

**CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF THE SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS AND  
COMMUNITIES ACT: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS**

Mina Kimmerling

The tragedy at Columbine High School and similar incidents across the nation have increased concern over violence in America's schools. This heightened awareness has focused attention on the policies and programs intended to prevent violence, drug use, and other threats to safety in America's K-12 education system. This report discusses the nation's largest school safety program, the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA). Created by Congress in 1986 as the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA), this program was reauthorized in 1994 as SDFSCA. In fiscal year 2000 (FY 00), it disbursed a total of \$605 million and involved 40 million students in 97 percent of the nation's schools. SDFSCA is the most frequently used federal source of funds for practices related to schoolwide discipline and violence prevention. It is currently in the process of reauthorization.

This report is not an evaluation of the SDFSCA program. Several such evaluations have been conducted, including 1997 analyses by the Research Triangle Institute and the Government Accounting Office (GAO). Rather, this report presents an overview of the program's structure, history, and major challenges. The increasing concern over drug use and violence in schools has shown the need for school reform efforts to target issues beyond academic achievement. Additionally, aligning the goals of drug and violence prevention programs with school reform initiatives may improve the effectiveness of program implementation. Only when prevention programs are seen as integral for school evolution rather than as mandated activities that detract from schools' central mission will the achievement of safe and drug-free schools be a priority in education.

To explore these issues, the U.S. Department of Education asked RAND to convene a conference of drug and violence prevention researchers, practitioners, and educational reformers. Participants were asked to consider how the SDFSCA program might be made more effective and, more broadly, how efforts aimed at decreasing student drug use and school

violence could best incorporate the national focus on school reform and accountability. This report was prepared to provide a shared knowledge base for the conference participants; it presents key information about the program's history, operational structure, implementational practices, past performance (as measured by various assessments), and proposed changes. Primary and secondary sources were used to obtain this information, as well as one-on-one interviews with U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice officials, policymakers, drug and violence prevention researchers, and education researchers. In addition, RAND conducted two focus groups in which school principals, administrators, and teachers from a suburban district and a large urban district discussed the feasibility of SDFSCA program implementation and barriers to its effectiveness.

With a large funding base, data to support its necessity, and a structure that allows schools to individualize resources to meet local needs, in addition to the public's attention and desire for implementation, SDFSCA seems to have the key ingredients that would enable it to have a significant impact. Nevertheless, when assessing the program's effectiveness, legislators are doubtful, researchers are critical, and educators are displeased. Problems with legislation and integration with school reform have hampered a potentially potent program. The points of contention that impede the SDFSCA program's functional efficiency include program creation versus program responsibility, the laissez-faire nature of program guidelines versus the increasing demand for program accountability, the focus on research-based methods in policymaking rather than ease and practicality of program implementation by teachers and principals, and the shifting focus of school reform toward safety and prevention rather than the exclusive pursuit of rigorous academic standards.

In view of these tensions, many would conclude that a new approach is needed. A shift in the definition and focus of school-based drug prevention to include school reform efforts and interagency collaboration may bridge the gap between the goals of public policy and the reality of implementation. This report sets forth these issues,

along with recommendations for improvements to the SDFSCA legislation, its implementation, and its integration with other programs, as well as more-general prevention policies.

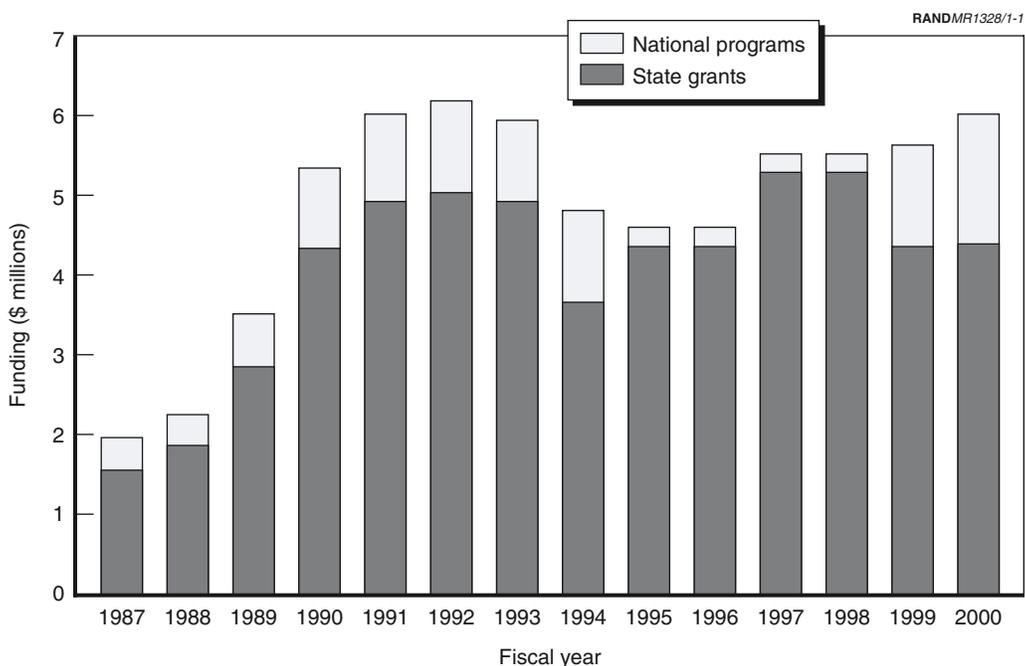
## INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Education's SDFSCA is the primary federal program supporting school-based efforts to prevent drug abuse and violence among America's young people. According to a 1998 evaluation of elementary and secondary school principals' utilization of government funding, local funding, and private funding, SDFSCA was the most frequently used source of funds for practices related to schoolwide discipline (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). When principals were asked about the role SDFSCA funds play in maintaining safety, orderliness, and proper behavior in their schools, 77 percent reported that these funds "made a difference," "made a big difference," or were "essential" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

