



### Girls Vulnerable to Alcohol Advertising

A new study found that girls are more vulnerable to alcohol advertising in magazines than boys. Public health surveys now show that teenage girls are drinking more than boys. The research on



the exposure of underage youth to alcohol advertising was conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth and was

published in *The Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. For more visit: [www.camy.org/press/release.php?ReleaseID=22](http://www.camy.org/press/release.php?ReleaseID=22). ■

### Parents: The Gang Antidote

How can administrators work with parents to deter gang activity in school? In one school district, principals send parents a letter as soon as their child shows any behavior indicating gang involvement.



The letter states: "Your child has been engaging in behaviors in school that may be gang-related. We have counseled your child to stop all such activity. Further activity may lead to suspension from school if it poses a provable gang threat or relates to gang intimidation."

The letter also acknowledges that some students are only pretending to belong to gangs, but cautions that the dangers are real. The letter states, "For [some] students, it is popular to dress, talk, and act like active gang members, even when they are not. These behaviors can cause serious or even life-threatening problems when such 'imitators' or marginal gang members encounter dangerous, and sometimes armed, gang members."

This communication concludes with a "call to action" urging parents to talk to their child about the dangers of gangs. "Please speak with your child about the dangers of real or pretend gang involvement. I would welcome a phone call from you."

For copies of this sample letter contact: [bmckeon@csc.com](mailto:bmckeon@csc.com). For additional information on gang prevention strategies see:

- ◆ California Gang Reduction Project: [www.cya.ca.gov/juvenile/gangviolence.html](http://www.cya.ca.gov/juvenile/gangviolence.html).
- ◆ National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations: A Guide to Gang Prevention for Parents: [www.nagia.org/kids\\_and\\_gangs.htm](http://www.nagia.org/kids_and_gangs.htm).
- ◆ Gang Reduction Through Intervention, Prevention & Education: [www.gripe4rkids.org](http://www.gripe4rkids.org). ■

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## Trouble on Mondays

Ever notice how more student disputes happen on Mondays? You might expect increasing tension on Fridays before an important game or dance, but why the trouble on Mondays? Spotsylvania, Virginia High School Security Officer Ripp Roberts explains that schools serve as the main social forum for youth. Disputes that began at a party on Saturday can erupt at school on Monday. Often the problems seem minor. A verbal altercation can trigger a physical fight between students that could result in suspension or expulsion. If possible, attempt to address these issues early.

At a recent training for security professionals, Officer Roberts recommended strategies to help students avoid the consequences of a physical fight. Administrators might also find these suggestions helpful:

- ◆ Listen to students as they arrive at school.
- ◆ Establish rapport with key students so they can alert you to potential violence before it erupts.
- ◆ Ask potential combative students if their actions are worth risking an expulsion.

**DoDEA Safe Schools Program Managers**  
Ed Englehardt, Rose Chunik

**Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff**  
Bob Michela, Jennifer Bloom, Brian McKeon

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By emphasizing expectations for proper conduct in the student handbook and in orientation sessions, administrators might be able to pre-empt some of these disputes. Offer conflict resolution, peer mediation or counseling programs to students having problems with other individuals in their environment. For examples of possible programs, see DoDEA's Prevention Program Guides at: [www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm](http://www.dodea.edu/schools/ISGuides.htm). ■



## Violence Prevented by E-mail

Training students to report threats they read about while on the computer might enable them to prevent violence in school. For example, Ceilia McGinty, 16, recently prevented a school shooting in another state by reporting a plot she had read about while on-line. From the tip, police arrested a Detroit high school student and seized a video tape of the student firing a stolen assault rifle.

According to news reports, the troubled youth sent an E-mail detailing his plan to detonate a bomb and shoot fellow students and staff. Because students spend time in chat rooms on the internet, DoDEA students could potentially report a similar scenario. Be sure to let your students know were to report any threats they may encounter while on-line. ■



## Security Awareness For All

Involving students, staff and parents in security awareness training enhances school security. When the entire student body consists of trained observers – the eyes and ears available to report strangers, troubled students or suspicious packages or vehicles increases.

With security awareness training, the school climate improves because:

- ◆ Students deepen their connection to the school.
- ◆ Students take ownership for security.
- ◆ Students' sense of security increases.

