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PRELIMINARY STAFF STUDY—DRUG ABUSE
IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS —

FOR THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS
ABUSE AND CONTROL

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DRUG ABUSE IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS

Due to increased concern over the problem of drug abuse in our Nation's schools, the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, chaired by Congressman Lester Wolff (D., N.Y.), has undertaken a preliminary study of the extent of substance abuse within New York City's school system.

During the course of this study reports received from the New York State Office of Drug Abuse Services have indicated that 77.5 percent, or more than three out of every four New York City public secondary school students have used alcohol or drugs. Over one third of the student population have at least experimented with marijuana or other drugs. In addition to this, approximately 1 out of every 8 students in grades 7 through 12 become involved with substances more serious than marijuana or alcohol. Of this figure, reports indicate that about one-fourth of the youngsters involved with these more serious substances have used heroin.

This problem is not restricted to the senior high school students but rather has extended down to the junior high school level and below. Over 69 percent of the junior high school students attending public schools in New York City have participated in some type of substance abuse. During the school year 1974-75, survey evidence indicates that 84,582 junior high students, or 43.7 percent of the student population, use alcohol exclusively. 32,711 or 16.9 percent have at least tried marijuana or hashish; 6,387 or 3.3 percent have experimented with inhalants, solvents or LSD; and at least 5,226 or 2.7 percent of the city's junior high school students have used narcotics such as heroin.

By the time a student reaches high school, each of these categories increases with the exception of the number of students who use alcohol exclusively. During the same 1974-75 school year, the number of students using alcohol actually declined to 40.9 percent, indicating an increased poly-substance abuse pattern. The percent of the high school population using marijuana or hashish, however, increased to 29.5 percent, with the use of pills increasing to 6.3 percent, the use of inhalants, solvents and LSD rising to 4.6 percent, and the number of high school students attending New York City's public schools who use heroin has jumped to 3.5 percent of the student population, or 10,696 students. Only 15.2 percent of the high school students are considered to be nonusers.

Volume 13, section 804-a of the Consolidated New York State Law (McKinney 1971): Instruction regarding the nature and effects of narcotics and habit-forming drugs, states that:

"(1) The course of study beyond the first 8 years of full-time public day schools shall provide for instruction in the nature and effects of narcotics and habit-forming drugs on the human system, in accordance with the provisions of this section.

"(2) It shall be the duty of the commissioner to prescribe such courses of instruction as he may deem necessary and desirable for the welfare of the student and the community. The contents of such courses may be varied to meet the needs of particular school districts, or the state. The courses shall emphasize desirable health habits, attitudes and knowledge of the effects of narcotics and habit-forming drugs upon the physical, mental and emotional development of children and youth."

In practice however, less than 50 percent of all students in grades 7-12 have been exposed to either prevention or intervention programs.

Prevention programs are designed to alert students to the dangers of using drugs through such means as films, lectures, assembly presentations and classroom discussions. Such prevention programs are geared for the general school population, rather than for specifically targeted groups of drug abusers.

Intervention programs on the other hand include a broad array of counseling services provided for students who are either using drugs or who are considered by school and drug personnel to be "drug prone" on the basis of behavioral indicators, such as truancy, excessive absenteeism, acting-out, and academic failure.

Nonusers as a group receive the least amount of exposure to either prevention or intervention programs. More than 55 percent of the students who have not used drugs received no exposure to either prevention or intervention programs. New York City public schools appear to be concentrating their efforts on providing services to the target populations since the substance users show a higher percentage of exposure to the school-based drug programs than the nonusers.

The State of New York's Office of Drug Abuse Services indicates that while the New York City public schools have succeeded in concentrating their intervention efforts upon students who have used drugs, there is a clear need to extend intervention services to a greater percentage of the substance using population. At the same time, they state, that the New York City public schools must increase the exposure of nonusers to prevention programs in order to prevent this group from becoming involved with drugs. In addition, those nonusers whose behavioral characteristics make them especially "drug-prone" must be identified early and provided with intervention services. Of the number of nonusers who were exposed to school-based drug programs, more than two-thirds were exposed to prevention only, while less than one-third were exposed to intervention.