SDFSCA has been a consistent component of the federal government's ongoing efforts to combat drugs and violence through school and community-based prevention programs. When DFSCA was reauthorized in 1994 as SDFSCA--part of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), an omnibus bill reauthorizing core federal education programs--the reauthorizing legislation was expanded to focus on violence prevention and school safety.

Total funding for the program began at \$200 million in FY 87 and grew fairly steadily until FY 93, when funding levels began to decrease. This decrease continued until FY 97, when appropriations were increased by \$100 million. Current funding is sizable, \$605 million for FY 00 (Figure 1). Funds are allocated to states on the basis of school population. In FY 99, state grants ranged from \$1.7 million (Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia) to \$39.5 million (California). The average state award was \$10 million. States distribute the funds to school districts on the basis of student population and district characteristics, such as perceived need for prevention programs. The average district receives roughly \$6 per student, but 59 percent of the districts--those that are small--receive grants of less than \$10,000 (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Per-pupil spending may be higher than this in

districts that choose to concentrate their program resources on a particular age group, such as middle-school students.



**Figure 1--Funding for Safe and Drug-Free Schools Programs, 1987-2000**

#### **Perceived Political Factors in the Creation and Development of the SDFSCA Program**

The creation of the SDFSCA program can be attributed, at least in part, to national perceptions of a crack cocaine "epidemic" during the mid 1980s. School- and community-based drug prevention was perceived by both government officials and the general public as a way to address the increasing problem of drug use by America's youth. However, the legislative mandate to create school-based programs to counter the spread of drugs lacked strong substantive underpinnings. Because the SDFSCA program was created as a response to a perceived emergency, the responsibility for school programs fell to local districts. The legislation provided few clear guidelines and little capacity for monitoring and enforcement. The resulting flexibility in program structure and the lack of political leadership have caused public and governmental perceptions of the program to continually wax and wane.

Throughout the program's 13-year history, leaders espousing a broad range of political perspectives have both attacked it and taken credit for its accomplishments.

### **Converging Legislative Focus**

The broadened scope of the program following the 1994 reauthorization seems to have been driven by a nationwide perception of an increasing level of school violence. The general public saw drug use and violence as related issues. The 1994 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes reported that the public found the increase in fighting, violence, gangs, and poor discipline to be the most serious problems facing U.S. public schools (Elam, Rose, and Gallup, 1994). The poll also found that the public believed the main causes of the perceived increase of violence in the nation's schools were the increased use of drugs and alcohol (Elam, Rose, and Gallup, 1994). Each year about 3 million thefts and violent crimes--nearly 16,000 incidents per school day--occur on or near school campuses. In 1994, about one in five high school students regularly carried a firearm, knife, razor, club, or other weapon (Government Accounting Office, 1995). Although the problem of safety and violence in schools was clearly receiving greater public recognition, the actual number of arrests for violent crimes had not significantly increased. Nonetheless, parents and school administrators were clearly interested in integrating violence prevention education into the existing drug prevention curriculum.

