

Archived Information

Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Advisory Committee Local Education Perspective – August 21, 2006

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1. *Currently as implemented, what are the strengths of the SDFSCA State Grants Program? What are the elements of the States Grants Program that are working and addressing the needs of students and schools today*

- Provides the flexibility for LEAs and states to respond to local needs.
- Assures that every LEA is providing substance abuse prevention and has a crisis team.
- Encourages LEAs to use evidence based programs and practices.
- Provides funds for non-public schools.
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2. *(A) Is the SDFSCA State Grants Program working effectively to promote safe and drug-free schools across the country, specifically in rural, urban and suburban settings?*

(A) In New York State we believe the program is so effective that the NYS legislative and governor added approximately \$1.3 million of NYS tax dollars to the NYS budget to compensate for the federal reduction in funding for the Governor's portion of the SDFSCA State Grants Program. Our state has a long history of collaboration between community based substance abuse prevention organizations and LEAs. I'm the executive director of a community-based substance abuse prevention organization that contracts with 28 LEAs where we're providing prevention programming in 57 secondary schools. I'm also the developer of two national model programs. Without federal SDFSCA funds our economically disadvantaged LEAs would not have funds to contract with us or implement other evidence based program. Local examples of the effectiveness include; of approximately 2000 7th – 12th graders that received four or more sessions of our evidence based program:

- 96% of the students increased their perception of risk of harm associated with AOD use or maintained their perception of harm;
- 92% of the students who reported any use of AOD reduced their use, became abstinent or did not increase their use;
- 91% of the students who reported associating with peers involved in delinquent or deviant behavior decreased those associations;
- 88% maintained or increased associations with peers not involved in delinquent or deviant behavior;
- 94% of the students who participated in delinquent behavior decreased their participation in delinquent behavior.

(B) What are the difficulties in determining the effectiveness of the program?

(B) The main difficulties in determining the effectiveness are:

- the lack of funding for evaluation and the lack of funding for full program implementation with fidelity. The reduction of funding levels have barely provided enough funding for programming, for example, a school that was effectively implementing a program with fidelity had staff turnover and reduced funding. The LEA was not able to purchase new materials or send the new staff member for training on the program's implementation.
- the requirement for active parent consent for student participation in surveys in some LEAs;
- The LEAs lack of expertise in evaluating program, effectiveness.

(C) Are there mechanisms that could be proposed that would help determine if programs being supported with SDFSCA State Grants Program funds are effective in meeting program purposes?

(C) Increased levels of funding to implement programs with fidelity, public domain availability of survey questions that could be selected by LEAs to measure the effectiveness of programs supported by SDFSCA funding, and free scoring and reporting of survey results.

3. Are there emerging issues facing students and schools today that the SDFSCA State Grant Program does not address and should they be addressed in the SDFSCA State Grants Program?

No. The SDFSCA funding guidelines already address too many major issues for the amount of funding available.

4. The SDFSCA State Grants Program includes a focus on safety. Sec 4114 (d)(7) states that recipients of the SDFSCA State Grants must have "a plan for keeping schools safe and drug-free" including, a "crisis management plan". Considering the Nation's focus on emergency response and crisis planning is this language sufficient to address the concern for crisis management in our schools or are further guidance or other steps necessary to address this concern?

The language is sufficient to address the concern for crisis management regarding individuals. The SDFSCA programs cannot and should not address the safety related issues for natural and large-scale disasters.

5. Is the structure of the SDFSCA State Grants Program (awarding funds to the State Education Agency and the Governor), the most effective mechanism for the use of these funds?

The current structure provides for maximum flexibility to address local concerns as well as statewide priorities. The effectiveness could be increased if there was increased funding to pay for required collaboration between LEAs and the Single

State Agencies for Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (SSAs). We are lucky that NYS has a very large network of SSA funded community based prevention organizations and that our SSA, the NYS OASAS has a good collaborative relationship with the SEA. In some states my colleagues in CBOs are required to address certain prevention priorities determined by the SSA and are not able to respond to the identified needs of the LEAs. Understanding that many prevention specialists and experts do not have the expertise in language arts, it is important to note that many professional educators do not have expertise in substance abuse prevention. The vast majority of LEAs do not have the substance abuse prevention expertise to assess and respond to prevention issues. For example, a LEA might identify a need and then pick the wrong solution.

The structure in the way non-public schools receive their funds needs to be examined. Consideration should be given to these schools receiving direct funding from the State Education Agency (SEA) based on the number of students enrolled, and not necessarily have their funding come from the LEA. I am aware of many non-public and special act public schools that do not have even one student who lives in the public school district where they are located. It is unfair to require LEAs to give their SDFSCA funds to these schools just because they're physically located in the same geographic area. In some cases the vast majority of students do not even live in the same county where the non-public school is located!

6. *Is the balance between flexibility and accountability contained in the statute working? Could State and local flexibility be balanced with additional core requirements that would encourage LEAs to address specific issues?*

The flexibility and accountability are working, but could be enhanced with additional funding for effective program implementation, administration and evaluation.

Additional core requirements without additional funding would cause some LEAs to forgo their funding. LEAs should continue to be allowed to spend their funds on assessed local needs, which can and often do change.

7. *How can the tension between the Principles of Effectiveness provisions that require that funds be spent on research-based activities and the broad list of authorized activities (many of which lack a strong research base) be resolved?*

The tension can be resolved by understanding that there isn't research yet on every authorized activity but local evaluation of effectiveness for those activities can justify their existence.