

# Prevention of Inhalant and Other Substance Use Among Middle School Youth

## Substance Use Among Middle School Youth

Young adolescents are particularly vulnerable to initiation of substance use. Moreover, inhalants pose a particularly dangerous risk to middle-school youth. Inhalants are often the first drug to be abused given their ready accessibility, low cost, and the frequent lack of knowledge among adolescents of their extreme toxicity.

The current study will examine the effectiveness of a peer-delivered communications intervention, adapted for youth who attend schools on or near American Indian reservations.

## Project Goals

To test the effectiveness of the anti-drug communications campaign - Be Under Your Own Influence - to lower inhalant and other substance use among 7<sup>th</sup> graders who attend schools on or near American Indian reservations.

To develop a "turnkey" intervention that can be made available to American Indian and other schools.

## Project Design

We will partner with 7 communities on or near American Indian reservations to conduct this study. Each community will be randomly placed into either the intervention or control group.

- **Four (4) communities will serve as intervention sites**, and their schools will receive the Be Under Your Own Influence intervention. The intervention will **target 7<sup>th</sup> graders using high school age peers** to deliver the Be Under Your Own Influence messages. Two cohorts of 7<sup>th</sup> graders will receive the intervention.
- **Three (3) communities will serve as control sites**, and their schools will receive the intervention materials at the end of the project.
- **All schools will survey two cohorts of 7<sup>th</sup> graders 4 times each** (spring and fall for two consecutive years).

## The Be Under Your Own Influence Intervention

A benefit of substance use for youth is the feeling of rebellious noncompliance and independence. The "**Be Under Your Own Influence**" intervention **reframes substance use as an activity that impairs personal autonomy and aspirations.**

Although Be Under Your Own Influence has been found to reduce substance use among multi-ethnic youth, it has not yet been adapted and tested for effectiveness among American Indian youth. We believe that by working in partnership with American Indian communities, the intervention can be adapted successfully and made available to schools in these and other communities.



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## Use of High School Peer Mentors

Middle school is a time when peer influence is becoming strong. Thus, the intervention relies on older peer mentors to deliver the campaign to 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

- Approximately seven high school students from each intervention community will be selected to serve as role models and deliver the intervention to the 7<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Peer mentors will be trained during summer 2015 at Colorado State University (CSU) on how to deliver the intervention campaign and how to be role models and effective leaders.
- These peer mentors will then deliver the intervention to 7<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2015-2016 school year.
- A new set of high school students will be trained as peer mentors in 2016 using training modules developed from the summer 2015 training. These peer mentors will deliver the intervention to 7<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2016-2017 school year.

## Adaptation of the Intervention

CSU will rely on community participation from the intervention communities to adapt the intervention to an American Indian audience. This participation will include:

- A local American Indian liaison in each intervention community, to be paid by CSU. This individual will assist in organizing and implementing the activities that will occur in the intervention communities.
- Formation of a Community Advisory Board in each community. CSU staff will meet with each advisory board periodically.
- Student focus groups and other forms of youth input.

## Costs and Benefits to the Intervention Schools

The intervention schools will not incur financial costs. Our research grant will pay for:

- Materials needed for the intervention and for adaptation of the intervention.
- Travel, room, and board to CSU in Fort Collins, Colorado for the peer mentors and a school advisor during summer 2015.
- A small stipend to community advisory board members for each meeting attended.
- A local liaison that will assist in organizing and implementing intervention activities.

## Costs and Benefits to the Control Schools

As part of this grant, we must compare changes in substance use in 7<sup>th</sup> graders who receive the intervention to 7<sup>th</sup> graders in another community who do not receive the intervention. Thus, it is necessary to randomly assign 3 participating communities to a "control" condition. These communities may be a part of adapting, but not implementing the intervention during years 2015-2018. However, at the end of the grant period, the control schools will receive the entire intervention, and our staff will give instruction on how to implement the intervention.

Control communities will agree to survey two cohorts of 7<sup>th</sup> graders 4 times each. The schools will receive a detailed report of the survey findings.



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