Policy leaders, too, began to increase their focus on school safety. This was reflected not only in the creation of SDFSCA, but in other federal legislation as well. In 1994, President Clinton signed into law Goals 2000, encompassing a set of eight National Goals originally created in 1989 by the President and the 50 state governors. The explicit intention of Goals 2000 was to establish "world class" national education standards. One of the national goals specifically targeted safety and drug prevention, underscoring the role of SDFSCA. The seventh goal called for all schools in America to be free of drugs and violence and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and to offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning by the year

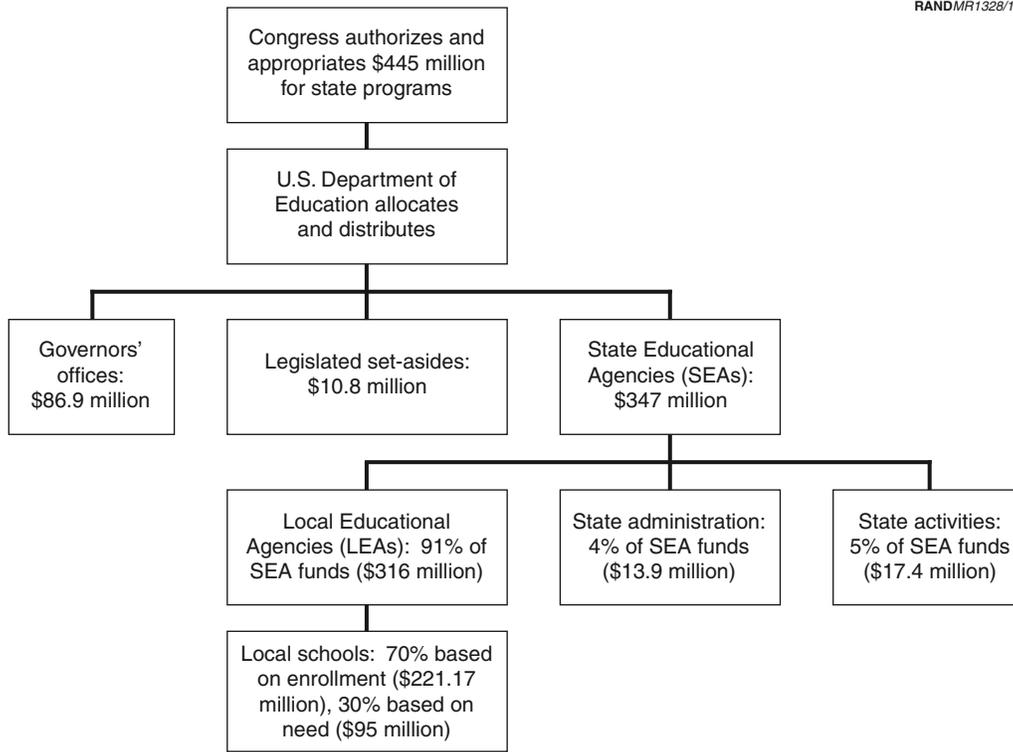
2000. Though clearly exhortatory rather than feasible, this goal was also reflected in the Department of Education's Strategic Plan, which stated that schools were to become strong, safe, disciplined, and drug free. Recognition of the need for safe and drug-free schools as part of national educational goals reflected not only an understanding of the problem, but also the realization that a safe school environment is necessary if schools are to achieve academic goals.

#### **FUNDING PATTERNS AND PROCESSES**

SDFSCA funds are distributed through two major programs, the State Grants program and the National Programs. The majority of program funds are disbursed through the State Grants program, which makes separate allocations to the State Education Agencies (SEAs) and to the governors' offices. SEA funds flow to local districts according to a formula based on enrollment and need for prevention programming. Governors' program funds go to local grantees, which are primarily community groups and organizations. Figure 2 delineates the current path of funding streams, using 1995-1996 allocation figures (Government Accounting Office, 1997b).

#### **From the State to the Districts**

According to the current legislative formula, the SEAs receive 80 percent of the total amount allocated to the state. Although the districts must officially apply for funds, the state designates money for Local Education Agencies (LEAs), using a formula that is 70 percent enrollment-based and 30 percent need-based. Two-thirds of the states base their high-need allocation decision on rates of student alcohol and drug use, arrests, expulsions, or suspensions from school, and rates of school violence and vandalism (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). The local agencies, in turn, have broad discretion in choosing which schools will receive funding and in deciding how program funds will be used to prevent drug abuse and violence and to promote safety. SDFSCA requires districts applying to the state agency for funds to include in their application "a detailed explanation of the local educational agency's



**Figure 2--Disbursement of Funds**  
(based on FY 2000 expenditures of \$445 million to state educational agencies)

comprehensive plan for drug and violence prevention," including the district's goals, funding plan, community coordination efforts, and coordination efforts with other federal, state, and local sources. Programs must be comprehensive (designed for all students and employees) and designed "to prevent use, possession and distribution of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs, to prevent violence and promote school safety, or to create a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

A small percentage of state funds are designated to support federally funded program coordinators, whose job is to give technical assistance to districts and to oversee district activities. Legislation allows for schools and districts to use funds for a wide range of activities, including comprehensive drug prevention, health education, early intervention, student mentoring and rehabilitation referral programs, sexual-harassment prevention programs, conflict management,

and expenditures for metal detectors and crime- and drug-free school routes.

