

Extending Knowledge - Changing Lives



Youth Drug Awareness Raised by 4-H Health Rocks!

How a Delaware youth program educated 5,900+ youth on the dangers of substance abuse

ISSUE

According to the 2015 Monitoring the Future Survey conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, tobacco use continues to fall among students in grades 8, 10 and 12. However, use of other tobacco products (e.g., e-cigarettes and cigars) sold in sweet, kid-friendly flavors may be undercutting these gains. From 2011 to 2014, past 30-day use of e-cigarettes increased 1.5% to 13.4% among high school students and 0.6% to 3.9% among middle school students. Recognizing the problem, Delaware passed a law in June 2014 that illegalized the sale of e-cigarettes to minors. Another concern is the possibility of increased use of opiates (prescription drugs) and heroin by 8th–11th graders. For example, *The News Journal* has reported statistics on the growing use of opiates and heroin in Delaware, as has the Centers for Disease Control at the national level.

RESPONSE

In 2015, Delaware 4-H reached 5,962 youth at 109 locations statewide, offering over 10 hours of tobacco, drug and alcohol prevention life skills through the 4-H Health Rocks curriculum. Delaware 4-H facilitated 10 lessons of 4-H Health Rocks, with participants completing homework, posters and community projects while teachers facilitated additional hours before and after delivery of the curriculum. Delaware 4-H Health Rocks staff updated the curriculum to include information about the dangers of e-cigarettes and expanded the content on marijuana; students had perceived both products as low risk to their health.

In addition, the program hosted two events for National Drug Facts Week to raise awareness about substance abuse and its harmful effects. Eighteen schools selected students to read the morning drug facts announcements provided by Delaware 4-H, and Concord High School hosted the 4-H Health Rocks-sponsored Community Substance Awareness Night. In an open-ended survey, most schools responded positively, with interest in more information on prescription and other drugs and the impact on youth, which precipitated the National Drug Facts Week in January 2016.

IMPACT

A team from the University of Nebraska evaluated the results of the surveys administered by the 4-H team to 881 youth who completed 10+ hours of 4-H Health Rocks training. Their conclusions follow:

- Youth understanding of the addictive nature of cigarette use increased across all demographics by 14% to 86.3%
- After the training, 95.9% of youth understood that substance use could ruin relationships with friends and family members (an 8% increase from the program pre-test)
- After the training, there was a 13.4% increase in youth who indicated that they were able to talk to an adult when they felt stress
- Youth also learned skills on how to say no to risky behavior
- Following the training, there was a 12% increase (from the program pre-test) of youth (93.6%) who stated they could persuade a friend to avoid drugs