

Colleges Debate Usefulness of Drug Testing



Administrators at some colleges are debating the usefulness of drug testing, according to *USA Today*.

Last month, a federal judge ruled a Missouri technical college's mandatory drug testing policy is unconstitutional when it is applied to most students.

Linn State Technical College instituted the policy following the recommendation of community businesses likely to hire the school's students. The policy stated that if a student's drug test was positive, he or she would meet with a counselor, and could participate in an online substance abuse program. The student would then be required to take a second scheduled test and a third random test. If both subsequent tests were negative, the student could continue to be enrolled at the school and all test results would be destroyed at the end of the semester.

"Many schools continue to frame substance use by college students as an enforcement problem and therefore turn to policies such as drug testing as the solution," said Susan Foster, Vice President and Director of Policy Research and Analysis at the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. "The problem with this approach is that substance use and addiction are public health and medical issues. Enforcement strategies alone are unlikely to solve health problems."

Colleges across the country are concerned about the increasing popularity of the drug Molly, the article notes. "There has always been fashion to drugs of the day ... Chasing the problem one drug at a time is a costly game of whack-a-mole where use of one drug is addressed only to see the problem pop up in a different form," Foster noted.

A recent national survey of high school students found random drug testing in schools does not reduce students' substance use. The study found students who attend schools where they feel treated with respect are less likely to start smoking cigarettes or marijuana.