



The Effects of Preventative Programs on Adolescence

Terra Pierce, OTD; Dr. Valley McCurry, PhD, MBA, OTR/L, FAOTA
 Department of Occupational Therapy | University of Alabama at Birmingham
 Ligé Richardson-Shears, MSW, ICAADC | Girls Inc. of Central Alabama

Introduction

- Drug prevention programs can include the family, school, and community of the adolescent. They can prevent adolescent substance use by concentrating on the different factors of the environment, community and policies, and development of skills.¹
- Public health interventions such as drug prevention programs providing safe spaces for adolescents to openly communicate can reduce substance abuse based upon researcher's findings.²
- Peer-led interventions can be effective in preventing tobacco, alcohol and possibly cannabis use among young people, providing scope for considering the further development and evaluation of such programmes to strengthen the evidence base around effective means of prevention.³

AIM: To enter local middle schools and train eighth grade girls to be peer mentors to younger students allowing students to discuss different drug prevention related topics. Survey questions will help evaluate the effect the program has on the youth participants.

Methods

- Funded through Girls Inc. of Central Alabama
- Friendly PEERsuasion
 - Portable materials
 - 60 minutes for each session
- Hayes K-8 School
 - 12 sessions total
- Participants
 - Students in 8th grade attending Hayes K-8 Middle School
 - 12 total participants
- Pre-participation Survey
 - 11 responses
- Post-participation Survey
 - 11 responses

Results

Participants

- 100% Female
- 90.9% aged 13 years
- 1% aged 14 years
- Surveys included six identical questions designed to measure participants' knowledge, confidence, and preparedness related to substance use and peer influence.

Pre-Surveys: Figures 1-6

- Participants initially demonstrated mixed understanding of the risks associated with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Many reported low to moderate confidence when discussing substance-related concerns with family or trusted adults.
- Participants underestimated the frequency of teen exposure to substances and the impact of peer pressure.
- Reflected limited consistency identifying the consequences of substance use and showed lower levels of confidence in their ability to handle risky situations or resist peer influence.

Post Surveys: Figures 7-12

- Demonstrated positive shifts across all six questions.
- Participants showed clearer and more accurate awareness of health risks linked to substance use as well as improved recognition of peer pressure.
- Increased confidence in talking with family or trusted adults.
- Students reported feeling more prepared to navigate substance related situations.
- Showed stronger understanding of physical, emotional, and social consequences of substance use.

Results (Cont.)

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel about your ability to make healthy choices when faced with peer pressure to use substances? (1 = Not confident at all, 5 = Very confident)
 11 responses

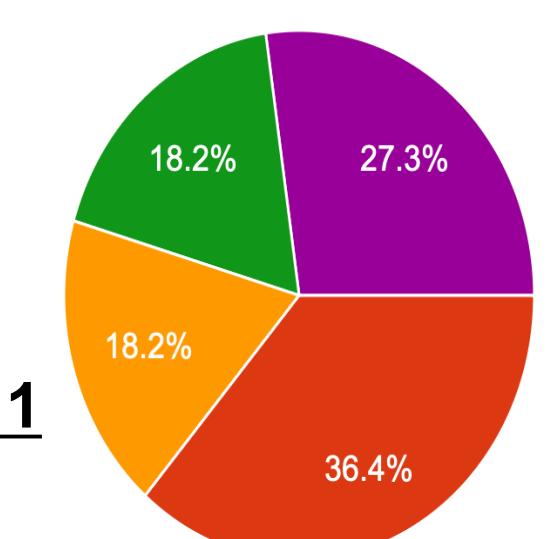


Figure 1

2. Have you ever participated in any activities or discussions about the risks of substance misuse (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, drugs) in the past year?
 11 responses