**From the State to the Governors' Programs**

The governors' programs receive 20 percent of the funds allocated to each state. Ten to twenty percent of the governors' program funds must go to law-enforcement/education partnerships, in which the efforts of local educational agencies are combined with those of law-enforcement agencies. Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) is the principal program funded under this provision. Whereas the LEAs allocate program funds primarily to school-based activities, the governors' programs largely support grants or contracts to community and nonprofit agencies providing prevention programs for children who are not normally served by schools or who have special needs (e.g., preschoolers, youth in juvenile detention facilities, runaway or homeless children, pregnant and parenting teenagers, and school dropouts). Federally authorized activities range from setting up after-school recreational and cultural programs that encourage a drug-free lifestyle to training parents and other members of the community in prevention.

**From the U.S. Department of Education to National Programs**

SDFSCA also provides resources for National Programs. These funds are distributed at the discretion of the Department of Education rather than through a block-grant process. The role of the National Programs is to fund local activities, disseminate information at the state and local levels, and emphasize coordinated interagency programs. Through different phases of the program's history, allocations for the National Programs have ranged from 5 percent to 22 percent of the total SDFSCA budget. As Figure 1 illustrates, after an initial period of comparatively high allocations to the National Programs, Congress sharply limited such spending between FY 95 and FY 98. Interagency coordination and spending increased in 1999, and spending on National Programs increased significantly, to 22 percent of the SDFSCA yearly budget.

Beginning in FY 99, the Department of Education, with Congressional support, committed \$95 million to two new efforts. First, \$35 million

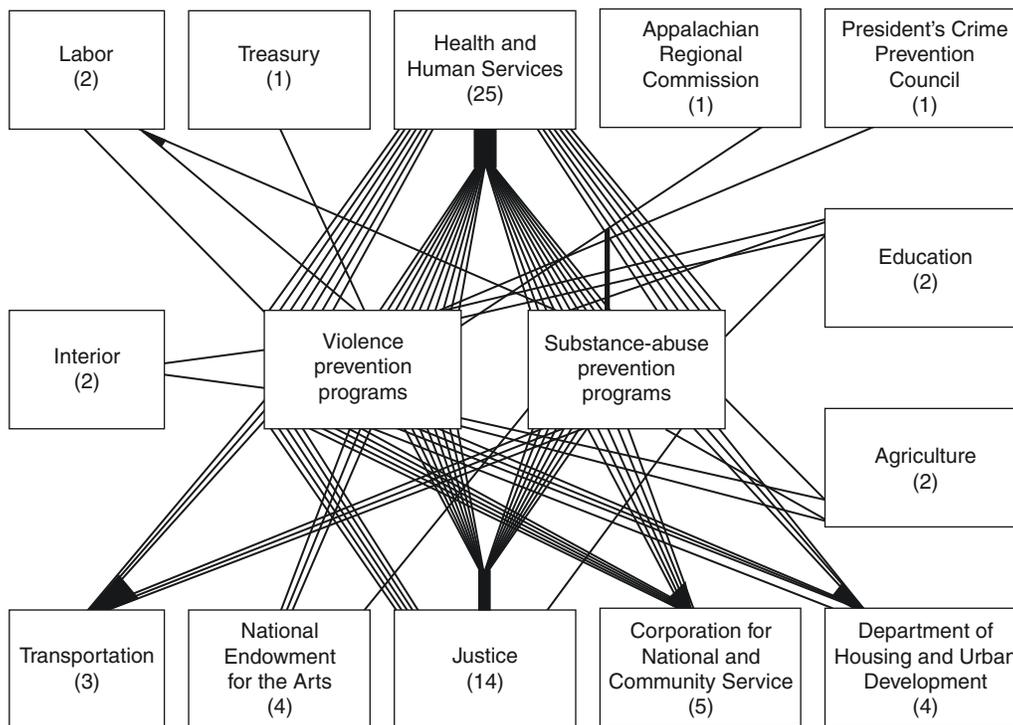
was allocated for creating full-time middle-school prevention-program-coordinator positions. Then the remaining \$60 million was combined with \$35 million from the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services to implement a "Safe Schools, Healthy Students" program. Under this program, 54 competitive grants are awarded to districts that promote "safe and drug-free learning environments." This initiative requires applicants to show that they are using research-based programs to address the problems of drugs and violence in schools.

### **The Local Perspective**

Although the SDFSCA program is the primary provider of school-based prevention funding, it is only one of a number of federally funded programs for substance-abuse and violence prevention. A 1998 audit by the Education Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that 12 out of 26 districts surveyed reported using local funds to supplement prevention program expenses. Districts have also tapped into the plethora of federally funded drug and violence prevention programs. As Figure 3 shows, in 1996, 13 federal departments administered a total of 66 substance-abuse and violence prevention programs. Although most of these programs do not focus solely on elementary- and secondary-school-based interventions, schools often apply for funds from them. Because a large number of programs have apparently similar goals, many federal funding sources have come under criticism for lack of coordination with other agencies, leading to charges of duplication, excessive spending, and wastefulness (Government Accounting Office, 1997c).

