

D.A.R.E. Saratoga:

Culturally Adapted Youth Substance Use Prevention in a Rural Community

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Purpose: The purpose of this intervention is to decrease youth substance use by adapting the existing fifth-grade D.A.R.E. program to the specific experiences, risk factors, and needs of Saratoga youth.

Background:

- Saratoga, WY
 - Located in Carbon County
 - Home to 1,609 residents
- Wyoming ranks 5th in the nation for underage binge drinking and 1st for underage drinking and driving
- Carbon County meets or exceeds these state measures

Methods:

- Demographic analysis highlighted Carbon County's high rates of underage alcohol use
- Conversations with Prevention Management Organization - WY (PMO) representative and school district superintendent confirmed substance abuse as a major community health issue
- Literature review revealed that culturally-adapted youth substance use prevention programs increase youth engagement and improve overall effectiveness in decreasing substance use

Results:

- Community project proposal to culturally-adapt D.A.R.E. to rural Saratoga:
 - Conduct interviews with youth to gather information including: extracurricular settings, risky behaviors, perceived social norms, and attitudes towards substance use
 - Host an event where youth share personal experiences and brainstorm ways to help peers avoid use
 - Directly integrate youth interviews and community-specific information into the activities and vignettes used in the D.A.R.E. program
- Literature review and detailed project proposal was shared with and well-received by PMO, school district superintendent, and local D.A.R.E. officer



Discussion:

- Obstacles include time, funding, and resources in gathering youth-specific information and then implementing changes into the existing D.A.R.E. program.
- Success of culturally-adapting D.A.R.E. to Saratoga is largely influenced by the partnership with PMO due to:
 - Ongoing community knowledge
 - Pre-existing health campaigns and efforts
 - Substantial state funding
- This intervention, targeting youth substance use prevention, is one level in community-wide substance abuse prevention. Further efforts should consider family and community-centered events to decrease substance abuse across all ages.

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