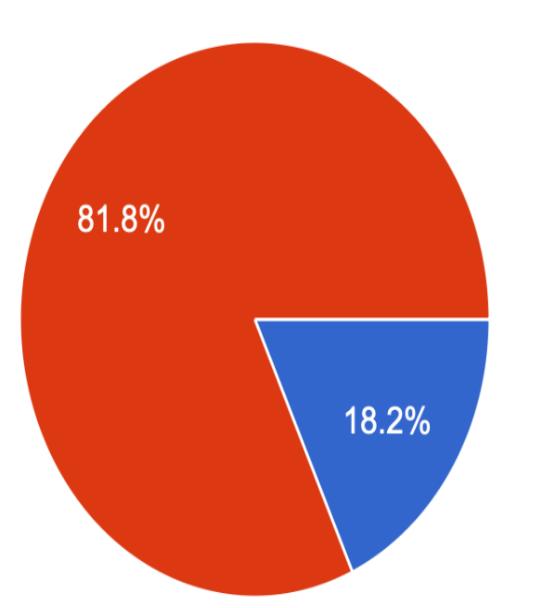


Figure 2

3. What is the most effective way to prevent substance use among teens?
 11 responses

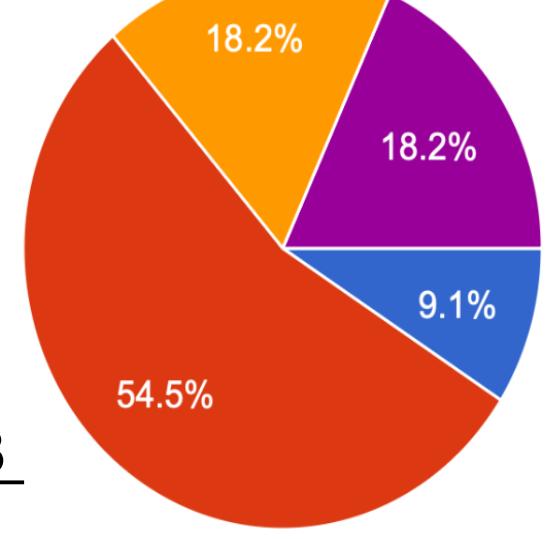


Figure 3

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel about your ability to make healthy choices when faced with peer pressure to use substances? (1 = Not confident at all, 5 = Very confident)
 11 responses

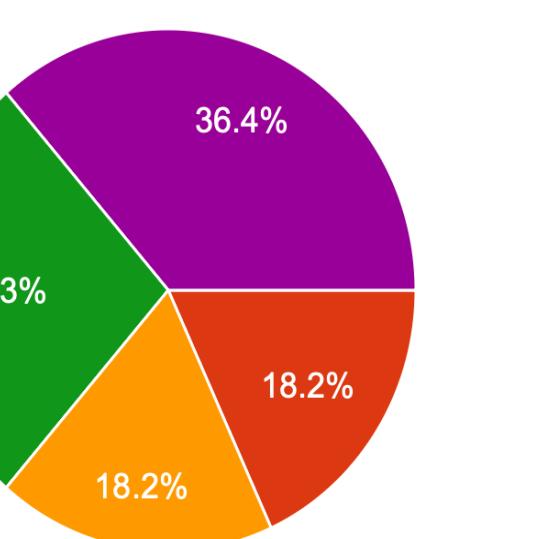


Figure 7

2. Have you ever participated in any activities or discussions about the risks of substance misuse (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, drugs) in the past year?
 11 responses