Even within schools and districts, there is substantial variety in the types of prevention activities utilized. According to one prevention expert, "School principals were asked to identify whether or not their school used activities in any of 14 distinct categories of prevention efforts. On average, they reported using prevention efforts that fell into 9 of the 14 different categories" (Denise Gottfredson in U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

RANDMR1328/1-3



**Figure 3--Federal Departments and Agencies Administering Drug and Violence Prevention Programs in FY 96**

**Issues of Accountability**

Issues of accountability have arisen throughout SDFSCA's history, perhaps due to the high level of discretion local and school officials have over funding and the resulting wide range of program variation, even within a single district. The legislation allows for state, district, and school prevention programs to vary substantially, which makes it difficult to develop intervention accountability systems or to monitor long-term effectiveness. The average SDFSCA program budget of \$6 to \$10 per student leaves little room for funding both program and evaluation activities.

Nevertheless, accountability measures have been implemented from the federal to the programmatic level. The 1994 SDFSCA legislation mandated four mechanisms to increase accountability:

- An application process that requires approval of state and local program plans.
- Monitoring activities by state agencies.
- Triennial reports and evaluations.
- The use of substate regional advisory councils.

Additional changes to SDFSCA program requirements have encouraged schools to evaluate their proposed prevention programs by using scientifically objective research. The 1998 Principles of Effectiveness are regulatory guidelines created by the Department of Education to ensure that SDFSCA funds go only to reliable prevention programs. For example, the 1997 Research Triangle Institute evaluation found that few districts seemed to know about or consider research findings when planning their prevention programs, and that prevention approaches that have been shown to be effective were not widely used (Silvia, Thorne, and Tashjian, 1997). Although compliance is not a legislative requirement, the Department of Education has made abiding by these principles mandatory for all recipients of SDFSCA funds. The Principles of Effectiveness, derived through examining evaluation results and long-standing ideas on how to improve program effectiveness, include the following stipulations:

- Programs must be based on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems that exist in the local schools and community.
- Programs must have the assistance of a local or regional advisory council that includes community representatives; they must establish measurable goals and objectives; and they must design activities accordingly.
- Activities must be based on research or evaluation that provides evidence that the strategies used prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior.
- Programs should be evaluated periodically to assess progress toward achieving goals and objectives. Evaluation results

should be used to refine, improve, and strengthen program goals and objectives as appropriate.

This new research-based focus is designed to integrate evaluative findings and improve program effectiveness, outcomes, and accountability.

Accountability at the state level has been emphasized through the Department of Education's use of triennial self-reports that assess local program effectiveness. Additionally, when applying to the state agency for program funding, districts must submit a plan ensuring that funds will be spent in compliance with program guidelines. Because the scope of acceptable programs is so broad, varying from sexual-harassment counseling to metal-detector installation, states have begun to require additional information. Forty states now require a program report and 42 states have begun requiring a financial report of program expenditures. States have also implemented on-site visits and required local self-reports as part of their oversight of local program activities (Government Accounting Office, 1997b).

On a federal level, the Department of Education created a strategic plan that emphasizes the role of the SDFSCA program. The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) requires that all executive agencies, including the Department of Education, develop a five-year strategic plan that includes long-term strategic goals, annual performance goals, and reports on progress toward those goals.

The seven departmental strategic goals call for all students to be able to

- Read independently by the end of the third grade.
- Master challenging mathematics, including the foundations of algebra and geometry, by the end of the eighth grade.
- Be prepared for and able to afford at least two years of college by age 18, and be able to pursue lifelong learning as adults.
- Have a talented, dedicated, and well-prepared teacher in their classroom.

- Have their classroom connected to the Internet by the year 2000 and be technologically literate.
- *Learn in strong, safe, and drug-free schools* (emphasis added).
- Learn according to challenging and clear standards of achievement and accountability.

To assess the accomplishment of students learning in strong, safe, and drug-free schools, the Department of Education created the following six indicators. To be successful, a school had to

- Slow the increase in the rates of alcohol and drug use among school-age children by 2000.
- Achieve continuous decreases in criminal and violent incidents in schools by students between 1993 and 2002.
- Realize continuous increases in the percentage of students reporting negative attitudes toward drug and alcohol use between 1993 and 2002.
- Improve prevention programs by having the majority of LEAs participate in SDFSCA programs based on the Principles of Effectiveness by 1999.
- Ensure that by 1999 data were collected statewide on alcohol and drug use among students and on violence in schools.
- By 2000, significantly increase the number of teachers who were appropriately trained to address discipline problems.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy has included SDFSCA goals in its 1999 Performance Measurement Effectiveness (PME) system. The first of the strategy's six goals, aimed at reducing illegal drug use and drug availability by 50 percent and reducing health and social consequences by 25 percent, focuses on enabling America's youth to reject illegal drugs as well as alcohol and tobacco. Selected objectives of this goal include the following:

- Provide students in grades K-12 with research-based alcohol, tobacco, and drug prevention programs and policies.

