

The State Grants Portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program Must Be Maintained

Zeroing out the entire \$294.8 million that funds the State Grants portion of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities (SDFSC) program would totally dismantle the drug and violence prevention infrastructure that is currently in place in every Local Education Agency (LEA) in the nation.

WHAT DOES THE STATE GRANTS PORTION OF THE SDFSC DO?

It Provides the School Based Prevention Infrastructure Throughout the Country

- The SDFSC program currently serves more than 37 million youth throughout the country and costs less than one dollar per month, per child served.
- It provides effective drug and violence prevention programs, services and activities through every LEA in the nation.
- It provides K-12 science-based prevention curricula, student assistance programs, crisis management planning, school resource officers (SROs), information dissemination about the dangers of drug use and violence, parent training, peer mediation and training in drug and violence prevention for teachers throughout the country.

It Is THE Portal Into Schools For Other Prevention and Intervention Activities

- The State Grants portion of the SDFSC program serves as a platform for other drug and violence prevention efforts within schools throughout the country. This program is *the* portal into schools for a host of other prevention and intervention activities.

It Leverages Additional Resources and Manpower

- Although more than half of the LEAs in the country receive less than \$10,000 from the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program, most have leveraged these limited funds to recruit partners who have committed additional public and private resources and manpower to implement programs that work for their schools and communities.
- LEAs receiving a small amount of money also develop consortia to pool their resources and thereby provide optimally effective programs and services.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE SDFSC PROGRAM IS ELIMINATED?

States Throughout the Country Will Be Left Without:

- **Any** funding to support school-based drug prevention
 - Given that massive state budget shortfalls make backfilling from state coffers highly unlikely, if not impossible as a means to make up the cuts proposed to the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program, LEAs who do not receive a grant from the new national program will be left with no funding for substance use and violence prevention in schools.
- **Any** foundational funding and manpower that is currently leveraged by the program including, the capacity of schools to compete for national grants

Schools Throughout the Country Will Be Left Without:

- **Any** points of contact for substance abuse prevention and intervention activities.
 - This means that even if community groups want to donate funding and manpower to school based efforts, there will likely be no one to coordinate these efforts within the schools.
- **Any** school based representation in community wide efforts to deal with drug use and violence among school-aged youth.

Students Throughout the Country Will Be Left Without:

- **Any** drug or alcohol prevention in schools and far less violence prevention programming.

Local Data Collection Will Become an Unfunded Mandate

- Currently all of the local recipients of the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program are required by law to go through a strategic process called the “principles of effectiveness.” This mandates that schools conduct a needs assessment of their local drug and violence prevention issues. This process, including the collection of vital local substance use data from school surveys, will be dismantled under the Administration’s proposal and become an unfunded mandate.
- Currently, most states collect the core data set of incidence, prevalence, age of onset, perception of health risk, and perception of social disapproval of illegal drug use and violence at the building/LEA levels via student surveys. If the program is eliminated, it will result in:
 - The loss of the ability to collect longitudinal data in LEAs throughout a state;
 - The loss of the incentive for non-funded LEAs to participate in student or staff surveys;
 - A lack of statewide data coverage will impede communities and other state agencies in their ability to continue to track these issues over time as well as to apply for, and report outcomes of, grant programs funded by other Federal and state agencies; and
 - The availability of local data will be spotty at best.

WHY IS IT CRITICAL TO MAINTAIN THE SDFSC PROGRAM?

Softening Attitudes Indicate Prevention Is Needed Now More Than Ever

- Trends from the recent *Monitoring the Future (MTF)* Survey show that overall drug use by youth has declined by 25% over the past seven years (2001 – 2008).
 - When MTF data is disaggregated, we can already see the beginning of disturbing trends, as eighth graders have the perception that regular use of substances such as marijuana and inhalants are less dangerous than previous cohorts.
 - This is extremely disconcerting as research demonstrates that substance use among youth increases as attitudes soften.
 - In addition, past 30 day use of marijuana has already eclipsed that of tobacco among 10th graders according to the latest MTF data.

Substance Use and Poor Academic Achievement Linked

- Youth with an average grade of D or below were more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as youths with an average grade of A.ⁱ
- Adolescents who use alcohol may remember 10% less of what they have learned than those who don’t drink.ⁱⁱ

Peer Substance Use Linked to Lower Reading and Math Scores

- Lower reading and math scores are linked to peer substance abuse—not to individual student use as one might expect.ⁱⁱⁱ
- On average, students whose peers avoided substance use had test scores that were 18 points higher for reading, and 45 points higher for math.^{iv}
- The challenges in students’ learning environment, particularly substance use, must be addressed in order to increase the academic performance of our youth.

