

Drug and Alcohol Policy Frequently Asked Questions

Why?

- What led the school to consider such a policy?

In the past few years, parents, teachers and students began reporting higher usage of drugs and alcohol within our student body. We discovered information through parent reports, student disclosure, surveys, faculty observation, and incidents through the Dean's Office.

- Is there a drug problem at the Prep?

Our students, like students at most high-schools, report significant drug and alcohol abuse. These numbers are too high.

- Is the school concerned about damage to our reputation?

The decision to implement a strict drug-use identification program was made only to increase safety for our students and decrease drug and alcohol use—not because of any reputation related reason. Although we are always concerned about the reputation of St. Joseph's Prep, this policy was implemented for safety reasons only.

- Why was the policy implemented at the beginning of the school year, then suddenly suspended and re-implemented?

We presented a revised drug and alcohol policy that we believed was complete in September. Although we thought the policy was prepared and properly researched, it was not ready for implementation. A few administrative issues required revision, such as documented legality and second offense repercussion.

- Why was the current policy chosen?

The current policy was chosen because it appeared to be the most effective mix of education and substance identification. Our committee consisted of 10 faculty members. All faculty were invited to join our committee.

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What?

- What problems did the Board of Trustees have with the policy, and how were those issues dealt with to the Board's satisfaction?

Confidentiality – We documented and assured the Board that we have an already effective confidentiality policy in place for students who experience non-punitive issues with drugs and alcohol.

Legality – A second legal opinion verified our initial impression that random drug testing is an entirely legal and ethical practice in private schools.

- What legal authority does the school have to require participation in such testing?

“St. Joseph’s students are not compelled to attend the school. By applying for and accepting admission, they agree to abide by St. Joseph’s policies. Therefore, St. Joseph’s drug testing policy does not run afoul of Federal or Pennsylvania Constitutional protections.” - SJ Prep Attorney

- Did the school consider an opt-in or opt-out program of testing?

All options were considered. Inclusion of the entire student body was viewed as most preventative when coupled with increased education.

- Are prescription medications for ADHD included?

Yes, ADHD medications are identified by our testing. Students providing a prescription for ADHD medication are not held accountable for violating school policy.

- Are anabolic steroids included?

No.

- Suppose my son has either tested positive or self-reported prior to the test being conducted.

- What is required of him?

Drug and Alcohol Evaluation by a specialist outside school

Drug and Alcohol Education by SJP’s Drug and Alcohol Counselor

Testing every 90 days

Regular counseling meetings

- What is required by us as parents?

Support and adherence to requirements of the student.

Drug and Alcohol Policy Frequently Asked Questions

- What assistance does the school provide?

If requested we will recommend a Drug and Alcohol Counselor. We will work collaboratively with the outside treatment team to whatever degree requested. We will continue to monitor the student's personal development and work to help his life at the Prep in all ways possible.

- How confidential are the results of such an assessment?

Confidentiality is one of the most important aspects of this policy. Only four people in this school will know about a student who initially tests positive. These individuals are the Principal, Dean of Students, Counselor and Drug and Alcohol Specialist.

- What happens if a student who has tested positive refuses to comply with the assessment/treatment options (e.g., fails to see his counselor, fails to keep appointments with an outside agency, etc)?

That student will be referred to the Dean of Students.

- What happens to a student with a second positive test?

A student who tests positive for a second time will be referred to the Principal. At that point the Principal may take whatever action he/she sees fit, including possible dismissal.

- How and when will this policy be evaluated?

After the school year is complete.

- What is the cost of the policy?

\$39 per test, plus varying costs of speakers and presenters, budgeted by the Prep (no fees to parents).

- What is the school doing about the abuse of alcohol by Prep students?

The Prep is communicating with parents more proactively about known Prep drinking events. Our educational efforts are not focused on illegal drugs alone; the message includes alcohol education. We are continuing to provide many alternative events through clubs, activities, mixers and sporting events.

