

November 22, 2010

2010-R-0468

DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION (DARE) PROGRAM

By: Judith Lohman, Assistant Director

Regarding the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program, you asked: (1) how the program is funded, (2) how many Connecticut school districts participate in it, (3) whether any Connecticut schools or districts have dropped the program, and (4) if there has been any research on the program's effectiveness.

SUMMARY

The DARE Program trains police officers to lead educational sessions in local schools. The original program was aimed at fifth and sixth graders and the sessions were designed to help students to resist peer pressure and the temptation to take illegal drugs. The program began in 1983 in Los Angeles and was the brainchild of then-Police Chief Darryl Gates. In the past few years, DARE has expanded its focus to include seventh to ninth graders and such topics as alcohol and cigarettes, prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse, online safety, and gangs. The elementary school DARE curriculum is currently being revised along the lines of the new program for seventh and eighth graders known as "Keepin It Real."

According to Trooper First Class Rafael Morales, head of the Connecticut State Police DARE Unit and the state DARE coordinator, roughly 120 of the state's 169 towns use the DARE program in their schools. Some towns have dropped the program in the past 10 years, generally due to budget constraints.

Program funding is generally provided from local appropriations and private donations. Morales' salary as the full-time state DARE coordinator is a state expense, while training for the police officers who teach in the program is funded from asset forfeitures, according to Morales. Department of Public Safety (DPS) funding for state troopers to serve as school resource officers in school districts (such officers taught the school DARE programs) was suspended as of July 1, 2010 because of state budget problems and the troopers were reassigned to patrol duties.

Paul Flinter, head of the State Department of Education's (SDE) Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, could not provide a statewide count of the number of schools that use DARE. But, after reviewing reports submitted to the department from grantees funded under the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) Program, he reported that 20 school districts used federal SDFS funds for DARE or a "similar police liaison program" in 2006-07. He said more districts were using SDFS funds for the DARE program in 1999-00. Flinter attributes the drop to evaluations questioning the DARE program's effectiveness and the U. S. Education Department's (USDOE) failure to include DARE on its list of exemplary and promising programs in 2001.

Finally, according to the Office of Fiscal Analysis (OFA), municipalities can receive funding for drug prevention programs, including DARE, through a federal grant from the U. S. Department of Justice.

Because DARE is the most widely used school-based substance abuse prevention program in the U. S. and is also used in many other countries, its effectiveness has been extensively studied. The results are mixed. More than 30 evaluations and meta-analyses of the program by academics and government agencies have found the program to be ineffective in preventing drug use by young people. Many of these evaluations were done in the 1990s, before recent program modifications. Other evaluations, many of which appear to judge DARE on measures other than its success in preventing drug use, have found that the program has a high customer satisfaction, improves attitudes towards police, and has a positive effect on students.

DARE IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS

We asked both DPS and SDE for information on the number Connecticut schools offering DARE, whether any districts have dropped the program and why, and how the program is funded.

Number of School Districts Offering DARE

In an e-mail, Trooper Morales told us that approximately 120 towns participate in the DARE program. In the past decade, he said, some schools have dropped the program because of budget cutbacks. But some of those districts, such as Chaplin and Danbury, have recently restarted the program.

Flinter was unable to provide a statewide count of schools districts that use DARE because SDE has no oversight responsibility for the program. But, to help answer our questions, he reviewed prevention reports SDE received from recipients of federal SDFS grants, which until 2008 were distributed to school districts through SDE.

This review showed that, in the 2006-07 school year, nearly 20 school districts provided DARE or a similar police liaison program. In an e-mail, Flinter said that SDFS supported many DARE programs until 2000 but the number of districts using the program declined because "early in the decade, when the move toward evidence-based programs strengthened, a number of schools and child service providers questioned the effectiveness of this intervention." He noted that the program did not appear a [list](#) of exemplary and promising programs published by the U. S. Department of Education's (USDOE's) Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools in 2001.

Program Funding

Morales stated that DARE is typically funded by local school districts and private donations. He also said some districts use state or federal preventive grants to pay for DARE programs. According to Flinter, states used to receive SDFS formula grants and were required to distribute 93% of the funds to school districts for authorized drug-abuse and violence-prevention activities. Some school districts used their SDFS grants to pay for the DARE Program. These grants were not funded after 2007, so the schools that have continued to provide the DARE program have done so "exclusively through local funding, usually a combination of local school and police contributions."

Until this year, the state paid state troopers who acted as school resource officers in towns covered by the state's 11 state police barracks or by resident state troopers, but DPS suspended this funding on July 1, 2010 to save an estimated \$ 1. 2 million. The troopers were reassigned to regular patrol duties. The suspension of state funding for state troopers to act as school resource officers and DARE Program instructors (see below) led to the loss of the program in several districts including

Griswold and North Stonington and at the Norwich and Grasso regional technical high schools, according to a *New London Day* [article](#) published on June 14, 2010.

