

“As a practical matter, a needs assessment provides objective information about both the nature and the level of drug use among the students.”

*Guidelines Concerning Student Drug Testing in Virginia Public Schools. 2004.*

## **Step 1: Identifying the Need**

A needs assessment is a process to collect and examine information about school-wide issues related to illegal drug use then, using these data, to prioritize future goals, to develop a plan, and to allocate funds and resources. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other community members can be included in gathering the necessary data.

### **Developing a Needs Assessment**

The purpose of conducting a needs assessment is to portray an accurate view of the illegal drug use within a school. Measuring the level of drug use will help you evaluate whether a student drug testing program is needed.

#### Utilize Local Resources

The following list provides some starting points for gathering information. These resources are most valuable because of their experience and insight into drug abuse trends within your community.

1. School faculty and administration
2. Local law enforcement agencies
3. Local adolescent drug abuse treatment facilities
4. Juvenile services agency staff
5. Health departments
6. Businesses that employ teenagers
7. Civic groups
8. Faith community leaders
9. Medical community (e.g. emergency room personnel)
10. Local 12-step programs, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous

#### Research School Records

When identifying drug use in your school, it is important to gather information both quantitatively (measured by number) and qualitatively (observational data). Consider the following qualitative questions when assessing drug use within your school:

1. How widespread is illegal drug use at the school as assessed by administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community?
2. How easily available are illegal drugs?
3. What are the most common types of drugs used?

Some relevant information may be collected through your school records and files. Collecting the following quantitative information will give you a better indication of the areas that illegal drug use may impact.

1. Overall academic performance by grade (per year)
2. Disciplinary actions (E.g. detentions, suspensions, academic probations)
3. Violent incidents
4. School grounds violations (E.g. destruction of school property or weapons present)
5. Student absences, truancy and tardiness
6. Drug- and alcohol- related occurrences
7. Reports of students using illegal drugs and alcohol
8. Police incidents involving students

#### Collect state survey results

Obtaining additional data for quantitative analysis is possible by conducting or assessing surveys. You may accomplish this by participating in or accessing statewide surveys. Some benefits of using statewide surveys are:

1. Historical Data -- Your school may have participated in past statewide surveys
2. Comparative Data -- The surveys may provide information broken down by county or city.

Examples:

*Indiana* - The annual survey of alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use by children and adolescents in the state is coordinated by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center in Bloomington. The survey results help state and local entities coordinate prevention programs by providing information regarding the prevalence of ATOD use across the state.

Website: <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/survey/atod/2004/index.html>

*Maryland* – The annual Maryland Adolescent Survey compares state to national statistics by grade. It also breaks down information by county.

Website: [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/special\\_reports/adolescent\\_survey](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/special_reports/adolescent_survey)

Use data from statewide surveys that have been conducted at your school to assess drug use among your student population. An analysis may be included along with the survey results.

### Use nationwide surveys

If your school does not participate in any statewide survey, appropriate data can be extrapolated from nationwide surveys.

The benefits of using nationwide surveys include:

1. state-to-state comparisons
2. historical comparisons

The following are national surveys that feature students' use of illegal drugs:

Monitoring The Future Survey: Provides national data regarding student drug use and behavior for 8th, 10th and 12th grades.

Website: <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Provides estimates for national and state data regarding substance abuse. Data is reported by age group. Age groups are youths aged "12 or older", "12 to 17", and "adults 18 to 25".

Website: <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/states.htm>

PRIDE Surveys: Provides national data for 4th grade through 12th grade regarding student perceptions and prevalence of illegal drug use through self-report surveys.

Website: <http://www.pridesurveys.com>

### Use pre-existing surveys as models to create your own

If you decide to create your own school assessment survey and plan to use questions from existing surveys, verify if you need permission from the original source. Also be aware that there are certain federal guidelines that must be followed by public schools. Private schools may or may not be affected by these guidelines which include:

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ppra/index.html>

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)

<http://www.ed.gov/print/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Office of Human Research Protections(OHRP)

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>

Code of Federal Regulations 45 (CFR45)

<http://www.nih.gov/icd/od/foia/cfr45.htm>

Below are examples of national surveys that have questionnaires available:

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda/methods.cfm>.