Security awareness training for parents, students and staff bolsters their confidence because it provides them with strategies to protect themselves. Antiterrorism Level 1 briefings have been required for older students and adults for years. A new on-line training on the Internet allows adults and youth to internalize security lessons while they make decisions during different scenarios.

Administrators, don't forget to watch out for any "insider security threats" at your school. Increased vigilance in this area could help to detect troubled students. DoDEA's Level 1 Antiterrorism Awareness Training requirement is available at: [www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700\\_1.pdf](http://www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700_1.pdf). Supplemental materials are available at: [www.dodea.edu/log/safety\\_security/index1.htm#Security](http://www.dodea.edu/log/safety_security/index1.htm#Security). The on-line training is available at: [www.at-awareness.org](http://www.at-awareness.org). ■

## Troubled Youth Statistics

Administrators can use the following U.S. statistics as a "wake up call" to give staff and parents a greater understanding of the problems affecting youth. According to the organization Parent Teen Guide, between now and this time tomorrow:

- ◆ 1,439 youth will attempt suicide;
- ◆ 15,006 students will use drugs; and
- ◆ 3,506 children will run away.

The three organizations that comprise Parent Teen Guide (e.g., Help My Teen, Lifelines, and Teen Solutions) printed guides to help parents and teachers intervene early with troubled youth. For copies of the guides: "Difficult Teens: Suggestions for Parents" or "Teen Drug-Use: 34 Warning Signs" visit: [www.parentteenguide.com/teen-drug-use.html](http://www.parentteenguide.com/teen-drug-use.html). ■

## FAST FACT

According to an August 2004 Study conducted by The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and The Children's Health Fund:

- ◆ 48% of parents are unaware of emergency preparedness plans at their children's school.
- ◆ Confidence in the ability of the Federal Government to protect Americans has fallen to 53% in 2004 from 62% in 2003.

For more go to:

[www.ncdp.mailman.columbia.edu](http://www.ncdp.mailman.columbia.edu). ■

## Suicide and Friendship Among Adolescents in the U.S.

Suicide rates among adolescents have increased sharply in the past few years. Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among 15-to 24-year-olds. A recent study in the *American Journal of Public Health* sheds new light on the relationship between adolescent friendship patterns and “suicidality.”

The findings attest to the importance of a school’s social-emotional climate. Girls, in particular, were more likely to take their own lives in response to dealing with their feelings of isolation. Both boys and girls in the study were more likely to have suicidal thoughts if there was a gun in the house or if a family member or friend had attempted suicide.

Students were considered more likely to attempt suicide if they:

- ◆ Felt depressed;
- ◆ Experienced a homosexual attraction;
- ◆ Abused drugs or alcohol frequently; or
- ◆ Suffered from low self-esteem.

The study also concluded that a students’ friends, or a lack thereof, influenced their decision to commit suicide. This study can be found at: [www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/94/1/89](http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/94/1/89). ■



## Gang “Wannabees” Invite Violence

Students transferring to DoDEA schools may have been exposed to youth gangs in U.S. schools and/or their communities. Some might have become peripheral gang members while others may have been “wannabees.” Students at a rural high school in Virginia recently discovered how imitating gang behavior can be almost as dangerous as joining a gang.

The local newspaper ran a picture of football linemen “throwing hand signs” to each other as they celebrated touch downs. Unfortunately the players made the MS-13 gang’s hand sign upside down. The Associated Press picked up the picture and circulated it to other newspapers. The real gang members saw the gesture and thought the linemen were “dissing” them. The MS-13 gang decided to retaliate by trying to kill the football players. The students were saved by law enforcement officials who became aware of the gang’s plans. A detective visited the school and informed the school security officer that some hard core gang members had put a “hit” on one of their students. With this knowledge special security measures were put in place to protect the players.

This anecdote illustrates the value of proper communication between community and school security officials. Educate your students and staff about the danger associated with students attempting to “act” like gang members. To prevent the start of youth gangs in your school, inform students, staff and parents about the violent nature of gangs. ■

## Substance Abuse Prevention Video for Educators and Parents

Many DoDEA school administrators are interested in working with parents to find solutions to help students with substance abuse problems. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA) published a new “Parenting Is Prevention” video package that assists parents and others in the community who are concerned about youth substance abuse. Videos I and II offer parents suggestions on how to communicate effectively with their children. The videos also describe the powerful influence parents have on their children’s use of drugs. Videos III and IV offer ideas about creating safer environments for young people and are geared toward prevention practitioners, educators, community coalitions and parents.

