

## Prevention Speaker Guidelines

When administrators or teachers consider a guest speaker for alcohol or other drug prevention programs, they will want to make sure that guests follow all \_\_\_\_\_ (school district name), state, and federal guidelines. Before bringing an outside speaker or consultant into the school to address students, consider the following checklist:

- **Avoid using recovering addicts or alcoholics as speakers or role models for school-age audiences.**  
The power of confession may be useful in intervention programs for adults or recovering students. However, children and adolescents may receive a different message from what was intended. Rather than interpreting the intended “Don’t do as I did” message as a reason to avoid similar mistakes, students may conclude that a speaker who used drugs, survived, and possibly has celebrity status occasionally, is an acceptable role model.
- **Avoid the use of scare tactics or sensationalism.**  
Scare tactics and sensationalism have been known to stimulate mixed reactions. Some students may be attracted to the excitement and danger linked to alcohol and drug use. For these students, the peril is the lure. Scare tactics challenge some defiant students to try to prove the authority figures are wrong. Students who believe a presentation is exaggerated or untrue may ignore the meaning of the message. Respecting the ability of an audience to make a right decision based on accurate information is better than trying to force a group to behave or believe a certain way.
- **Make every effort to show that illegal drugs are harmful to the health of anyone who uses them.**  
Do not imply that there is a “safe” level of illegal drug use. Do not classify a drug such as marijuana as “soft” while calling heroin a “hard” drug. The term drug needs no classification as “hard” or “soft”.
- **Do not include illustrations or dramatizations which may teach people ways to prepare, obtain, or ingest illegal drugs.**  
Prevention presentations should not illustrate drug paraphernalia and methods of illegal drug use in such a way as to instruct an individual in ways to use or obtain illegal drugs. A presentation of this variety may teach students ways of using drugs, which they had never considered. (It is important to preview any videos guests may use as a part of a presentation because many of the videos, which are offered as drug prevention, show ways of preparing/using drugs. The makers of the videos do not seem to be concerned about federal guidelines.)
- **Do not glamorize or glorify the use of alcohol and other drugs.**  
Stress that the use of drugs is not necessary for a person to fit in with a group, to have a good time, or to relax. It is important to stress to athletes that strength can be increased without the use of steroids; the potential for an increase of performance ability is not worth the effects of steroids.
- **Do not “blame the victim.”**  
Speakers will not use insulting terms to refer to those who use alcohol or other drugs. Addiction is classified as an illness. It is not an appropriate topic for humor.
- **Speakers will not attempt to solve problems of a personal or individual nature during a question and answer period.**  
Teachers will be ready to intervene, if necessary, to ensure questions are of general interest. Speakers should be aware that counselors, Community Youth Service Specialists, nurses, and administrators can suggest resources to families and individuals who are seeking assistance in breaking the cycle of addiction and/or coping with the addiction of a family member.

**Note:** Material found in these guidelines has been taken from documents prepared by the Federal Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, the Texas Education Agency, and the United States Department of Education.

These guidelines may also be used with the RED FLAGS that are included in the *Texas Prevention Resource Guide: Drug and Violence Education (DAVE)*. See <http://dave.esc4.net> for additional drug prevention and violence prevention resources.