*Note: You do not need special permission from SAMHSA to use its questions in your own survey. However, SAMHSA cautions that the data collected cannot be compared to estimates from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health because of differing survey methodology designs.*

2. Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) reports national and state-specific data regarding drug use and behavior for youths aged 10 to 24.

2005 YRBS Questionnaires, and question rationales are available on the DASH website <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

*Note: CDC publications (for example the YRBS questionnaires) are in the public domain and may be copied, distributed, and adapted without permission.*

3. PRIDE Surveys offer teachers and administrators the means to conduct surveys and online ordering is available. PRIDE will provide copies of a questionnaire with instructions, will analyze results, and provide a full report. A fee per questionnaire is charged for this service.

PRIDE Surveys Grades 4-6 and 6-12 website <http://www.pridesurveys.com>.

Further contact information for these surveys may be found in Appendix B.

When choosing which questions to include, there are certain core areas on which to focus:

1. Use of specific drugs in student's lifetime, use in the past 30 days and use in the past 12 months;
2. Attitudes/perceptions about using drugs; and
3. Attitudes/perceptions about student drug testing

In Appendix A, you will find examples of core questions from national surveys such as MTF (Monitoring the Future), SATURN (Student Athlete Testing Using Random Notification), and SSDA (Social Science Data Archives) developed by the Institute for Behavior & Health, Inc.

## Analyzing and Reporting Results

Once survey results and other data are collected and analyzed your findings will help determine if your school has a significant illegal drug problem and if a student drug testing program should be implemented. Drug testing is a welcome enhancement to most schools current drug prevention programs.

If you decide that your school should implement a student drug testing program you will need to present a report to the pertinent decision-makers within your community. This may include but is not limited to: the school board, the superintendent, principal, and/or school director.

### Presenting the Results of the Needs Assessment

If the assessment results suggest a need for a mandatory student drug testing program, the data should be presented to the decision-makers in your school community such as the school board, superintendent, principal and/or other administrators.

Use your research to present a compelling argument. Your report should have the following sections:

√	Items	Description
	Report	Use statistics from reports and surveys about student drug use
	Description	Describe what your school's current drug prevention program encompasses
	Benefits	List compelling reasons as to why your school should implement a student drug testing program
	Results	Show results from other student drug testing programs
	Timeline	Suggest a feasible timeline

### √ **Report**

When reporting,

1. Educate others on the dangers of drug use and the effects it can have on your community.
2. Report results from local data.
3. Share survey results and compare it to state and/or national statistics that relate to your particular situation.
4. Tailor your presentation to the audience to which you are presenting.

The following data focus on trends of marijuana use in the state of Maryland.

