Addressing Student Substance Abuse:
A national Survey of School Psychologists

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Presentation Objectives

- Seriousness of substance abuse among our nation’s schools
- School psychologists’ roles in addressing substance abuse, intervention, and prevention
- Review of Current Literature
- Goals of Study ”A National Survey of School Psychologists”
- Findings from Study
- Implications for Future School Psychology Preparation Programs
- Questions?
10% of youth (12-17 years) are Illicit Drug Users\(^1\)
8% of these youth meet criteria to be classified as having a diagnosis of:
1. Substance Abuse
2. Dependence Disorder

Schools Psychologists are **VERY** likely to be in contact with students with substance abuse problems.

\(^1\)Newcomb, 1995; Shelder & Bock, 1990; SAMHSA, 2006
DSM-IV-TR Definitions of Substance Abuse and Dependence Disorder

- **Substance Abuse**
  - Failure to fulfill major obligations
  - Use when physically hazardous
  - Recurrent legal problems
  - Recurrent social or interpersonal problems

- **Dependence Disorder**
  - Tolerance
  - Withdrawal
  - Large amounts over a long period
  - Unsuccessful efforts to cut down
  - Time spent in obtaining the substance replaces social, occupational or recreational activities
  - Continued use despite adverse consequences

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2 DSM-IV-TR, 2002
Treatment of Substance Abuse has received little attention in Field of School Psychology

- Students report alarmingly high rates of substance abuse
- Frequency of use and variety of substances increased from middle to high school:

  Use of any illicit drug within past year:
  
  8th Grade: 21%
  10th Grade: 38%
  12th Grade: 50%
Percentage of Students who have used one or more times in 30 days: ³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>8th Grade:</th>
<th>10th Grade:</th>
<th>12th Grade:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>17 %</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>14 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>21 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhalents</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³Johnston, O’Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2006
School Personnel Responsible for Providing Mental Health:

- School Counselors (77%)
- School Nurses (69%)
- School Psychologists (68%)
- Social Workers (44%)

In this study, Mental Health included Substance Abuse

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4 Foster, Rollefson, Doksum, Noonan, Robinson, & Teich, 2005
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) encourages school psychologists to provide mental health services.

Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice: Domain 2.7 Prevention, Crisis Intervention, and Mental Health

- School Psychologists have knowledge of human development and psychopathology and of associated biological, cultural, and social influences on human behavior. School psychologists provide or contribute to prevention and intervention programs that promote the mental health and physical well-being of students.

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5National Association of School Psychologists, 2000
Role of School Psychologists in Addressing Drug Use

School psychologists frequently deliver mental health services (Foster et al, 2005)

- Services include substance abuse prevention and treatment
- No previous research has addressed the level of training of school psychologists in addressing substance abuse issues
- Additional research is needed to understand what type of training school personnel have to address substance abuse
School Psychologists are likely the most highly trained school personnel to provide services for students with substance abuse issues:

- Counseling
- Assessment
- Intervention

Most School Psychologists have very limited to no training regarding substance abuse\(^6\)

\(^6\) Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000
Prior Research:

- **Burrow-Sanchez & Lopez (in press)**
  - A national survey of high school counselors to identify substance abuse issues

- **Burrow-Sanchez, Lopez, & Slagle (in press)**
  - A national survey of middle school counselors’ perceived competence in addressing student substance abuse

- **Goldberg & Governali (1995)**
  - Study assessed the general preparation of school counselors for addressing substance use within central New York state
Purpose of study was to understand how high school counselors perceived their ability to address student substance abuse problems ($n = 289$)

- Current levels of training
- Most important training areas for working with student substance abuse problems
- Most common substances in high schools
Highest levels of training related to consulting with teachers about students with substance abuse issues

Lowest levels of training related to conducting screening and assessment for students with substance abuse problems

38% of high school counselors reported screening and assessment as the most important area for future training

37% of high school counselors reported individual counseling interventions as the most important area for future training