Social and Emotional Learning Programs, Including Prevention Programs, Increase Academic Achievement

- Recent evidence supports the fact that “social and emotional learning” programs increase academic achievement, and help students avoid engaging in high-risk behaviors such as illegal drug use.^v
- The primary Federal program currently funding “social and emotional learning” programs, such as Life Skills Training, is the SDFSC program.

Now is NOT the time to cut prevention programming such as the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program. This is particularly true given that historically when funding for drug prevention wanes, as it did in the mid-to late 1990’s, youth drug use surges.

THE PRESIDENT'S FY 2010 BUDGET REQUEST IS NOT A SOUND PROPOSAL

The proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget request recommends eliminating the SDFSC program, and shifting \$100 million of this funding to the National Programs portion of SDFSC program for competitive grants to LEAs. This Administration's proposal is NOT sound because it would:

- Leave the vast majority of our nation's schools and students with no drug and violence prevention programming at all.
- Allow only a very limited number of LEAs, predominantly in urban areas with sophisticated and skilled grant writers, to successfully compete for these funds.
- Likely prevent rural and underserved areas from successfully competing for funds from the new national program as they are unlikely to have the resources to hire the grant writers required to compete for this type of discretionary funding.
- Provide large, time limited, competitive grants to a very small number of recipients that will not be sustainable over time.
- Create an unfunded mandate for data collection and result in the loss of the substate data infrastructure that the SDFSC program has provided.

THE JUSTIFICATION FOR ELIMINATING THE SDFSC PROGRAM IS FLAWED

The justification for eliminating the SDFSC program is predicated on incorrect information:^{vi}

- The 2001 RAND Drug Policy Research Center study that is referred to in the justification to eliminate this program was conducted prior to the enactment of H.R. 1, which statutorily corrected many of the problems associated with the program. No further studies have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of the program since that time.
- The justification to eliminate the program states that the proposal to move \$100 million into a competitive program will ensure that the schools with the greatest need receive funding. In fact, only schools that can afford to pay sophisticated and skilled grant writers will be able to successfully compete for the available funds.
- The proposal to eliminate the program **does not** take into account the fact that although most LEAs receive less than \$10,000, they leverage these funds to recruit partners who have committed additional public and private resources and manpower to implement school based programs that work for their communities.
 - It also does not take into account that LEAs receiving a small amount of money develop consortia to pool their resources to provide optimally effective programs and services.
- The justification to eliminate this program states that the National Advisory Committee suggested that the funds for the SDFSC program would be better used by the Federal Government if they provided federal grants. To the contrary, the Advisory Committee report specifically states "at the outset, the committee notes that none of the witnesses testifying before the committee or any of the committee's members suggested that the State Grants Program is no longer necessary. Rather, the committee believes that the program is crucial because safe and drug free schools are the foundation for improved learning."^{vii}

CONCLUSION

The SDFSC State Grants program is the only federal-level funding that is available to all school systems throughout the country to focus specifically on the issue of substance abuse and violence with school-age youth. Zeroing out the State Grants portion of the SDFSC program and moving \$100 million into National Programs to give discretionary grants to a tiny portion of America's school districts is NOT a viable option and should not be enacted.

ⁱ Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *SAMHSA's National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report—Marijuana Use among Youths*. July 19, 2002. Available at www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm.

ⁱⁱ Brown, S.A., Tapert, S.F., Granholm, E., et al. (2000). "Neurocognitive functioning of adolescents: Effects of protracted alcohol use." *Alcoholism: Clinical and experimental research*, 24(2).

ⁱⁱⁱ Bence, M., Brandon, R., Lee, I., Tran, H. University of Washington. (2000). *Impact of peer substance use on middle school performance in Washington: Summary*. Washington Kids Count/University of WA: Seattle, WA. Available: http://www.hspsc.org/wkc/special/pdf/peer_sub_091200.pdf.

^{iv} Bence, M., Brandon, R., Lee, I., Tran, H. University of Washington. (2000). *Impact of peer substance use on middle school performance in Washington: Summary*. Washington Kids Count/University of WA: Seattle, WA. Available: http://www.hspsc.org/wkc/special/pdf/peer_sub_091200.pdf.

^v Zins, J.E., Payton, J.W., Weissberg, R.P., & O'Brien, M.U. (2007). In G. Matthews, M. Zeidner, & R. D. Roberts (Eds.), *The science of emotional intelligence: Knowns and unknowns*. New York: Oxford University Press.

^{vi} Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget. (2009). *Terminations, reductions and savings: Budget of U.S. government Fiscal Year 2010*. Washington, DC. Available: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/fy2010/assets/trs.pdf>

^{vii} U.S. Department of Education, Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee. (2007) *Enhancing achievement and proficiency through safe and drug-free schools*. Washington, DC. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/sdfscac/enhancing-achievement.doc>