- What level of knowledge and concern does the administration have concerning student drinking?

The school is aware of our students' activity outside our building. We take it very seriously and convey the dangers associated with such behavior. Unlike drugs, alcohol does not remain in the system long enough for testing. We educate, inform, and hope for collaboration among our students and parents.

Drug and Alcohol Policy Frequently Asked Questions

- Are we testing faculty members?

Faculty members are not mandated to abide by our random drug testing policy. Some faculty members have requested to be included in the random testing pool of students. They will be included in testing if randomly selected.

Drug and Alcohol Policy
Frequently Asked Questions

How?

- Why was the testing firm selected?

Psychemedics is a reputable firm who specializes in testing large groups of individuals (Fortune 500 companies, Police Departments, etc). Additionally, Psychemedics has a program directed entirely to high schools.

- How is the randomness of the selection and the privacy of the individual guaranteed?

We provide Psychemedics with our entire list of student ID numbers (no names). Psychemedics then randomly generates 10 names, twice per month. We receive the student ID numbers, identify the student, and test.

- When will random testing begin?

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

- How will students be tested and how often?

Our students will be tested twice per month until final exams are complete.

- How was this number determined?

This number provides us with a significant yet manageable number of students.

- How many cycles in an academic year?

18

- How many students per academic year?

180

- At what point will a parent/guardian be notified that a student has been selected for testing?

Parent will be emailed after all tests are administered.

- Who will notify?

Dean of Students

Drug and Alcohol Policy Frequently Asked Questions

- How and where will the sample be taken?

The sample will be taken in the Counseling Office in the morning.

- By whom?

Dean of Students

- Who else will be present?

The School Nurse will be present, and a counselor will be in another room with students waiting to be tested.

- How will samples be delivered to the testing site?

FedEx

- How was the list of substances included in the test selected?

Psychemedics provided us with a basic panel which tests for Cocaine, Opiates, Phencyclidine, Amphetamines, Marijuana and the metabolites associated with these drugs.

- What length of time will there be between taking the sample and receiving the test results?

Results will be provided within 5- 7 days.

- How will a student and his parent/guardian be notified of the test results?

If testing identifies substances in a student's system, they will be notified by the Dean when the results are received. Negative test results will be relayed via email to the parents. The student will be notified in school by the Dean.

- What is the specific time frame in which a student and/or his parent/guardian may request a re-test?

Students and their parents may request a re-test at the meeting with the Dean. The sample will be taken at that time with the parents present.

- What school personnel are notified of a positive test result?

Principal, Dean, Counselor and Drug and Alcohol Counselor.

Drug and Alcohol Policy Frequently Asked Questions

- What record of a positive test is maintained by the school – by whom specifically and for how long?

Record of a positive test is kept by the Counselor until the student graduates.

- Who will access such records?

Counselor only, provided the student doesn't test positive again. Further positive test results are forwarded to the Dean's Office.

- What sort of communication, if any, is there between the Prep personnel and an outside facility/counselor-therapist?

The Prep will request confirmation that an outside evaluation has taken place and that treatment recommendations are being followed. No assessment details are necessary. If the student, parents or counselor would like to collaborate with the school, accommodations will be met accordingly.

- Who receives updates/final report from the outside counselor?

The Counselor from the Prep requests a note that says the student has followed treatment recommendations.

- How are we furthering our student education?

This year the Prep has responded to Drug and Alcohol issues in a variety of ways:

Meetings/Presentations

Dean - policy description

Counselor - reasons for policy and adolescent substance abuse

Chris Herron – former NBA player who lost his career and more to D&A abuse, will speak to our entire school community about his struggle with abuse and his road to recovery on Monday, February 25

Small student groups - counseling

HeadsUp Police – “real life” account of the realities of D&A use/abuse

Biology/Chemistry of Drugs – John Berna, Ph.D. (Prep Counselor) presents the biological effects of drugs and alcohol on an adolescent mind

Program Creation

SADD

SpeakUp

HeadsUp