



Evaluation Study On Track

Recent findings from the University of Akron's five-year study of New **D.A.R.E.** show that the nation's largest and most comprehensive prevention research effort is on track and meeting researchers' expectations.

The New **D.A.R.E.** curricula for the 7th and 9th grade programs called, "Take Charge of Your Life," was developed using the findings from twenty-five years of drug abuse prevention research. It focuses on first changing the attitudes and beliefs of adolescents regarding substance use and eventually substance use behavior itself.

The latest data indicate that positive results from the first year of the study have carried over into the second year. Specifically, those students who received the New **D.A.R.E.** 7th grade program, "Take Charge of Your Life," continued in the 8th grade to have improved scores on decision-making skills and beliefs that drug use is socially inappropriate.

The five-year evaluation of New **D.A.R.E.**'s 7th and 9th grade programs, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is currently underway in six U.S. cities - Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Newark (NJ), New Orleans, and St. Louis. It involves over 19,000 students from 83 high schools and their 122 middle schools. Half of these high schools and middle schools are randomly assigned to receive the New **D.A.R.E.** program while the others are assigned to a control group for comparison purposes.

The New **D.A.R.E.** curricula for the 7th and 9th grade incorporate the latest in prevention science and teaching techniques, including high-tech, interactive, and decision-model-based approaches. New **D.A.R.E.** officers are trained as "coaches" to support kids as they try-out research-based refusal strategies in high-stakes peer-pressure environments. New **D.A.R.E.** students get to see for themselves -- via stunning brain imagery -- tangible proof of how substances diminish mental activity, emotions, coordination and movement.

The results of the New **D.A.R.E.** 7th grade curriculum released showed improvements in the students' decision making skills, refusal skills, and beliefs that

substance abuse is not the norm for adolescents. Eighth grade results became available in late fall of 2003. "The seventh grade results were encouraging," says Dr. Sloboda. "and the recent data confirms we are on the right path in preparing children for the 'at-risk' years."

The New **D.A.R.E.** elementary school curriculum has been updated with the latest in prevention science and will dovetail with New **D.A.R.E.** middle and high school programming. "The entire **D.A.R.E.** program, top to bottom, is benefiting from researched-based messages to an extent never before possible," says Parsons of **D.A.R.E. America**, "That's just how fast the prevention field is evolving."

