

Commentary

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White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's "Strategies for Success: New Pathways to Drug Abuse Prevention" Summer/Fall 2008 issue

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) recently released *Strategies for Success: New Pathways to Drug Abuse Prevention*ⁱ summarizing what has been learned about Random Student Drug Testing (RSDT). The report cites the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) finding that 14.6% of all public and private middle schools and high schools nationwide include drug testing in their drug prevention programs (School Health Policies and Programs Study, 2006). Of these schools, over 4,000 conduct random student drug testing. This number is much higher than previous estimates, demonstrating the rapid increase in the use of RSDT nationwide.

Strategies for Success has suggestions for starting a RSDT program, including gaining community support, spelling out students' rights and responsibilities, ensuring accurate drug testing of students, deterring cheating on the tests and encouraging the use of well-trained collection personnel. Implementing RSDT programs that protect students' privacy is a priority, as is ensuring that when students test positive, appropriate support is provided to help the students stay off drugs and remain in school.

The Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc. (IBH) is proud to be among the many organizations and countless individuals who have worked for two decades to bring RSDT into the mainstream of American education. Despite the many misconceptions about RSDT and the controversy over using drug testing in middle and high schools across the country, RSDT has been supported with two landmark U.S. Supreme Court Cases rulings (Vernonia School District 47J v. Acton, 1995ⁱⁱ; Board of Education of Independent School District No. 92 of Pottawatomie County, et al, Petitioners v. Lindsay Earls et al, 2002). In recent years schools have had the continuous support of ONDCP and the U.S. Department of Education through federal grants to implement and study RSDT programs.

While it is encouraging to see the new higher estimate of schools implementing RSDT, it is important to improve these programs as the practice becomes more widespread and to gradually extend RSDT to all students in both public and private schools. The beneficiaries of RSDT programs are the nation's youth, their families and their communities. RSDT has now joined other effective drug abuse prevention programs working to ensure that more American youth grow up drug-free and that the youth who do use drugs are given the help they need to become drug-free.

For more information on RSDT and IBH, please visit www.PreventionNotPunishment.org.

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ⁱ Available at http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org/newsletter/summer_fall_08/sfs_summerfall08.pdf

ⁱⁱ IBH President Robert L. DuPont, M.D. served as an expert witness on this U.S. Supreme Court case.