

Research Summary

Impact on High School Students' Behaviors and Protective Factors

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of the *Too Good for Drugs and Violence (TGFD&V)* program in impacting young people's substance and violence use intentions, attitudes and perceptions. The study examined the following questions. Do students receiving the *TGFD&V* prevention program in comparison to control students indicate: 1) fewer intentions of smoking cigarettes, drinking alcoholic beverages, using marijuana, and engaging in aggressive behaviors within the next 12 months; 2) more positive attitudes regarding the inappropriateness of substance and violence use; 3) more knowledge of the prevalence of peer substance and violence use; 4) more positive perceptions of peer disapproval of substance and violence use; 5) higher levels of emotional competence, goal setting and decision making, and social and peer resistance skills; 6) more awareness of the harmful effects of substance use; and 7) perceive their parents to be less approving of tobacco, alcohol or marijuana use?

Method

Two hundred and one students from 11 classrooms in a large Florida high school participated in the pilot test of the revised *TGFD&V* prevention curriculum. The total sample was 49% female, approximately 68% White, 9% African American, 20% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 1% American Indian and Multiracial. Forty-six percent of the students were ninth graders, 26% tenth graders, 12% eleventh graders, and 16% twelfth graders. Nine percent of the sample was categorized as economically challenged by status of receipt of free or reduced lunches. The school is rated "B" based on the Florida School Indicators Report, suggesting a student population that is overall fairly successful academically and in other performance indicators such as, attendance, mobility, and drop out rate.

All students in the treatment and control group were pretested using a survey questionnaire prior to delivery of the *TGFD&V* prevention program, and posttested at the end of the semester following the delivery of the program. The program was delivered to students in six health classrooms once a week for 50-55 minutes overall 14-week period by trained *TGFD&V* instructors.

Results

1. Given that school-based drug and violence prevention programs are a piece of the broad spectrum of prevention/intervention strategies--their usefulness, benefit or contribution to healthy growth and decision-making on the part of young people--is highly dependent on the integrity, potency and commitment in which it is delivered and maintained. Prevention research shows a direct relationship between the quality of program implementation and the program's potential to impact participants. In this study, classroom teacher responses to items on a survey questionnaire suggest the *TGFD&V* program was **implemented as planned with a high degree of quality and fidelity to curriculum content and learning activities.**
2. **Prior to delivery of the *Too Good for Drugs and Violence* program, students in treatment and control classrooms indicated similar levels of intentions to use/not use tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana, and similar levels of intentions to engage in aggressive behaviors within the next 12 months.** When the students in the pilot sample were asked, prior to the deliver of the program, how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements about their intentions to use substances and violence: 75% agreed or strongly agreed that they did not plan to use tobacco; 41% indicated they did not plan to use alcohol; 69% indicated they did not intend to use marijuana; and 66% indicated they did not plan to engage in aggressive or violent behaviors.

3. Following program delivery, item responses for students who did not intend to use substances or violence were reexamined. **Following program implementation, students participating in the *TGFD&V* program evidenced positive differences in comparison to the control group. Student responses suggest the following:**
- a. **INTENTIONS TO SMOKE CIGARETTES**
After program delivery, students participating in *TGFD&V* indicated 40% fewer intentions to smoke than did students in the control group.
 - b. **INTENTIONS TO DRINK ALCOHOL**
After program delivery, students participating in *TGFD&V* indicated 50% fewer intentions to drink alcohol than did students in the control group.
 - c. **INTENTIONS TO SMOKE MARIJUANA**
After program delivery, students participating in *TGFD&V* indicated 45% fewer intentions to smoke marijuana than did students in the control group.
 - d. **INTENTIONS TO USE VIOLENCE**
After program delivery, students participating in *TGFD&V* indicated 45% fewer intentions to engage in aggressive behaviors than did students in the control group.
4. Prevention research has identified certain risk factors that increase the likelihood that a student will use drugs and engage in aggressive behaviors and certain protective factors that decrease or buffer the impact of the risk factors. The *TGFD&V* program incorporates curriculum and instructional activities aimed at building protective factors. Survey questionnaire items associated with nine protective factors were examined in this study. **Student responses to protective survey items at the time of the posttest suggest the following:**

- (a) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or more **appropriate attitudes regarding drug use** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (b) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or more **appropriate attitudes regarding aggressive or violent behaviors** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (c) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or were more **knowledgeable of actual rates of substance and violence use among youth in their age group** (peer norms) in comparison to students in the control group.
- (d) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or thought their **peer group was less accepting of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, or violence use** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (e) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or higher levels of **emotional competence/self efficacy** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (f) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or more positive perceptions of their **goal setting and decision making skills** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (g) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or more positive perceptions of their **social and peer resistance skills** in comparison to students in the control group.
- (h) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had statistically significant higher scores or perceptions of the

harmful effects of smoking, drinking and marijuana use in comparison to students in the control group.

- (i) Students participating in the *TGFD&V* program had higher scores or perceptions of **parental disapproval of youth substance use** in comparison to students in the control group.
5. In summary, the *TGFD&V* program evidenced positive effects on high school students' intentions to use tobacco, alcohol or marijuana or to engage in aggressive behaviors. The program was also successful in impacting students' protective factors associated with strengthening young people's abilities to make positive, healthy decisions.
6. There are limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results. Generalizing the findings to more academically and economically challenged school settings may be limited. No extended follow up testing was conducted to examine long term effects of the program on students' intentions, attitudes and perceptions. Sample size was limited in the pilot, preventing reasonable exploration of potential differences in program impact due to grade-level, gender, ethnicity, high risk, exceptional needs, and economic status. Future research for examining the efficacy of this program should include larger samples representing a broad spectrum of student populations with program effects examined over time.