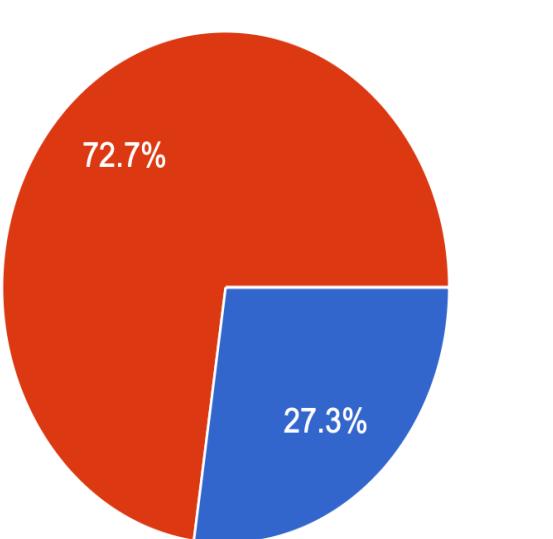


Figure 8

3. What is the most effective way to prevent substance use among teens?
 11 responses

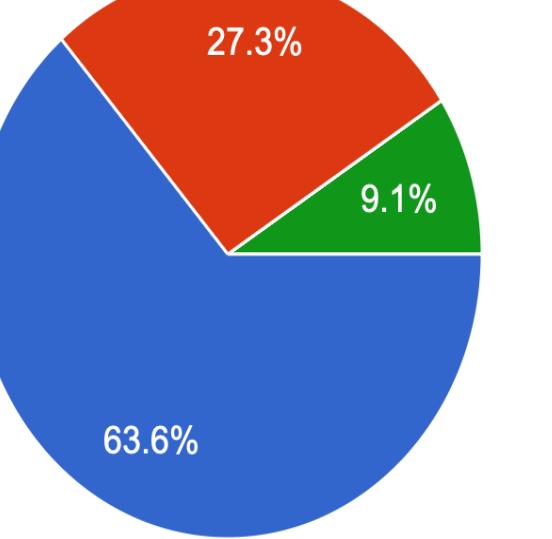


Figure 9

4. How likely are you to seek help from a trusted adult if you or a friend is struggling with substance use? (1 = Extremely not likely at all, 5 = Extremely likely)
 11 responses

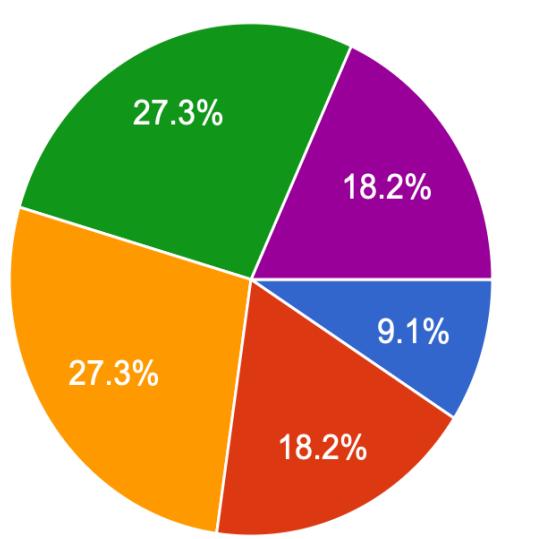


Figure 10

Results (Cont.)

5. What do you believe are the most common reasons why teens might start using substances (Select all that apply)
 11 responses

