

Prevention programs that have proven to work help youth build confidence, improve social skills, resist peer pressure, and make better choices about alcohol and drug use.

Healthy Schools, Deschutes County

Healthy Schools is a cooperative venture between Deschutes County Public Health and Bend-La Pine Schools that embeds public health specialists in the district's 14 middle and high schools.

Since 2021, the CDC-recommended program has shown positive results:

- All schools have a 2-year action plan to reduce substance use, improve family engagement and increase student engagement and belonging.
- All health teachers are using effective prevention education programs.
- Twelve out of 14 schools have a peer-led suicide prevention program that also impacts substance use, mental health and violence.

"Schools cannot figure out what to do, they know there are increasing concerns of student mental health and substance use, but they need help to implement effective prevention programs—that's the job of public health," said Deschutes County's Aimee Snyder, who supervises the program's five public health specialists.

Photo: Primary prevention program in Deschutes County

LifeSkills Training, Linn County

Linn County has been teaching the LifeSkills Training program in its seven, mostly rural school districts for over two decades. The program is one of the most studied substance abuse prevention programs in the country and has shown large reductions in tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and other drug use, with effects lasting up to 12 years.

County Alcohol and Drug Prevention Specialist Shannon Snair has been teaching the LifeSkills program in 4th and 6th grade classes for 17 years. "Some of the topics we cover are communication, self-esteem, decision-making, and assertiveness. We aim to give students the necessary skills to resist peer pressure associated with smoking, drinking, or using other substances," said Snair.

Endorsed by national, private and state agencies, the program has also shown reductions in physical and verbal aggression and delinquency. Cost analyses show the return on investment ranges from \$16 to \$50 for every \$1 spent.

LifeSkills costs Linn County about \$315,000 a year, most of which pays the salaries for the program's certified prevention specialists. The county uses four different federal and state funding sources to cover program costs.

