

Extending Knowledge – Changing Lives

Botvin LifeSkills Program for Delaware Youth (2016)

How a statewide substance abuse prevention program targeted 138 elementary school youth and 249 middle school students

ISSUE

The Botvin LifeSkills Training, a research-validated substance abuse prevention program, was implemented to prevent cigarette use among Delaware youth, which is a potential gateway drug and can lead to the use of alcohol, marijuana and other harmful drugs. Vigorous youth education and the rising cost of tobacco products have caused a decline in youth and adult abuse. However, it still poses a threat, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- If smoking continues at the current rate among youth in the U.S., 5.6 million of today's Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness
- Nearly 9 out of 10 cigarette smokers first tried smoking by age 18; 99% first tried smoking by age 26
- Use of electronic cigarettes increased among middle and high school students from 2011 to 2015
- Scientific evidence shows that tobacco company advertising and promotion influence youth to start smoking

RESPONSE

The Botvin LifeSkills Program reached 138 elementary school students (third–sixth grades):

- In an afterschool program in a school setting (one site)
- In public school settings during school hours (four sites)
- At community centers (four sites)

Teachings included self-esteem, decision making, smoking, advertising, dealing with stress, communication skills, social skills and assertiveness.

The program reached 249 middle school students (seventh–ninth grades):

- In an afterschool program in a school setting (one site)
- In a public school setting during school hours (one site)
- In private school settings during school hours (eight sites)
- In community centers (four sites)

Teachings included self-image, decision making, smoking, alcohol, marijuana, advertising, violence and media, coping with anxiety and anger, communication skills, social skills, assertiveness and conflict resolution.

IMPACT

The post-test questionnaire summaries, prepared by National Health Promotion Associates, Inc., indicated that:

- 98% learned cigarette smoking can cause teeth to turn yellow or brown
- 98% learned cigarette smoking can cause skin to wrinkle
- 96% learned smoking cigarettes causes mouth cancer
- 92% of students learned cigarette smoking causes the heart to beat faster
- 94% of students learned not to let others influence their decisions

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