

WHAT DO YOU TELL THE PARENTS

ABOUT RANDOM DRUG TESTING FOR STUDENTS

By Roger Morgan

Don't Gamble! Your child only has one shot at life. Make it a good one.

In spite of your parenting skills and good relationship with your child, there is a very active, evil and incredibly well financed illicit drug trade focused on destroying your child. The alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug trades know that if a child reaches adulthood prior to first significant use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, they should virtually never have a problem. So they do everything possible to hook them early. Almost all of the estimated 700,000 who die annually due to ATOD and the 22 million Americans who are dependent on drugs and alcohol, have something in common. ***They incurred the disease of addiction between 11 and 17 years old.***

What many adults and young people fail to understand is that ***physiologically, children are much more susceptible to harm and addiction than adults***, since the brain and vital organs are not fully developed until the mid twenties, or later. For that reason, it is incumbent on all adults to do whatever it takes to safeguard their health and safety, and to educate young people on the harm that they can inflict on themselves by using drugs.

Schools and parents are fortunate today to have a prevention tool that was not available until relatively recently, hair tests, combined with urine and saliva testing. Random drug testing has been used very effectively in the work place, military and schools. Concurrently, many parents just keep a test kit on top of the refrigerator, as a constant reminder that if for any reason a child gives cause for suspicion, the child will give a sample to allay their parents' fears. That, combined with suspicion based testing at school, is the best protection a child can get.

Random drug testing reduced drug use in the work place, transportation industry, private schools, public schools and military from 67% to 90%. In 2002 the US Supreme Court allowed its use for all athletes and those engaged in extra curricular activities. Private schools can make it a criteria for admission.

The results of the drug tests are confidential, shared only with parents and those who in the school system who need to know. Law enforcement is kept out of the process, and the records are sealed on graduation so they have no impact on a child's future. Unlike zero tolerance policies where a kid is expelled and taken out of the system, the endeavor here is to keep them in the system until they arrive at adulthood intact, well educated and prepared for a productive, wholesome adulthood.

The specific intent of non-punitive random student drug testing is: 1) *To prevent drug use;* and 2) *To identify problems early, so a child can get help.* The single biggest reason kids don't use drugs is fear their parents will find out. Random drug testing implants enough fear that most kids don't use. If they know they are going to be tested and they use anyway, then chances are they have a problem and need help. Some drugs are so strong, like crystal meth, crack cocaine and heroin, that a kid can become addicted in a matter of days. So the window of opportunity to get help is very short; often too short.

Other advantages of non-punitive random drug testing by schools is that it takes the onus off teachers and parent to play drug cop, and teaches children to be responsible for their own actions. It gives kids a reason to just say no to peer pressure. 54% of kids and 70% of parents surveyed like the idea of random drug testing.