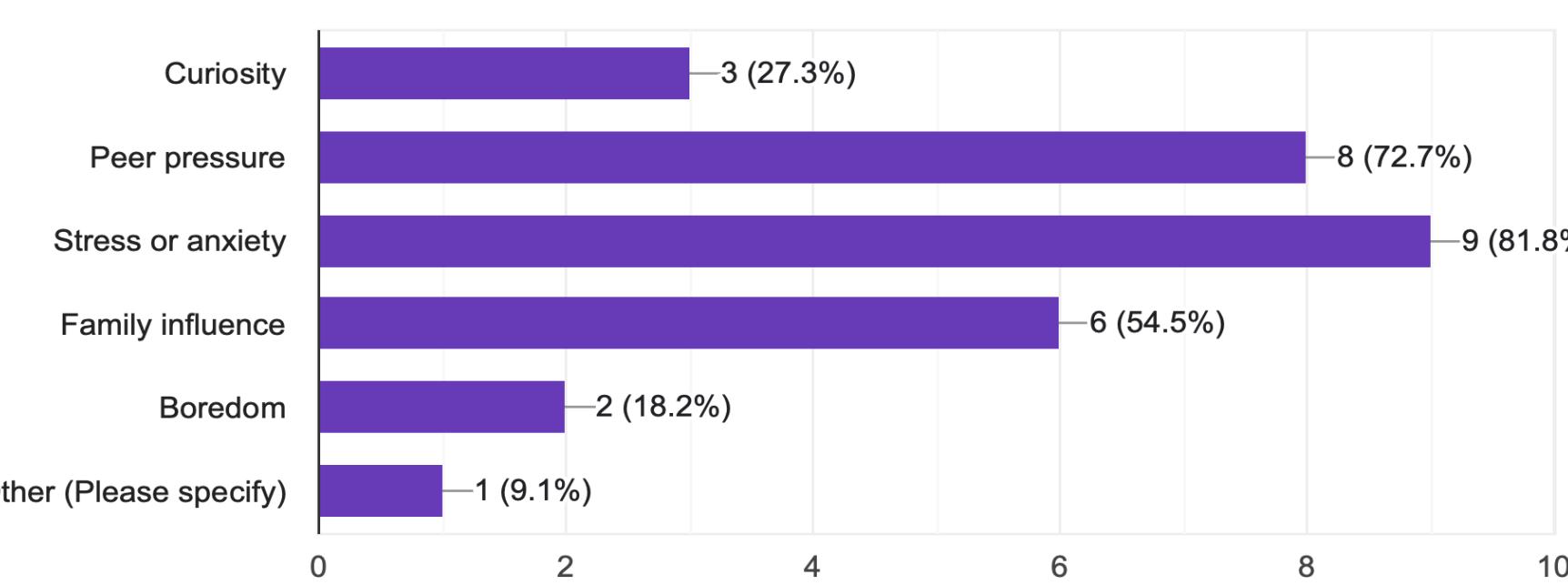


Figure 11

6. Did you learn something new today that will help you make good decisions regarding substance use?
 11 responses

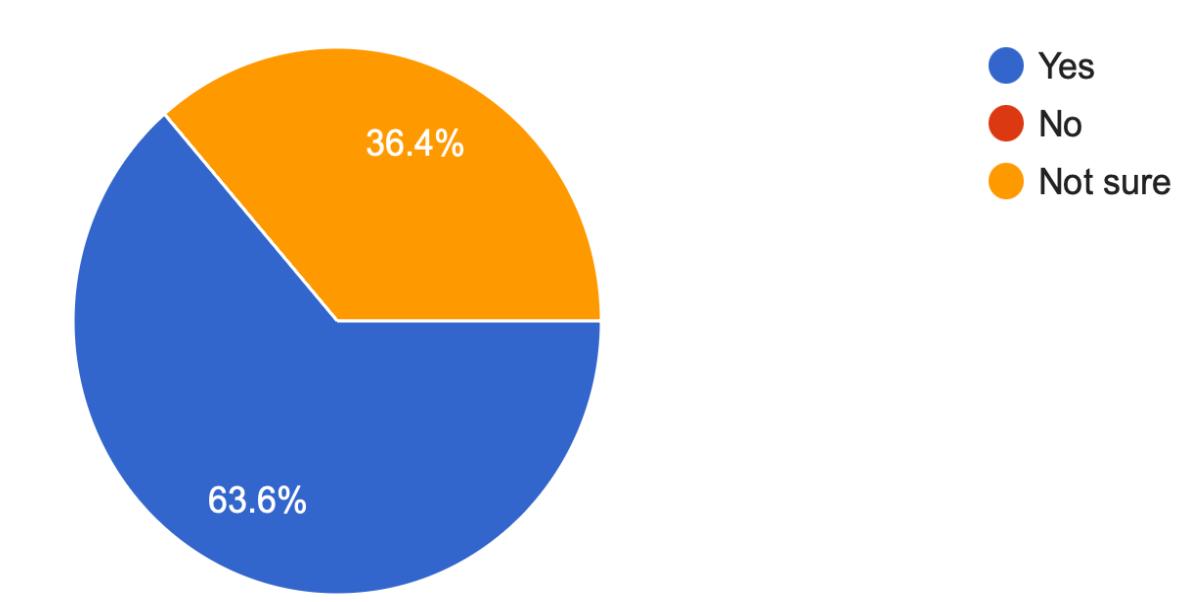


Figure 12

Discussion and Conclusion

Survey Responses

- Increased knowledge of substance risks
- Improved confidence talking to supportive adults
- Better awareness of peer pressure
- Improved ability to identify consequences
- Stronger preparedness to make safer choices

Study Limitations

- Small sample size
- Incomplete data due to 1 missing survey
- Interrupted timeline due to the 12-week sessions being extended
- Self-report bias
- Limited survey scope
- No long-term follow up

Implications

- Early intervention can be effective
- Peer mentoring may enhance engagement
- Programs can strengthen communication skills
- Schools may benefit from expanded programming

References