- Encourage and assist the development of community coalitions and programs to prevent drug abuse and underage alcohol and tobacco use.
- Develop and implement a set of research-based principles upon which prevention programming can be based.
- Support and highlight research, including the development of scientific information, to inform drug, alcohol, and tobacco prevention programs targeting young Americans.

#### **KEY FINDINGS OF PROGRAM EVALUATIONS**

To assess SDFSCA-funded programs' long- and short-term effectiveness, evaluations have been conducted by the GAO, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Education. The following issues that inhibit or encourage local program success have been identified.

**State-level efforts at overseeing local program selection and implementation are minimally effective.** While both state and local education authorities have broad discretion on how to use SDFSCA funds, states may lack the staffing resources needed to provide oversight and technical assistance. Legislation dictates that local districts will decide which programs to spend their allocation on. Part of the job of the state coordinators is to aid in fund allocation and local program supervision. Yet state coordinator offices often have very small staffs, making it difficult or impossible to provide sustained assistance or to oversee district activities. Data from one state follow-up study showed that of 48 state SDFSCA coordinators, half reported providing monitoring visits to fewer than one-fourth of their districts. Eighteen of the 25 state coordinators who conducted program-specific monitoring visits stated that because of a lack of staffing funds they were no longer able to visit as many districts as they had previously visited. Of the 34 state SDFSCA program administrators who responded to a survey question on technical-assistance problems, 23 cited insufficient staff size, nine cited lack of program funds, and nine cited lack of knowledge or expertise among state-level staff as

barriers to meeting districts' technical-assistance needs (Silvia, Thorne, and Tashjian, 1997).

SDFSCA grantees are required to develop goals and objectives for their state and local programs. All states have met this requirement. However, the quality of the goals and objectives varies within states (Government Accounting Office, 1995). It has become apparent that many district goals have not been focused in the right area. Some have targeted the quantity of work completed--e.g., number of staff trained--rather than measuring program outcomes. Increased guidance by state coordinators may refocus district goals and efforts to obtain these goals.

**There is little consistency of programs even within schools.** The amount and content of prevention programming varies greatly within both classrooms and schools, and even within districts attempting to deliver consistent programs, which tend to have the best results. As the 1997 Research Triangle Institute study reports, "student outcomes were better when prevention programs had greater stability over time, a definition that includes being in place for a long period, with continuity of staff, planning and leadership." Often, however, local patterns reflect inconsistent implementation. Teachers and counselors simply do not have enough time, support, training, or motivation to provide all the instruction and other services and activities that they plan to provide (Silvia, Thorne, and Tashjian, 1997).

In focus groups conducted by RAND, teachers stated that they often doubted the continuity of school-based prevention programs. Grant money seemed to come and go. One teacher said, "We're all in limbo. . . . Are we getting it or are we not getting it? . . . People are asking, Can I do this prevention activity next year or not?" The state education agencies often award grants for three years, but local funding fluctuates year by year, based on the state's budget and priorities. It is clear that developing secure administrative and financial support for prevention programming is vital for improving the performance of prevention programs.

**Few of the specific programs that have been applied in schools have been found to be effective in previous research** (Silvia, Thorne, and

Tashjian, 1997). Current drug and violence prevention literature reaches near consensus on a few points concerning prevention programs. It is generally agreed that the most effective prevention programs are "comprehensive." That is, they not only teach children how to resist and deal with the social influences that encourage the use of drugs, but they also correct misperceptions of peer drug use rather than exposing children to the dangers of drug use and violence. Unfortunately, comprehensive programs are rarely implemented, possibly because they require increased teacher training and staff time and therefore have higher costs.

DARE, the most widely implemented program, is reportedly used in 48 percent of elementary schools, 21 percent of middle schools, and 8 percent of high schools. Despite students', parents', and teachers' enthusiasm for DARE, a number of research studies have shown that the program has few short-term effects and no long-term positive effects (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). But even though schools may be aware of data suggesting that the program does not provide positive long-term results, they like having it around. As one prevention coordinator explained, "Not only are there police officers around the school, but that's one less period a week that teachers need to prepare for, so they get some time off. Also the responsibility and cost of prevention programs is shifted from the schools to the police department. Additionally, having DARE in school makes principals look good in front of parents. DARE is a nationally recognized program and most Americans don't realize that long-term it doesn't make a huge difference. Parents are just happy about their kids going through DARE programming."

