

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2021

Wolf Administration: Substance Use Prevention Resources Available to Schools

Harrisburg, PA – Today, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) visited the Halifax Area Middle School and High School to highlight their evidence-based substance use disorder (SUD) prevention program and remind schools of the resources available to provide support to students, educators, and communities.

“Prevention is our first line of defense in assuring our children grow up to live healthy, productive lives,” said DDAP Secretary Jen Smith. “We must address trauma, mental health conditions, and adverse childhood experiences brought on by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Intensifying our primary prevention efforts and strengthening protective factors such as positive school climate, decision-making and coping skills, and how to process trauma is absolutely critical to address these risk factors which too often lead to misusing substances.”

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), primary prevention education is “delivered prior to the onset of a (mental health or substance use) disorder to prevent or reduce the risk of developing a behavioral health problem, such as underage alcohol use, prescription drug misuse and abuse, and illicit drug use.”

“Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, people across the nation have experienced an increase in frustration, anxiety, depression—all things that can lead to substance misuse—and these outcomes are not limited to any one age group, gender, race, or geographic area,” said Secretary of Education Dr. Noe Ortega. “The Wolf Administration is committed to the health and well-being of our students and educators and has an array of helpful resources available for schools to take advantage of as they work to prevent substance use disorders.”

The secretaries met with members of Halifax Area School District’s Communities that Care Club (CTC), which provides direct access to SUD prevention activities, including in-person classroom instruction. Halifax CTC was established by a group of school administrators and community members in July 2001 and is designed to take communities through a well-defined and structured process to prevent adolescent problem behaviors and promote positive youth development.

A key component of Halifax CTC is youth-led clubs that are offered in 4th through 12th grades, and currently have over 80 members. Halifax CTC is funded through the Dauphin County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services and offers several school programs including:

- *Botvin LifeSkills Training*: An evidence-based SUD program with over 20 years of rigorous research that is designed for students at the upper elementary school level. *Botvin LifeSkills Training* is based on scientific evidence of what causes substance misuse, uses a comprehensive approach, emphasizes proven skills training methods, and is proven to reduce tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use.
- *Too Good for Drugs and Violence*: An evidence-based program where lessons include activities to strengthen knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and skills effective for drug-use and violence prevention.

Research has shown that certain prevention programs are proven to reduce the likelihood of a student's future substance use and improve mental health and educational outcomes. Prevention programs accomplish this by

increasing protective factors, which are environmental, biological, or relational factors that help children deal with stressful and risky events in an effective way.

Prevention Resources

The [Alcohol and Other Drugs Resource Guide](#) provides information that can help schools identify their needs, select prevention programs, and implement prevention programs. This guide outlines Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) programs, curricula, and supplementary programs. Best practices on choosing AOD programs involve usage of evidence-based, effective, and promising programs that are developmentally appropriate.

[County drug and alcohol offices](#) can provide prevention programs and materials that address numerous substance-related topics, and also help with selecting prevention programs that are the best fit for schools, parents/families, and communities.

School district data from the [PA Youth Survey \(PAYS\)](#) is an important resource for identifying student needs and the factors influencing student substance use. This information can be used to help guide the selection of prevention programs. The PAYS How-to Guide is a tool to help in analyzing PAYS data. Local county drug and alcohol offices and coalitions may also be able to assist in analyzing PAYS data.

[Just Five](#) is a free online tool to enhance education and awareness about substance use disorder (SUD). With just six short learning modules, it is a self-paced program that aims to increase awareness, reduce stigma, and provide education about SUD prevention and treatment which inspires conversations with family, friends, and communities.

The Get Help Now Hotline is a toll-free helpline that connects callers with treatment options and resources for themselves or a loved one. You can reach the Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). The helpline is available 24/7 – including on national holidays. An anonymous [chat service](#) offering the same information to individuals who may not be comfortable speaking on the phone is also available.

To learn more about the Wolf Administration's efforts in combatting substance use disorder, visit [ddap.pa.gov](#). Prevention resources for schools, families, communities, and the workforce are available at [ddap.pa.gov/prevention](#).

MEDIA CONTACT: Kendall Alexander, PDE, kenalexand@pa.gov
Stephany Dugan, DDAP, stdugan@pa.gov

#

If you would rather not receive future communications from Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, let us know by clicking [here](#).
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 555 Walnut St, 6th Floor Forum Place, Harrisburg, PA 17101 United States