Morales said he is responsible for DARE teaching in 15 towns. In those towns, the program is funded by donations and his time as the full-time person assigned to the DARE unit. Police training costs are normally funded from asset forfeiture money, he said.

According to OFA, municipalities are eligible to receive federal direct [Justice Assistance Grants](#), also known as Burne/JAG grants, from the U. S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ has approved use of the grants for drug abuse prevention activities, such DARE. According to the Bureau of Justice Assistance FY 09 [local awards list](#), 24 Connecticut municipalities received grants from the program in FY 09. The state-funded Drug Enforcement Program used to provide funding for DARE as well, but, the program was eliminated from the Office of Policy and Management's budget several years ago.

RESEARCH ON DARE'S EFFECTIVENESS

Background

The results of various evaluations of DARE are mixed. There have been so many evaluations of its effectiveness since its inception that we can provide only a brief overview of their conflicting outcomes in this report. To supplement the information summarized below, we list additional articles, websites, and bibliographies on the program in a separate section below.

The "core" DARE program is a 17-week series of 45- or 60-minute lessons taught by police officers, with suggested extended activities to be integrated with other instruction by the classroom teacher. At first, the program was aimed at students in the last year of elementary school, usually in grades five or six, depending on which is the elementary school exit grade. The program has added a middle school component for grades seven to nine. It has also expanded beyond drug prevention to cover such activities as drinking and smoking, online safety, bullying, choosing good role models, gangs, and other topics. The program it is still predominantly taught by police officers.

Negative Evaluations

Many evaluations of the core DARE Program found it to be ineffective. The findings of approximately 30 evaluations, as reflected in several articles and reports, may be summarized as follows:

1. The program has some immediate positive effects on students' knowledge of drugs, attitudes about drug use, social skills, and attitudes toward the police.
2. These effects dissipate within one to two years of students' participation in the program.
3. The program's effect on drug use is either small or unidentifiable and, when identified, dissipates quickly.

These studies found that DARE did not prevent drug use in the short- or long-term and students who participated in the program were indistinguishable from those who did not.

Based on these disappointing evaluations, the DARE Program was listed as "ineffective" in *Youth Violence: A Report of the U. S. Surgeon General*, published in 2001 by the Office of the U. S. Surgeon General. That report cited DARE as "one school-based universal prevention program [that] meets the criteria for Does Not Work. . . ." The report stated that although DARE receives substantial support from parents, teachers, police, and government funding agencies:

Numerous well-designed evaluations and meta-analyses consistently show little or no deterrent effects on substance abuse. Overall, evidence on the effects of the traditional DARE curriculum, which is implemented in grades 5 and 6, shows that children who participate are as likely to use drugs as those who do not participate. However, some positive effects have been demonstrated regarding attitudes toward police. " ([Chapter 5, Prevention and Intervention, Ineffective Primary Prevention Programs](#))

A 2003 Government Accountability Office report, which looked at six long-term evaluations of the program, two each in Kentucky and Colorado and one in Illinois between 1991 and 1999, concluded that the program had "no statistically significant long-term effect on youth illicit drug use" ([Youth Illicit Drug Use Prevention: DARE Long-Term Evaluations and Federal Efforts to Identify Effective Programs](#), Government Accountability Office, January 15, 2003).

Positive Evaluations

The DARE Program has also received positive evaluations including the following:

- A 2002 study of fifth and sixth graders in Nashville, Tennessee found that DARE was highly effective in preventing smoking among elementary-school-age children, with students who completed DARE being five times less likely to smoke than those who did not (Ahmed, Nasar U. ; Ahmed, Noushin S. ; Bennett, C. Ray; Hinds, Joseph E. "Impact of a Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D. A. R. E.) Program in Preventing the Initiation of Cigarette Smoking in Fifth- and Sixth-Grade Students," *Journal of the National Medical Association*, Vol. 94, April 1, 2002, pp. 249-256).
- A 2004 evaluation of the effects of DARE on 57 young New Hampshire offenders referred by probation officers found the program "to be an effective intervention to help improve anger management and social skills. " The report also noted that the participants "still reflect youth in need of treatment and further aftercare" (Russell, Keith C. , [Evaluating the Effects if the Project D. A. R. E. Program on Young Offenders](#), School of Health and Human Services, University of New Hampshire, August 2004).
- A 2007 paper on the use of DARE in Canadian schools concludes, among other things, that DARE (1) "appears to be as effective as other programs in impacting knowledge, basic skills, and even attitudes"; (2) positively affects the tone of classes and schools; and (3) increases students' confidence, positive feelings toward police, respect for laws, and consideration of the consequences of making decisions (Mangham, Colin, [The Effectiveness, Appropriateness and Fit of DARE in Canadian Schools: Responding to Criticisms About the Program](#), Population Health Promotion Associates, May 2007).