3 most common substances were alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco

3 least common substances were steroids, LSD, and heroin
Purpose of study was to determine how middle school counselors perceive their training related to student substance abuse ($n = 283$)

- School counselors require additional training to effectively address substance abuse issues
- Counselors identified screening and assessment as the most important training area related to substance abuse
- Counselors agreed that they should and would attend substance abuse trainings
Purpose of study was to assess the general professional preparation of school counselors in regards to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs ($n = 54$)

- General background knowledge related to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Comfort in providing counseling for alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use
- Areas in which school counselors would like additional inservice education
Goldberg & Governali (1995)

How adequately prepared and comfortable were school counselors in identifying students with drug problems, making referrals, and providing interventions?

- Almost two thirds of counselors reported feeling comfortable with their referral skills, but less than half felt prepared to conduct interventions for students with substance abuse problems.

- 70% or more school counselors reported that they would like additional information about steroids, inhalents, stimulants, hallucinogens, depressants, narcotics, and over-the-counter drugs.

- There is a need for inservice programs to help high school counselors develop and improve counseling skills for students with substance abuse problems.
School Counselors feel that Substance Abuse Services should be provided in schools.

School Counselors do not feel competent in addressing substance abuse concerns.

School counselors would like more training in:
- Substance Abuse Screening
- Individual Interventions
Prior studies have included samples of school counselors rather than school psychologists.

- What **Level** of training do School Psychologists and to address substance abuse?
- What **Type** of training have school psychologists received?
- How do school psychologists **perceive** their **competency** in responding to substance abuse issues?
- What are the **most needed areas of training** in order for school psychologists to effectively respond to substance abuse issues?
- To date, no studies have assessed the level of competence of school psychologists in responding to substance abuse issues.
- Substance use and abuses affects all of our nation’s schools.
- What’s being done?
Purpose of Study

1. Determine how school psychologists perceived their training in the areas related to substance abuse
2. Identify most needed training areas
3. Identify most common substances used by students in secondary schools
School Psychologists Perceptions Regarding Competence in Responding to Student Substance Abuse

Survey of 500 school psychologists throughout the Nation

- Participants sent survey materials during the winter of 2007
- From a national list of 800 school psychologists, 500 were randomly sampled
- Used a proportional, straified random sample procedure produced a geographically representative sample of high school psychologists
  - Sample was based on the percentage of high school-aged children living in each of the nine geographic regions identified by the 2000 U. S. Census Report
- 212 Surveys were returned (42.4%) 210 used for analysis in study
Instrumentation

- 38 Item Survey
- Estimated Time for Completion: 10-15 Minutes
- Items Categorized into 4 Sections:
  - Background Information
  - Assessment & Referral
  - Types of Substance Abuse
  - Substance Abuse Training Areas
- Question Formats included:
  - Forced Choice
  - Rank Order
  - Checklist
Pilot Study

- Survey was originally used with School Counselors
- Modified the survey for use with School Psychologists
- Survey was reviewed by two School Psychology faculty members
- Piloted with a group of School Psychologists \((n = 11)\)
Pilot Study

Questionaire Feedback Form

1. If you received the questionaire in the mail would you comlete and return it?

   YES or NO (Please circle one)

   Please explain: Why or why not?

2. Three things I would recommend changing about the questionaire are:

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   Addressing Student Substance Abuse
Pilot Study

Questionnaire Feedback Form used a 5 point likert scale (1=Low, =High)

1. Interest level in the content
2. Readability and visual interest
3. Length
4. Usefulness of content to a high school psychologist
Procedure

- Survey Study
  - Tailored Design Method\textsuperscript{7}

- Initial Mailing Packet
  - Introductory Letter and Consent Form
  - Survey and self-addressed, stamped envelope
  - Bag of Tea

- Post Card: Reminder to complete survey sent 1 week after initial mailing

- Final Mailing: Sent 2 weeks after initial mailing
  - Original Consent Form
  - Letter encouraging participation
  - Another copy of the Survey along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope
  - Bag of tea

\textsuperscript{7}Dilman, 2000
Data Analysis

- All data entered into SPSS 15.0
- Reliability verified on 100% of returned surveys
  - 2 researchers did data input for 100% of returned surveys
  - Reliability = 98%
- Errors corrected prior to analysis
- 3 surveys eliminated due to significant proportions of missing information
- 210 surveys analyzed
How do school psychologists perceive their training in areas related to substance abuse?

