



## The New Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) Program

### Program Description

The new Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, known as D.A.R.E., is designed to prevent the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and inhalants, as well as the occurrence of violence, among students in grades K–12. D.A.R.E. is among the nation's best-known substance abuse prevention programs and represents an extensive drug prevention education network. According to D.A.R.E. America, the program is used in 80% of all school districts around the country and reaches 36 million young people each year.

The Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District developed the original program in 1983, which was implemented in the fifth and sixth grades by specially trained police officers. Evaluations of the original D.A.R.E. curriculum concluded that the program had no lasting effect on student drug use.

Since then, D.A.R.E. has been revised with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The grant recipient, the Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron, has developed a new middle school curriculum based on the latest prevention research and is testing it in six U.S. cities. The original D.A.R.E. elementary curriculum has also been revised, and booster sessions for the ninth grade have been developed.

### Target Audience

The target audience for the new middle school D.A.R.E. curriculum is grade 7, the new elementary curriculum is grades K–4, and the booster session is grade 9.

### Special Populations/Available Adaptations

DARE's workbook is produced in Spanish and Braille. During training, officers are prepared to work directly with classroom teachers to assure effective delivery to special needs students who may require accommodations. Because DARE is a universal program, high-risk students receive the program in their regular classrooms.

### Program Components

Starting at the elementary level, D.A.R.E. officers visit the kindergarten through fourth grade classes. Four D.A.R.E. sessions are held in kindergarten through second grade, and five sessions are held for third and fourth grades. These visits focus on child safety and prevention issues, and alert students to the potential dangers of the misuse of drugs, medicine, and other substances.

The new, revised elementary curriculum, designed for fifth and sixth grade, consists of ten sessions taught once a week over a ten-week period. The curriculum teaches facts about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, and inhalants, along with data that demonstrate how few of their peers actually use these substances. Students develop decision-making and refusal skills by practicing and applying these new skills to real-life situations.

The new middle school D.A.R.E. curriculum, called "Take Charge of Your Life," consists of ten sessions taught over a ten-week period to seventh grade students. The curriculum contains engaging activities that allow students to practice and expand their communication, decision-

making, and resistance skills. It helps students understand that most people their age do not use tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and inhalants on a regular basis. Students also examine the conditions that lead up to violent behavior and the ways to identify, avoid, and defuse violent situations. D.A.R.E. officers lead discussions, model desired behavior, and encourage interaction and problem-solving among students.

At the high school level, ten booster sessions for ninth grade students reinforce elementary and middle school objectives. These sessions use interactive learning strategies that target real-life teen issues.

### **Program Costs**

The D.A.R.E. curriculum, lesson plans, instructor manual, educational video, and instructional charts are furnished by D.A.R.E. America at no charge to instructors who successfully complete the D.A.R.E. Officers Training. For the first year of D.A.R.E. elementary program implementation, student workbooks are provided free of charge by D.A.R.E. America. After that, additional materials can be ordered through D.A.R.E. America Merchandise.

### **Training & Technical Assistance**

D.A.R.E. Officers Training consists of two weeks (80 hours) of preparatory instruction. All police officers must complete this training before presenting the D.A.R.E. curriculum in classrooms. Training can be arranged by contacting a D.A.R.E. State Coordinator or Regional Director.

Tuition, lodging, and meal expenses for D.A.R.E. America Coordinated Trainings are covered at no cost to participants or their agencies. Financial assistance in the form of grants may be requested for travel costs associated with D.A.R.E. America Coordinated Trainings.

D.A.R.E. American Regional Directors are available to provide technical assistance to D.A.R.E. Officers within their region upon request.

### **Evaluation Results**

First-year evaluation results of the new D.A.R.E. curriculum are based on the findings of an ongoing five-year study of the new D.A.R.E. curriculum for the seventh and ninth grade being tested in six U.S. cities (Detroit; Houston; Los Angeles; Newark, NJ; New Orleans; and St. Louis). The study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, includes more than 19,000 students from 83 high schools and their corresponding 122 middle schools—half of which are randomly assigned to receive the new curriculum while the rest form the control group.

These preliminary findings show that:

- Students who participated in D.A.R.E. had better decision-making skills than the control group.
- More students who participated in D.A.R.E. found drug use socially inappropriate and believed fewer peers used drugs than the control group.
- Students who participated in D.A.R.E. had stronger refusal skills than control students.
- Fewer treatment students reported intent to use inhalants than control students.

The latest data indicate that positive results from the first year of the study have carried over into the second year. Specifically, those students who received the new D.A.R.E. 7th grade program, "Take Charge of Your Life," continued in the 8th grade to have improved scores on decision-making skills and the belief that drug use is socially inappropriate.

### **Recommended Evaluation Components**

Rigorous national evaluation is on-going. Pre-and post-intervention instruments are available for local communities.

### **Contact Information**

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