
CounterAct



Schools, Families and Police Working Together

For Grades 4–6

From
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What Is the *CounterAct* Program?

CounterAct is a six-session curriculum designed to involve police officers, schools, and families in preventing children from using alcohol and other drugs and helping children avoid using violence as a means of solving problems. *CounterAct* teaches students in grades 4, 5, and 6 specific skills they can use to resist alcohol, other drugs, and violence, and offers young people a supportive community that strengthens the protective factors in their lives.

CounterAct is an interactive, skill-based curriculum. Students learn specific skills that they can apply in real-life situations, and they will demonstrate these skills before graduating from the *CounterAct* program. The curriculum uses a variety of activities designed to encourage a high level of interaction among police officers, students, and parents. These include: 1) student activities, including homework assignments to be done with parents or other adults, 2) poster activities to be used in the classroom and the parent/guardian session (Session 6), and 3) a set of slides or a PowerPoint presentation that provides structure and organization to the program.

What Are the Goals and Objectives for *CounterAct*?

Goals:

To help students in grades 4, 5 and 6 learn skills to make positive choices and resist pressures to engage in risky behaviors such as drinking, smoking, using other drugs, or becoming violent. *CounterAct* joins local police departments, elementary schools, and parents in a cooperative effort to help young people live healthy lives.

Objectives:

As a result of participating in this program, **students** will...

- Give examples of the negative consequences of violent behavior and drug use
- List forces that influence people's behavior
- Demonstrate *CounterAct* skills students can use to resist negative influences
- View police officers as approachable and helpful
- Be motivated to choose healthy and safe activities

As a result of participating in this program, **families** will...

- Describe problems with violence, drinking, smoking, and other drug use in their community
- Identify the importance of family influence in preventing children from engaging in risky behaviors
- Reinforce the belief that police are a source of help
- Talk with their children about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Describe the *CounterAct* skills

As a result of participating in this program, **police officers** will...

- Forge new partnerships in the community
- Meet and interact with young people and their families to foster prevention
- Demonstrate that police can be a source of help in the community

Why Is It Important To Talk About Tobacco, Alcohol, Other Drugs and Violence with Young People?

Drug use among youth—including tobacco and alcohol use—is a concern both for students' immediate and long-term health and well-being (Grant & Dawson, 1997; Greenblatt, 2000; Gruber, DiClemente, Anderson & Lodico, 1996; USDHHS, 1994).

Tobacco Use

The majority of adult smokers begin smoking before the age of 18 (USDHHS, 1994). It is well established that smoking cigarettes is related to serious health consequences, such as increased risk of stroke, coronary heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema, and bronchitis (USDHHS, 1994). In the United States, one of the most preventable causes of premature death is cigarette smoking, and one in five deaths is attributable to smoking (USDHHS, 1994). The younger a child is when he or she starts smoking, the more likely he or she will become strongly addicted to nicotine (USDHHS, 1994). Tobacco is also a gateway drug, often leading to alcohol and other drug use.

Alcohol Use

Early use of alcohol is also a concern. A report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Greenblatt, 2000) concludes that there is a strong relationship between alcohol use among youth and many social, emotional, and behavioral problems, including use of illegal drugs, fighting, stealing, driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, skipping school, feeling depressed, and deliberately trying to hurt or kill themselves.

In addition to the problems that occur during adolescence, early initiation of consuming alcohol is related to alcohol-related problems later in life, including alcohol abuse and violence, injuries, drinking and driving, and absenteeism from school or work, as well as increased risk for using other drugs (Grant & Dawson, 1997; Gruber, DiClemente, Anderson & Lodico, 1996). In fact, the earlier a child begins drinking, the greater the risk for problems later on in life.

Other Drug Use

Students who use marijuana are more likely to get lower grades and are less likely to graduate from high school than those students who do not use marijuana (NIDA, 2002). Marijuana use is also related to many serious health consequences such as increased risk of heart attack and lung cancer and impaired short-term memory, attention and learning capabilities (NIDA, 2002).

So we know that tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use among young people pose serious consequences for young people. However, rates of drug use remain at unacceptably high levels. Despite recent improvements in tobacco use among youth, 11% of eighth graders, 18% of tenth graders, and 27% of twelfth graders reported smoking currently (use in the past 30 days) (Johnston, O'Malley & Bachman, 2003).

Rates of alcohol use have been fairly stable and remain at unacceptably high levels of use. In 2002, the prevalence of past 30-day alcohol use was 20%, 35%, and 49% for eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students, respectively (Johnston et al., 2003). Rates of illicit drug use were down some in 2002 from the recent peak levels reached in 1996 and 1997 (Johnston et al., 2003).