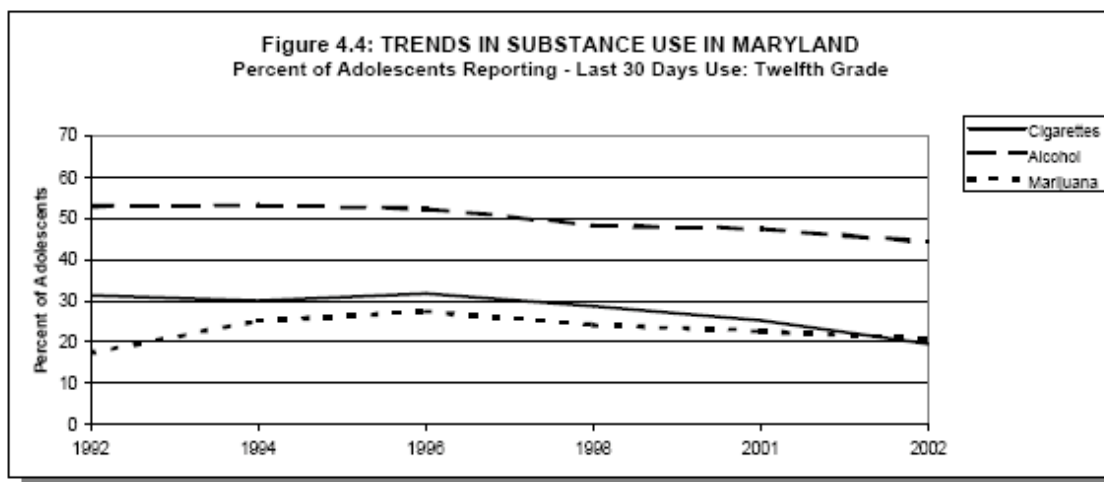


Figure 4.4 shows trend data across time for adolescents reporting use of marijuana in 12th grade. Students reported a slight decrease in their use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. Since 2001, marijuana usage decreased 1.7 percentage points compared to a higher decrease of 3.2 percentage points for alcohol use. There is a consistent correlation among all three data sources showing marijuana use among 12th graders as higher than for students in lower grades.

**Table 3-1**  
**Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland (Statewide), and**  
**National Substance Use in Past 30 Days**

	Montgomery County (%)			Maryland (%)			National (%)		
Substance	Grade			Grade			Grade		
	8	10	12	8	10	12	8	10	12
Cigarettes	2.4	9.1	16.6	6.6	12.7	19.8	10.7	17.7	26.7
Alcohol	8.6	30.9	39.1	16.4	35.0	44.3	19.6	35.4	48.6
Marijuana	2.6	14.0	23.6	6.9	16.7	21.0	8.3	17.8	21.5
Heroin	0.2	1.3	1.4	0.7	1.1	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
Ecstasy	1.1	4.0	2.7	1.4	3.1	3.6	1.4	1.8	2.4

Source for Montgomery County and Maryland Statistics: 2002 *Maryland Adolescent Survey*.

Source for National Statistics: *Overview of Key Findings from Monitoring the Future Study, 2002*. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse. This study includes data only for Grades 8, 10, and 12.

Table 3-1 shows survey data compared from county level to state level to national level. You could use a similar format when presenting your findings to teachers or administrators.

✓	<b>Items</b>	<b>Description</b>
	Report	Use statistics from reports and surveys about student drug use
	Description	Describe what your drug prevention program already encompasses

### ✓ **Description**

Describe what your drug-free program already has in place and what it is lacking. For example:

<b>What We Want</b>	<b>Do We Have It?</b>
Student Assistance Professionals	Yes
Drug Free Education in Curriculum	Somewhat, needs improvement
Student Drug Testing Policy	No policy
Strong Support for a Drug-free School	Lukewarm support

Do:

1. Describe the atmosphere of the current school environment as learned through conversations, notes and research. For example, there may be reports of students hospitalized because of incidents involving illegal drugs or alcohol served at parties.
2. Share opinions and encouragement from others concerned about drug use. Students, parents or community members may have suggested additional or alternative activities within the community to combat youth drug use.

Don't:

1. Single out individuals when describing situations. The source is not as important as the message.
2. Blame or threaten others. If they do not agree that anything should be done to improve the school's current drug-free program, ask if they can suggest a reasonable alternative solution.

Schools do not need unanimous support for a program but it is desirable to hear and respond to everyone who expresses an opinion.

For more information about guidelines on presenting drug use information, visit these websites:

PRIDE Survey National Summary – Narrative Report  
<http://www.pridesurveys.com/main/supportfiles/us02ns.pdf>

Student Drug Testing Coalition – Student Drug Testing, An Overview and Resource Guide  
<http://www.studentdrugtesting.org>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration – Too Smart to Start  
Implementation Guide

<http://www.samhsa.gov/index.aspx> (Use search function for “implementation  
guide”)