Within subjects ANOVA with Bonferroni correction was conducted to compare mean scores for nine competency items.
9 Competency Areas

I feel that I have the training necessary to:

1. Identify students with substance abuse problems
2. Consult with teachers about a student with substance abuse problems
3. Consult with parents about a student with substance abuse problems
4. Provide screening or assessment to students with substance abuse problems
5. Work with students who have a parent who abuses substances
6. Provide individual interventions to students with substance abuse problems
7. Provide group interventions to students with substance abuse problems
8. Teach curriculum units on substance abuse prevention to students in the classroom
9. Effectively work with students with substance abuse problems
I feel that I have the training necessary to provide individual interventions to students with substance abuse problems:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree
Comparison of Mean Differences among Competency Items ($n = 208$)

$p$ Values: $\alpha = 0.05$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>$M^\alpha$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>&lt;.01</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.25</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>&lt;.05</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>NS</td>
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<td>NS</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sarah Lillian Adolphson, M.Ed.  lillian.adolphson@utah.edu  Addressing Student Substance Abuse  30/56
The initial and final geographical distributions were NOT significantly different.
Participant’s Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 79.8% of participants who have a master’s degree, 23.3% reported to have an Education Specialist certification.
## Racial/Ethnic Background of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>91.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-racial</td>
<td>2.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Descriptive Findings

- 66.7% of respondents were female, 33.3% male
- Average Length of Employment: 14.85 years (SD = 8.97)
- Median Student Caseload = 125 students
- An average 18 students per year were seen for substance abuse issues
- 56.2% of respondents worked in suburban settings, 22.8% in rural, and 21.0 in urban settings
### Type of Substances Used by Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Methamphetamines</td>
<td>64.29</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>99.49</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>Inhalents</td>
<td>60.29</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>98.38</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>OTC Meds</td>
<td>57.36</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription Meds</td>
<td>80.77</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>Crack Cocaine</td>
<td>50.85</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>69.85</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>Sedatives</td>
<td>43.09</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>67.88</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>30.09</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokeless Tobacco</td>
<td>67.19</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>LSD</td>
<td>27.93</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club Drugs</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>Steroids</td>
<td>22.64</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What substances ARE school psychologists encountering in high schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Commonly Seen Substances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Commonly Seen Substances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steroids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Areas of Greatest Perceived Competence

1. Consultation
   - With teachers
   - With parents

2. Identification of students with substance abuse problems

3. Working with students whose families have issues with substance abuse
Areas of Least Perceived Competence

1. Providing direct intervention
   - Individual interventions
   - Group interventions

2. Developing and teaching curriculum units on substance abuse and prevention
Substance Abuse Trainings Provided by Districts

Number of trainings regarding substance abuse provided by the district in the previous three years:

- No Trainings: 53.1%
- One Training: 22.7%
- Two Trainings: 11.1%
- Three or More Trainings: 13.0%
Attitudes regarding preparation of graduate programs to prepare school psychologists to respond to substance abuse issues

I feel I received adequate training during my graduate degree program to work with students with substance abuse problems in school settings:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

On average, responses were closest to “disagree” (M=2.01, SD=0.849)
What services ARE schools providing?