Youth Violence

In addition to drug use, violence is a threat to adolescents' health and well-being. Nationally, homicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24 (MacKay, Fingerhut & Duran, 2000). Violent behaviors assessed nationally by the Youth Risk Behavior Survey for ninth through twelfth grade students indicate that violence is still a concern, despite recent reductions in violent behaviors. In the 2001 survey, 6% of students reported having carried a weapon on school property in the past 30 days, 6% reported having carried a gun in the past 30 days, and 33% had been in a physical fight in the past year (Grunbaum et al., 2002).

As these facts illustrate, careful attention to the prevention of substance use and violent behaviors among youth is warranted and critical. The goal of *CounterAct* is to reach students with a prevention message before they experience the pressure to use or begin experimenting with use.

References

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Curriculum Scope and Sequence

Session	Learner Outcomes
	By the end of this session, students will be able to:
Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe their thoughts and feelings about police officers • define <i>influences</i> • recognize factors that influence their decisions and describe how advertisers try to influence their choices • tell a parent or another adult about the goals of the program
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the factors that influence students and adults • define <i>consequences</i> • give realistic examples of consequences that result when people make poor decisions
Session 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe activities that are safe, legal and fun • identify activities they personally enjoy • list the four <i>CounterAct</i> skills • Practice influencing their classmates to participate in a positive activity
Session 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • define <i>violence</i> • describe the feelings brought about by violence • understand factors that influence violence and the consequences of violence • practice using the <i>CounterAct</i> skills to resist violence
Session 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate the four <i>CounterAct</i> skills in a role-play • invite their parents or another significant adult to attend Session 6
Session 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk to each other about alcohol or other drug use and violence in the community • describe the <i>CounterAct</i> program • use the <i>CounterAct</i> skills to forecast and practice potential situations and to learn from situations that occur

Meeting National Academic Standards** With the *CounterAct* Program

Using the *CounterAct* program, you will meet the following standards:

Health Education (Grade 4-5):

- Knows characteristics needed to be a responsible friend and family member.
- Knows how health-related problems impact the whole family.
- Knows strategies for resisting negative peer pressure.
- Knows some non-violent strategies to resolve conflicts.
- Knows behaviors that are safe, risky, or harmful to self and others.
- Knows influences that promote alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.
- Knows ways to avoid, recognize, and respond to negative social influences and pressure to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Health Education (Grades 6):

- Understands how various messages from the media, technology, and other sources impact health practices.
- Understands how peer relationships affect health.
- Knows strategies that improve or maintain family health (e.g., how one's personal behaviors can affect the behavior and feelings of other family members).
- Knows how communication techniques can improve family life (e.g., talking openly and honestly with parents when problems arise).
- Knows appropriate ways to build and maintain positive relationships with peers, parents, and other adults (e.g., interpersonal communication).

**Standards are taken from Kendall, John S. and Robert J. Marzano, *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education (3rd Edition)*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL), 2000.



Health Education (Grades 6) (continued):

- Understands the difference between safe and risky or harmful behaviors in relationships.
- Knows techniques for seeking help and support through appropriate resources.
- Knows the various possible causes of conflict among youth in schools and communities, and strategies to manage conflict.
- Knows how refusal and negotiation skills can be used to enhance health.
- Knows the short- and long-term consequences of the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

English/Language Arts Standards (Grade 4-5):

Listening and Speaking

- Contributes to group discussions.
- Asks questions in class.
- Listens to classmates and adults.

Viewing Media (Advertising)

- Understands basic elements of advertising in visual media.

English/Language Arts Standards (Grades 6):

Listening and Speaking

- Plays a variety of roles in group discussion
- Asks questions to seek elaboration and clarification of ideas

Viewing Media (Advertising)

- Knows that people with special interests and expectations are the target audience for particular messages or products in visual media
- Understands techniques used in visual media to influence or appeal to a particular audience

Life Skills (Grade 4-5):

Thinking and Reasoning

- Identifies issues and problems in the school or community that one might help solve.

Life Skills (Grades 6):

Thinking and Reasoning

- Identifies alternative courses of action and predicts likely consequences of each.
- Selects the most appropriate strategy or alternative for solving a problem.
- Analyzes personal decisions in terms of the options that were considered.

Working with Others

- Demonstrates respect for others in the group.
- Occasionally serves as a leader in groups.
- Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

Self-Regulation

- Sets explicit long-term goals.
- Weighs risks in making decisions and solving problems.