.

Challenges to Achieving Our Objective

Drug use and violence involving young people are vast and complex problems affected by a host of factors, only some of which are under schools' control. These factors include societal and parental attitudes; peer pressure; activities of organized crime and gangs; individual, family, and community risk and protective factors; advertising and other media images of drug use and violence; and government efforts at the local, state, national, and international levels. In addition, these factors play out very differently from one locale to another, making it more difficult for Federal actions to respond effectively to local needs. Moreover, it is more difficult to influence local policy and implementation through a formula grant program (such as Safe and Drug-Free Schools state grants) than through a discretionary program. In a discretionary program, the Department has direct contact with a small number of grantees; however, in a state-administered formula grant program, the Department has only indirect influence on local activities and must depend on states to establish policy and monitor implementation.

Recent studies cite challenges to which the Department has responded with its reauthorization proposal.

- Lack of uniform information on program activities and effectiveness make Federal oversight difficult. (Reauthorization proposal includes development of common core of indicators and information requirements.) [General Accounting Office Study, October 1997]
- Reporting required from states every three years may be insufficient for congressional oversight. (Reauthorization proposal requires annual reporting.) [General Accounting Office Study, October 1997]
- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) should report on actual performance against performance indicators and should submit comprehensive plans with detailed descriptions of programs and services that align with measurable goals. (Reauthorization proposal requires these elements.) [Office of the Inspector General Report, December 1998]
- States should consider effectiveness of LEA-conducted activities as a criterion for awarding greatest need funds. (Reauthorization proposal requires states to award all funds based on combination of need and quality of plan.) [Office of the Inspector General Study, December 1998]
- States should consider LEA performance as a criterion for continuation funding. (Reauthorization proposal requires states to determine if LEAs have made "substantial progress" in order to receive continuation funding.) [Office of the Inspector General Study, December, 1998]