- Individual counseling/intervention (66.3 %)
- Prevention Services (51.9 %)
  - D.A.R.E.
  - Life Skills
  - Red Ribbon Week
    - Schools averaged between 8 and 9 years of implementation (SD=5.91)
- Group counseling/intervention (38 %)
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)

- D.A.R.E. is the most popular school-based drug-abuse prevention program in the U.S.
  - Positive effects on students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior fade over time
  - By late adolescence students exposed and not exposed to D.A.R.E. are indistinguishable
  - Multiple studies support that D.A.R.E. may produce limited short-term effects, but these effects decay over time

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Birkeland, Murphey-Graham, & Weiss, 2005; Clayton, 1996
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)\(^9\) Limited effectiveness of our Nation’s most widely used Drug Prevention Program underscore the need for robust prevention programs

- Prevention programs should target the specific risk factors of students
- Prevention efforts should incorporate ”booster” sessions to sustain positive effects

\(^9\)Birkeland, Murphey-Graham, & Weiss, 2005; Clayton, 1996
Most Important Future Training Areas for School Psychologists

![Bar chart showing the most important future training areas for school psychologists. The chart indicates that screening or assessment has the highest priority, followed by consultation, individual intervention, and other areas such as curriculum development, family interventions, and group interventions.]
Most school psychologists agreed that they SHOULD and WOULD attend substance abuse training.

No correlation between caseload and willingness to attend future substance abuse trainings.

School Psychologists were in agreement that Substance Abuse screening and assessment should be the focus of future trainings.

Graduate programs in school psychology should incorporate substance abuse training into existing courses.
”This is an increasing area of concern in my district. There are far more drug related suspensions and expulsions than 5 years ago. I think this is a worthwhile study as many psychologists are broadening their role in relation to drug and alcohol interventions and consultations.”

”This is a topic about which I know very little. I have suspected substance abuse in a handful of students but I suspect it is a much bigger problem...but I don’t have the training to better detect it!”
How ARE school psychologists responding to students with substance abuse issues?

When necessary, school psychologists refer students to:

- Community Counseling Centers (67.0 %)
- Individual Practitioners (63.1 %)
- Medical Centers (45.6 %)
Implications for school psychology preparation programs

Findings from study indicate school psychologists generally perceive themselves as lacking competence in areas related to substance abuse treatment.
What implications do findings have on pre-service and in-service training of school psychologists?

While school psychologists feel more competent providing consultation (with teachers, parents, etc.) there is less perceived competency in providing direct services.

- Three quarters of the participants reported NOT HAVING HAD pre-service training in the area of student substance abuse.
- More than half of the participants reported NOT HAVING HAD in-service training related to student substance abuse in the past three years.
NASP accredited programs typically include entire courses to fulfill domain requirements outlined in the *Standards of Training*.

Domain 2.7 - Prevention, Crisis Intervention and Mental Health:

- School psychologists should be able to identify “... precursors to academic, behaviour, and serious personal difficulties”
- Integrating substance abuse into current courses would more fully prepare students to address substance abuse issues.
Traditionally, school psychologists have served as crisis managers rather than prevention specialists.

Assessment has been a primary role of school psychologists.

School Psychologists have been called upon primarily for eligibility and placement issues.

\[^{10}\text{Bramlett et al., 2002; Ross et al., 2002}\]
The field of school psychology is restructuring the roles of school psychologists.\footnote{11}\footnote{Bradley-Johnson & Dean, 2000; Fagan, 2000; Reschley, 1988}

- Eligibility assessment no longer primary role of school psychologists
- More time allotted for consultation and prevention oriented services
Limitations of Study

- Sample may not generalize to school psychologists from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds
- Students with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds may have differing treatment needs
- No information was obtained regarding non-respondents, who may have different perspectives
Conclusions

- Substance abuse issues must be addressed in our nation’s schools
- Integrating substance abuse trainings and courses into graduate programs will better prepare students as future school psychologists
- School administrators should make student substance abuse a training priority for practicing school psychologists
  - Screening and assessment
  - Consultation
  - Direct intervention
Questions?

Thank you for your time!