

Middle School Prevention Program Helps Cut Later Prescription Drug Abuse



Young adults who had participated in a community-based prevention program in middle school reduced their prescription drug misuse up to 65 percent, a new study finds.

The researchers studied the effectiveness of the Iowa *Strengthening Families Program*, designed for parents and children ages 10 to 14. It aims to prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems, strengthen parenting skills and build family strengths.

It consists of seven sessions for parents, youth and families, and includes videos, role-playing, discussions, learning games and family projects.

The program reduced prescription drug abuse rates by 65 percent, the researchers report in the *American Journal of Public Health*. In a second study, published in *Preventive Medicine*, the researchers examined a prevention program for middle school students and their families called PROSPER (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience).

The researchers conducted follow-up surveys with families and teens for six years after they completed the program. They found that program reduced substance misuse rates up to 31 percent. Students who participated in the program had significantly reduced rates for use of marijuana, alcohol, cigarettes, methamphetamine and inhalants.

Teens and young adults who had participated in PROSPER reported better relationships with parents, improved life skills and few problem behaviors, Newswise reports. "We think the programs work well because they reduce behaviors that place youth at higher risk for substance misuse and conduct problems," lead author Richard Spoth said in a news release. "We time the implementation of these interventions so they're developmentally appropriate. That's not too early, not too late; about the time when they're beginning to try out these new risky behaviors that ultimately can get them in trouble."

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