School districts may conduct periodic, informal assessments of their programs, but fewer than half conduct formal evaluations or use formal evaluation results in selecting or altering their programs. (Silvia, Thorne, and Tashjian, 1997). Prior to 1994, there was no national mandate to collect data in a systematic and uniform way that would permit real evaluation. And even since the 1994 federal mandate was enacted, schools have not been well informed on the procedures and requirements of collecting outcome data. As one professional evaluator

of the SDFSCA program said, "Schools are told that they need to give data on outcomes of their programs, but they aren't told until the very last minute before the information is needed, so researchers don't know how accurate all of their information is. Often, they are promised that in the following year, they will be given advance notice, and then they are not . . . the same problem happens over and over. In recent years, program officials have been trying to change this, but we haven't seen a real difference yet."

The Department of Education has taken an interest in encouraging schools to use programs that have been shown to be effective and in encouraging schools to formally evaluate their own programs. The implementation of the 1998 Principles of Effectiveness at the state level and the introduction of the two national priorities (full-time middle-school coordinators and "Safe Schools, Healthy Students" programs) demonstrate the Department's commitment to remedying this problem. The grant application for National Programs emphasizes a research-based focus: "The National Programs portion of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act supports the development of programs that (1) provide models or proven effective practices that will assist schools and communities around the Nation to improve their programs funded under the State Grants portion of the SDFSCA; and (2) develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate new or improved approaches to creating safe and orderly learning environments in schools."

#### **1999 REAUTHORIZATION PROPOSALS**

New measures have been proposed to further improve the portfolio of the entire IASA program. Specific to improving SDFSCA and other programs' accountability factors, a set of six accountability measures has been developed to hold schools, district teachers, and students to high standards. These measures include the following:

- Support states in developing a single, rigorous accountability system for all districts and schools.
- Provide states and districts with additional resources to turn around low-performing schools.

- Update the recently enacted Education Flexibility Partnership Act of 1999, which permits states to waive selected requirements of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) programs.
- Increase accountability to parents and the public through school report cards.
- Assist all students in meeting challenging state standards.
- Develop first-rate student progress and promotion policies to end the practices of social promotion and grade retention.

In the arena of school safety, the Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 (part of IASA) has the following goals:

- Emphasize the importance of research-based programs by awarding local grants in accordance with the quality of the grant plan and its consistency with the Principles of Effectiveness.
- Concentrate funds in areas of high need by focusing grants on high-need programs that are of sufficient size and scope to be effective.
- Improve coordination between SEAs and governors' programs by mandating that state agencies and governors' offices submit a joint application for funding and by administering a joint technical-assistance and accountability effort.
- Provide training and technical assistance by creating a center designed to improve teacher and administrator ability to identify and implement effective, research-based prevention programs.
- Help schools respond to violent or traumatic crises. The School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) would provide immediate assistance to schools that have undergone a violent or traumatic crisis.
- Require schools that receive SDFSCA funds to prohibit the possession or use of tobacco, drugs, or alcohol in or around school.

- Require an individual evaluation of students who bring a firearm to school to assess their level of danger to themselves and to others.
- Strengthen program accountability.

At the state level, the proposed reauthorization of SDFSCA involves a change in the states' triennial self-reports. The following measures have been proposed to improve state accountability as well as interagency collaboration:

- State educational agencies should be required to use at least 70 percent of their total State Grant funding for competitive awards to local agencies (current law directs SEAs to award at least 91 percent of their funding to local agencies based on enrollment and greatest need). Competitive funding evaluations should be based on how well funds would be used to support research-based drug and violence prevention programs, the quality of the programs, and how closely grant applications are aligned with the Principles of Effectiveness.
- Local agency awards should be sustained for a maximum of three years. Within the final two years of the grant, funding should be sustained only as long as a local agency can make clear that progress has been made toward its performance indicators.
- To ensure increased coordination between the governors and state agencies, applications (for both LEA and governors' funding) should require that the governor and the SEA apply jointly for funds. These applications should detail the state's outcome-based performance indicators for drug and violence prevention, describe how SDFSCA state grant funds will be coordinated with other drug and education programs, and outline the procedures the state will use to inform its local agencies of the performance indicators.
- The majority of the governors' allocated funds (at least 80 percent) should be used for competitive subgrants to community-based organizations. Like the LEAs, local community-based agencies should be required to use SDFSCA funds to support

research-based drug and violence prevention and to follow guidelines aligned with the Principles of Effectiveness.