More than 41.1 percent of the students in grades 7-12 who were users of drugs more serious than marijuana during the 1974-75 school year received no exposure to either prevention or intervention services indicating a serious unmet need for such programs. Although the users of such substances did receive the highest percentage of exposure to both prevention and intervention, it is this population that is most seriously in need of some type of service. The fact that only 58.9 percent of these students who were users of drugs more serious than marijuana have been exposed to school-based drug programs underscores the critical need for increasing prevention and intervention services to these students.

One of the major reasons given for a reduction in such services has been major funding cuts in the area of drug-related programs. The

Office of Drug Abuse Services has reported that its funding for all school-based prevention programs in New York City has declined by 33 percent since 1974-75. ODAS further states that although it may be argued that drug prevention programs must be introduced in the elementary grades if their effectiveness is to be maximized, the increase in incidence of substance use as students advance from junior high to high school presents a strong case for increasing allocations to the high schools for the expansion of the intervention services.

The New York City Board of Education has been required by law since 1963 to report the names of students suspected or known to be addicts to the City's Health Department. Much controversy has arisen over the fact that the Board has apparently failed to comply with this law. Mr. Arthur Jaffe, who is the director of the SPARK program, one of the drug programs in the high schools under the Board of Education, has stated that one of the main reasons the Board has not complied with the law is the concern over the effect this stigma could have on a student who is reported to the Department of Health by the school as suspected of being addicted to heroin. According to Mr. Jaffe, this would act as a deterrent to a student who would normally seek out help through the school's counseling program if that student felt that he would then be reported and his name placed on a narcotics register.

The SPARK program (School Prevention of Addiction Through Rehabilitation and Knowledge) which was created in February of 1971, provides counseling services within the city's public high school system. Drug-prone students are provided a forum to discuss with a counselor and other students the problems which they face. Prior to the start of the SPARK program, most drug education and prevention programs were run on an independent basis by the individual school's Health and Physical Education Departments.

Students enter into the SPARK program from various sources. Often, problem students are referred to the program counselor from the deans, counselors, teachers, peers or even by self-referral. Once in the program, attempts are made to meet the specific needs of the individual student; however, if the student is in fact already addicted, he is then referred by the program counselor to one of the city's addiction treatment facilities.

In an effort to be most effective in dealing with the problem of substance abuse, the SPARK program has attempted to reach a target population of three major groups which include: those students who are already heavily abusing drugs (in which case the major focus is to effectuate a referral); students who are experimenting with drugs or who are considered to be drug-prone; and the student peer leaders.

The major problem which the SPARK program now faces has resulted from drastic reductions in funding. Where the program was in the past able to place teams of counselors in the school, there is now only 1 program counselor in a school population of 3,000 to 5,000 students. These funding cuts have resulted in cuts from the City's Addiction Services Agency, which in turn has also received massive budget cuts. Because of the city's financial difficulties and reduced Federal grants, public funds for drug treatment in New York City

have been reduced to \$35 million last year compared with \$62 million in 1974.

It is somewhat encouraging to note, however, that on December 21, 1976, Gov. Hugh L. Carey announced a \$1 million grant to help young people in drug treatment programs with their education. These funds will enable the State Office of Drug Abuse Services to provide supplementary educational services to persons under 21 years of age who are participating in elementary or secondary school programs and enables residential drug agencies to hire special teachers. Initial arrangements have been completed for 224 students in six local programs to benefit from the grant. Four of these agencies are in New York City: Daytop Village, Phoenix House, Project RETURN, and Veritas, Inc.

Other cuts which have taken place in the city's education budget and which have affected the school system's ability to function properly have taken place within the City's Bureau of Attendance. During the 1975-76 school year the high school population of 315,308 had an attendance rate of only 73.43 percent, and the junior high school population of 228,910 had an attendance rate of 83.76 percent. These cuts, which have occurred over the past 2 years, have reduced the Bureau's staff by nearly one-half, leaving some local school districts with no attendance teachers to even attempt to locate the truant student.