When purchased as a package, all four videos cost \$30. The videos also are available separately for \$10 each. To order, call SAMHSA at: (301) 468-2600 or toll free at (800) 729-6686. For related printed materials visit SAMHSA’s Information Clearinghouse at: [www.health.org](http://www.health.org). ■

## Maintaining Discipline: Keep Teaching

DoDEA administrators know that discipline contributes to a positive school climate and reduces the likelihood of violence. However, a recent study cautioned that expelling or suspending students could be counterproductive. The Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University and the Indiana Youth Services Association’s “Children Left Behind Project” (CLB) recently released four briefing papers that focused on whether or not school exclusion is effective.

While schools must make every effort to ensure a safe school climate, the CLB Project concluded that out-of-school suspension and expulsion do not contribute to that goal. In a paper titled “Discipline is Always Teaching: Effective Alternatives,” (Briefing Paper 3), CLB spoke with Indiana principals about innovative programs and ideas for maintaining school discipline and maximizing educational opportunities. The CLB found “no hint of compromise in the approach used by these principals.

These principals maintain high academic and behavioral expectations and are not afraid to remove a student if safety demands it.” However, the principals preferred to assign students who misbehaved to in-school suspension. Indiana principals suggested several strategies to enhance discipline:

- ◆ Train staff in classroom management strategies.
- ◆ Teach appropriate student behavior through school philosophy and prevention programs.
- ◆ Communicate and collaborate the discipline policies with parents.
- ◆ Re-connect students alienated from other students, due to their behavior problems, to mentoring and anger management programs.
- ◆ Develop creative alternatives in the school and community to support keeping students with discipline problems in school.

CLB encourages strategies that keep students involved in learning. The briefing papers and supplemental materials can be found at: [www.ceep.indiana.edu](http://www.ceep.indiana.edu). ■



## Free Drug Abuse Resources Available

Many DoDEA administrators recognize a link between substance abuse and violence. For administrators interested in educating students on the issue of drug abuse, The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) web site, titled: NIDA Goes Back to School, has a variety of resources available for middle and high school settings, including:



- ◆ Two recently updated pamphlets on marijuana (one for teens and one for parents);
- ◆ A newly updated child/adolescent drug prevention guide for parents, educators, and community leaders;
- ◆ Fact sheets on the health consequences of specific drugs;
- ◆ “Mind Over Matter” magazines for grades 5-9 and a teacher’s guide on the effects of drug usage on the brain;
- ◆ A high-school curriculum which focuses on the brain and addiction; and
- ◆ A collection of articles about drugs and their impact on the human body; a poster, and more.

Using these prevention resources helps decrease drug use by students. To request copies of these publications go to: [www.backtoschool.drugabuse.gov](http://www.backtoschool.drugabuse.gov). ■



## The Benefits of After-School Programs

Eight million young people are left unsupervised at the end of each school day. After-school programming can be an effective way to reduce the prevalence of high-risk behaviors. Beyond keeping kids out of harm’s way, what types of after-school programs are most beneficial?

Susan Black examines this issue in an article in this month’s *American School Board Journal*. She reports that many after-school programs in school and community settings focus on raising student academic achievement by offering homework and study sessions or academic tutoring. Although academic assistance is a crucial component of after-school programs, children also need informal learning opportunities where they can engage in exploratory play, pursue their own interests, and just “dawdle and daydream.” Based on recommendations from the National Research Council and the Erikson Institute, Black states, “after-school programs should support and complement classroom learning by emphasizing social, emotional, and physical development.” Black suggests that programs:

- ◆ Provide safe places for kids to interact with friends;
- ◆ Help youth build trusting, supportive relationships that help them feel accepted and included;
- ◆ Allow students to assume responsibility by making choices and pursuing challenges, and
- ◆ Engage students in activities that develop their personalities and interests as well as their intellect.

You can read the entire article at: [www.asbj.com/current/research.html](http://www.asbj.com/current/research.html). ■