- In applying for federal funds, state agencies should be required to describe in their applications how they plan to provide technical assistance to local agencies that are *not* receiving federal funding.
- State applications should be developed in consultation and coordination with appropriate state officials and representatives of parents, students, and community-based organizations. States should also be required to assist in conducting national impact evaluations of programs.
- Districts that receive SDFSCA funding should be required to expel students who possess a firearm at school; report all school-related suicides; have part- or full-time program coordinators; evaluate their program every two years, assessing progress toward meeting goals and objectives; and have a comprehensive plan for safe and drug-free schools.

#### **SCHOOL REFORM AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS**

Simply put, most national, state, and local school-reform efforts have ignored the existence of the SDFSCA program and have given little or no attention to the range of issues the program addresses. The seventh National Goal has received nowhere near the same emphasis as the goals dealing with school readiness and academic achievement. The major elements of the national school reform legislation have been the Goals 2000 program, the school-to-work initiative, the redesign of ESEA, and, especially, Title 1 funds for high-poverty schools. Each of these initiatives has been intended to enhance the possibility of high-performance, standards-based reform according to conventional academic criteria.

It is only recently, with the shift of attention from drug use to broader concerns about violence, safety, and discipline, that the potential for the SDFSCA program and school reform coordination has come into focus. Moreover, recent evaluations of the program have reported the same problems in effectiveness--namely, poor implementation and lack

of comprehensiveness--that have plagued mainstream school reform efforts. The focus groups interviewed for this study clearly showed that local practitioners, even as they follow the formal guidelines of the program and local projects, see SDFSCA resources as the only ones available to help them deal with the very broad and deep problems of hostility, isolation, and alienation that affect significant numbers of students in every school. These serious problems are seen to underlie violence and drug abuse as well as other school problems such as poor attendance and low achievement. Ironically, these perceptions may make integration of the program more feasible in that they address a set of issues that educators acknowledge responsibility for, rather than the specific problem of drug-abuse prevention, which teachers tend to see as "one more thing added to an already busy day."

The current atmosphere allows two alternative directions for SDFSCA's development: Programs like SDFSCA may be subordinated to law-enforcement strategies such as continued funding for metal detectors and on-campus security. Or, it is to be hoped, the perception of a safe school environment as a necessity for academic achievement will lead to greater program integration with Title I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other programs intended to make schools more accessible, attractive, and effective for all students.

**REFERENCES**

- Chandler, K. A., C. D. Chapman, M. R. Rand, and B. M. Taylor (1998). *Students' Reports of School Crime: 1989 and 1995*. U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, NCES 98-24/NCJ-169607, Washington DC.
- Durlak, J. A. (1995). "School-Based Prevention Programs for Children and Adolescents," *Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry*, 34.
- Elam, S. M., L. C. Rose, and A. M. Gallup (1994). *The 26th Annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools*, 76,1.
- Ellickson, Phyllis L. (1995). "Schools." In Robert Coombs and Douglas Ziedonis (eds.), *Handbook of Drug Abuse Prevention*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Flannery, D. J. (1997). *School Violence: Risk, Preventive Intervention and Policy*. New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Urban Diversity Series No. 109.
- Frammolino, R. (1998). "Failing Grade for Safe Schools Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, Section A, September.
- Government Accounting Office (1997a). *Drug and Alcohol Abuse: Billions Spent Annually for Treatment and Prevention Activities*, GAO/HEHS-97-12, Washington, DC.
- Government Accounting Office (1997b). *Safe and Drug-Free Schools: Balancing Accountability with State and Local Flexibility*, GAO/HEHS-98-3, Washington, DC.
- Government Accounting Office (1995). *School Safety: Promising Initiatives for Addressing School Violence*, GAO/HEHS-95-106, Washington, DC.
- Government Accounting Office (1997c). *Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention: Multiple Youth Programs Raise Questions of Efficiency and Effectiveness*, GAO/T-HEHS-97-166, Washington, DC.
- House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control (1987). *Drug Abuse Prevention in America's Schools*. Washington DC: United States Congress, 1st Sess., June.
- Shanker, A. (1995). "Classrooms Held Hostage: The Disruption of the Many by the Few," *American Educator*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Spring, pp. 8-13, 47-48.
- Sherman, L. W., D. C. Gottfredson, D. L. MacKenzie, J. Eck, P. Reuter, and S. D. Bushway (1998). *Preventing Crime: What Works, What*

*Doesn't, What's Promising.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, Research Brief.

Silvia, E. S., J. Thorne, and C. Tashjian (1997). *School-Based Drug Prevention Programs: A Longitudinal Study in Selected School Districts. Final Report.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Tashjian, M. D., E. S. Silvia, and J. Thorne (1996). *Characteristics of DFSCA State and Local Programs: Summary of the 1991-93 State Biennial Performance Reports.* Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

U.S. Department of Education (1999). *Federal Education Legislation Enacted in 1994,* Washington, DC.