The fact that 80,000 to 90,000 children, reported by the New York City Board of Education, as having been lost to the city's school system is of major concern. For once the student is lost to the system little can be done to effectuate his return. These children are now roaming the streets of New York without any knowledge on the part of the city officials, the Truancy Board, or anybody else, as to where they are and what they are doing. On a recent trip by Members of the Select Committee through Harlem, countless numbers of small children were observed roaming the streets, right between the pushers and the addicts, learning how easy it is to make a buck and not go to school.

These conditions have resulted in increased crime committed in the streets by children who should be in the schools. Yet even more disheartening are the numbers of drug overdose deaths which continue to increase among the city's youth. During the first 6 months of 1975 there were 47 deaths attributed to drug overdoses alone among the city's teenage population, and this figure does not take into account the numerous drug-related deaths which result from violent crime.

The cost of narcotic addiction to the State of New York was conservatively estimated to be \$3.6 billion in 1976 alone. The main cost of about \$3.3 billion, was due to property crimes committed by addicts not in treatment, the criminal justice expenses generated as a result, along with welfare and health-related costs. The total cost of drug treatment programs was \$55 million less than the total cost of holding addicts in correctional institutions. Such programs, however, provide rehabilitative services for almost four times as many addicts as languish in correctional institutions. When figured on a per person basis, keeping addicts in a correctional institution is over five times more expensive than rehabilitating addicts in drug treatment programs, and the annual cost incurred by society while an addict is untreated and on the street is estimated to be nine times the cost of treating the addict in a drug treatment program.

In a hearing held November 19, 1976, in New York City by the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, borough president Percy Sutton testified to the presence of a young dealer in a \$14,000 Cadillac parked at 117th Street, said to be only 17 years of age, with a 26-year-old chauffeur driving his car.

During the same hearing, special narcotics prosecutor Sterling Johnson described a "Mr. Big" as a person who deals in amounts of a kilo or more. He then told of a 16-year-old youth who had delivered something like six kilos of heroin, who would not be considered as a "Mr. Big." Each kilo, after being "whacked up," is worth \$300,000 to \$400,000.

Mr. Johnson also testified to not infrequent cases of students who are in the drug business, who will bet \$5,000 on a school-yard basketball game, and who are riding around in Mercedes Benzes and Rolls Royces.

A plainclothes officer of the New York City Narcotics Division later testified at these hearings that he had arrested 13- and 14-year-old youths with 15 to 20 bags of heroin who would already have \$2,000 to \$3,000 in their pockets.

While these are accounts of what young people do with the fruits of their activities in drug trafficking, it is clear that many of their sales are to other youths. For some of these youthful pushers, the schools are a haven and a target because they are the easiest and most expedient places to sell. The hard-core addict is always seeking to introduce someone else to drugs for his or her own benefit. The schools provide a substantial sales resource.

It has been reported that sales and injections have been observed in hallways, cafeterias and lavatories. One undercover agent testifying before a Congressional Committee reported seeing various quantities of glassine envelopes that were disposed of inside the lavatories and the locker rooms. Students were seen nodding out in cafeterias and in classrooms, and they have overdosed outside the school premises, where sales have also been observed.

There is not only a lack of cooperation between the teachers and the police department, but there is also a great deal of hostility toward law enforcement. Some administrators will deny that a problem exists and refuse to have undercover officers in their schools, even when there are documented sales by students in the immediate area of the premises of the school. Some faculty resistance is based on the attitude that its job is education and not enforcement. Also many do not believe that a child should be stigmatized with that kind of reputation, if police action is taken and he is arrested for dealing in drugs. For these reasons, police are usually requested to make arrests at the homes of the students.

The committee is aware that an epidemic exists within the schools of New York City. This drug epidemic however, is not limited to the city of New York alone but has spread throughout the Nation. If left unchecked, this disease will continue to spread further, infecting even the smallest township of the country.

During the course of the 95th Congress, the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control will take a much closer look at the

problem of drug abuse within our Nation's schools. Because of the extent of the problem which exists in New York City, it is likely that an indepth investigation will be conducted within the city's school system in an effort to provide effective recommendations which will help to curb this growing epidemic.

Our Nation's future strength lies in our youth. We must not forsake them—for to do so would be a regrettable failure on the part of our Nation's leaders, our communities and ourselves.



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