• A 2008 evaluation of the DARE prescription and over-the counter drug curriculum based on more than 750 fifth, seventh, and ninth graders in seven Maryland and West Virginia schools found significant improvements using various outcome measures, including in students' (1) ability to distinguish between prescription and other-the-counter medicines and (2) beliefs that it is risky to share prescription drugs and harmful to abuse over-the-counter drugs (Darnell, Adam & Emshoff, James G. , *Findings from the Evaluation of the D. A. R. E. Prescription and Over-the Counter Drug Curriculum*, Emstar Research, Inc. , July 24, 2008).

As already mentioned, DARE's curriculum has changed recently. A new version of DARE's middle school curriculum called "Keepin' It Real," is [listed](#) in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), a database of more than 160 interventions that have been independently reviewed and that support mental health promotion, substance abuse prevention, and mental health and substance abuse treatment. DARE offers Keepin' It Real to school districts in partnership with Pennsylvania State University.

NREPP states that it is not an exhaustive list of interventions and inclusion in the registry does not constitute an endorsement of any particular program. It lists one evaluation of Keepin' It Real which found some positive effects from the program, notably reductions in the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana by participating students who were already using these substances when they began the program. These effects lasted for up to 14 months after the students completed the program.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Though not specifically cited in this report, the following articles, papers, and websites provide more information about DARE and contain citations to additional articles on, and evaluations of, the program.

Berman, Greg & Fox, Aubrey, *Lessons from the Battle Over D. A. R. E.: The Complicated Relationship Between Research and Practice*, Center for Court Innovation, Bureau of Justice Assistance, U. S. Department of Justice, 2009. <http://www.courtinnovation.org/uploads/documents/DARE.pdf>

"CORK Bibliography: D. A. R. E. Program," Project CORK, Dartmouth Medical School, prepared September 2010, last updated, 9/22/10.

http://www.projectcork.org/bibliographies/data/Bibliography_DAREProgram.html

"D. A. R. E. , The Official D. A. R. E. Website." <http://www.dare.com/home/default.asp>

Miranda, Maricella, "DARE Program Looks to Reorganize Its Priorities," MPR News, October 3, 2010. <http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/10/03/dare>

"Pro and Con Arguments: Is the D. A. R. E. Program Good for America's Kids (K-12)?" ProCon. org. <http://dare.procon.org/>

Research Triangle Institute, *Past and Future Directions of the D. A. R. E. Program: An Evaluation Review*, National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, September, 1994. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/152055.htm>

Rosenbaum, Dennis P. , "Just Say No to D. A. R. E. ," *Criminology & Public Policy*, November, 2007; 6(4), pp. 815-24. (Available from the Office of Legislative Research)

Rockholz, Peter B. , "Sunday Debate: Is DARE Effective?" *Danbury News-Times*, February 19, 2010. <http://www.newstimes.com/opinion/article/Sunday-debate-Is-DARE-effective-Overwhelming-372445.php>

West, Steven L. and O'Neal Keri K, "Project D. A. R. E. Outcome Effectiveness Revisited," *American Journal of Public Health*, June 2004; 94(6), pp. 1027-1029. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/ppmc/articles/PMC1448384/>

HYPERLINKS FOR ARTICLES, REPORTS, AND WEBSITES CITED IN THIS REPORT

2001 Exemplary and Promising School-based Programs that promote safe, disciplined and drug-free schools, U. S. Department of Education. <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/exemplary01/panel.html>

Bard, Megan, "School Resource Officers Felled By State Budget Ax," *The Day*, June 14, 2010.

<http://www.theday.com/article/20100614/NWS01/306149991/1018>

Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/grant/jag.html>

FY 09 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program: Local Solicitation.

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/funding/09JAGLocalAwards.pdf>

Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/chapter5/sec4.html>

Government Accountability Office report, 2003. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03172r.pdf>

Abstract of "Impact of a Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D. A. R. E.) Program in Preventing the Initiation of Cigarette Smoking in Fifth- and Sixth-Grade Students. "

<http://www.dare.com/home/Resources/default5647.asp?N=Resources&M=16&S=0>

Evaluating the Effects of the Project DARE Program on Young Offenders. <http://www.obhrc.org/publications/technicalReports/2004-projectdare-finalreport.pdf>

The Effectiveness, Appropriateness and Fit of DARE in Canadian Schools: Responding to Criticisms about the Program. <http://www.dare.com/home/Resources/documents/DAREpaper.doc>

Findings from the Evaluation of the D. A. R. E. Prescription and Over-the Counter Drug Curriculum. http://www.dare.com/home/Resources/documents/DAREReport0821_final.pdf

Review of Keepin' it Real, National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=133>

