



The Social Development Research Group is an interdisciplinary team of researchers that investigates and promotes healthy behaviors and positive social development among youth and adults. Our evidence-based interventions focus on preventive strategies to avoid problem behaviors and strengthen healthy bonds at the family, school, and community levels.

Social Development Research Group

Just as public health researchers have identified behavioral and environmental risk factors for conditions such as heart disease and cancer, the Social Development Research Group (SDRG) at the UW School of Social Work has identified risk factors for many adolescent health and behavioral problems, from drug abuse, violence, and delinquency to teen pregnancy and failure in school.

Since our founding in 1979, we have applied our seminal research in this area with a mission to strengthen individuals, families, schools, and communities to prevent behavioral and health problems before they start and reduce their debilitating social and economic costs. We are involved in every step of the prevention process, from basic research that identifies risk and protective factors to developing and evaluating interventions that are now in use in communities nationwide and around the world.

SDRG's science-based programs have proven effective with children of every age, families of all races and ethnicities, and schools and communities at every socioeconomic level.

Our work includes:

- Conducting research on factors that influence child and youth development
- Developing and testing the effectiveness of interventions
- Studying service systems and working to improve them
- Advocating for science-based solutions to health and behavioral problems
- Disseminating knowledge, tools, and expertise produced by our research



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OUR SCIENCE-BASED SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Enhancing key protective factors:

- Bonding to family, school, and prosocial peers
- Clear behavioral standards and norms

Processes that promote these protective factors:

- Providing opportunities for involvement in productive, prosocial roles
- Building skills for successful involvement in these roles
- Providing consistent recognition and reinforcement

850

Journal articles, manuscripts, and book chapters produced by SDRG researchers over the past 40 years

60

Graduate students mentored in prevention science

150

Communities in the U.S. that implement our Communities That Care prevention program

\$8.22

Return on investment for each \$1 invested in implementing Communities That Care

KEY INITIATIVES

Communities That Care

Communities That Care is a breakthrough system that guides communities in interpreting data about their youth or adults, setting prevention priorities, and choosing tested, evidence-based programs that match those priorities and are a good fit for their needs. Through this process, communities can adopt or modify local policies, enhance oversight, and direct resources to support effective solutions. Clear, measurable outcomes are tracked over time to show progress and ensure accountability.

Studies show that, compared with youth in control communities, youth in Communities That Care programs are:

- 25% less likely to initiate delinquent behavior
- 32% less likely to initiate alcohol use
- 33% less likely to initiate cigarette use

To understand changes over the life course, ongoing SDRG research on Communities That Care outcomes includes a groundbreaking study that is following more than 800 individuals—now in their 30s—whose communities implemented the program when they were in the fifth grade.

Guiding Good Choices

We developed the five-session Guiding Good Choices program for parents of children in fourth to sixth grades, a critical period for preventing adolescent problem behaviors such as substance use, delinquency, and violence. Research has shown significantly reduced substance use rates among the children of these parents six years after the intervention. The program is being used in hundreds of communities in North and South America.

Building on this success, we recently developed and are testing Guiding Good Choices for Health in primary care settings within three health care systems: Kaiser Permanente Northern California, Kaiser Colorado, and the Henry Ford Healthcare System in Detroit. Consistent with our mission to apply science to improving lives, we will closely follow this program to understand its effects on preventing drug use, delinquency, and depression among youth.

JOIN US

We seek your support to build on our successes, sustain our focus on innovation, and make effective programs available to more families, schools, and communities.

To learn more about how you can help, please contact School of Social Work Advancement at sswadvan@uw.edu. Thank you.