

# The Community Page



Statistics of  
substance abuse  
among high school seniors:

**49% Marijuana**  
**14% Alcohol**  
**11% Cocaine**  
**8% Amphetamines**

## Who cares about them?

By the time they are seniors, almost one-half of high school students surveyed have smoked marijuana. More than a fifth of ninth-graders admit that they have already done the same.

ELEVEN PERCENT of the seniors say that they have used cocaine, one in twelve have taken amphetamines, and almost one in six of the students divulge that they have experimented with inhalants.

“Shocking statistics,” you might say, “I’m sure glad that we live in Idaho, where our kids are protected from that trash.”

**But those figures are specific to Idaho. They are from a 2008 report compiled by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.**

No town, no school, no family, no child is free from the reach of drug dealers and drug addiction. A 2010 study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University asked kids where they could get drugs. Three-fourths of them said that they only needed to ask a friend or classmate.

That same CASA survey found that one-third of the nation’s middle school students affirm that drugs are used, kept, or sold at their school. That figure is up an alarming 39% over last year, most likely due to the spread of gang activity. With hard pressure being applied by police in the big cities, the gangs are moving to rural areas, and they are taking their stock in trade—drugs—with them.



Parents are at the front line of the battle in the home, but who is standing up for the kids in school?

Their teachers are educating them in history and math, but who is talking to them about drugs...other than the dealers and the users? Parents often don’t realize how serious the situation is, so they put off the discussion...sometimes until it is too late.

### Not Afraid to Speak Out

Since 1983, when the **Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)** program was founded, more than 50,000 police officers have been trained in crucial subjects ranging from the harmful effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs to bullying, Internet safety, and gangs—and this cadre of streetwise professionals has been dispatched to school districts throughout the nation.

### D.A.R.E. has one mission:

*Teach students good decision-making skills to help them lead safe and healthy lives.*

The officers don’t try to overshadow the efforts of family and teachers, but to come alongside them in the effort. Students aren’t shown any drugs, nor are they told how to use them—what they do get are the medical facts, the straight scoop on how drugs can ruin one’s life, and training on how to avoid getting caught up in the downward spiraling road to addiction.

D.A.R.E. program administrators have consistently sought to stay abreast of the latest research and to continually refine the techniques used in class. D.A.R.E. reflects the best of current science and research-based standards for effective education.

All lessons are conducted by a specially trained, uniformed police officer. The core curriculum is aimed at students in the fifth and sixth grades, in order to have the best chance of reaching the kids before they are in trouble.

D.A.R.E. encourages them to choose friends carefully and to commit to a healthy and productive lifestyle.

Programs have also been developed for the junior high and high school levels, and there is a strong summer program that provides fun and sober activities for the kids. Opportunities exist throughout the year for volunteers to help, and there is hope that D.A.R.E. can expand its ability to equip parents with skills on helping their kids escape the horrors of drug addiction.

Experience shows that it’s a whole lot easier to not take the first drug than it is to get stopped once you’ve started. The first time is the worst time; gateway drugs lead to more and more and the effects get worse and worse. In the effort to once again experience the initial effect—a search that always ends in failure—many otherwise smart and capable individuals have sacrificed their homes, their families, and even their lives.

Upwards of 85% of prison inmates in the United States have histories of substance abuse, and every one of them started in the same way... with the first high. Any way you draw it, drugs do not make a pretty picture for anyone involved.

### How to Get In Touch

Locally, D.A.R.E. is a combination effort of Idaho Falls City Police and the Bonneville County Sheriff’s Department. You can get more information about the program by calling the D.A.R.E. office at (208) 529-1239 or by visiting the website at [www.bonnevillesheriff.com/dare.php](http://www.bonnevillesheriff.com/dare.php).

Whether you choose to join the fight by speaking with your own children and their friends or by volunteering to help with D.A.R.E., one thing is sure: every child needs to hear the truth about drugs. The evidence is in, and the results are clear. Drug addiction costs a whole lot more than the few bucks for that first dose. The user doesn’t just lay money on the table; the price is one’s life.

**Dare to care. Support D.A.R.E.**  
(Drug Abuse Resistance Education)



**Kevin Pettingill**  
Senior D.A.R.E. Officer

Ask a group of kids what they liked best about the D.A.R.E. presentation and you will likely hear reference to Idaho Falls Police Officer Kevin Pettingill. He has a way of connecting with the students that helps them to see not only how much he knows, but how much he cares.

Ask Officer Pettingill about D.A.R.E., though, and he will quickly point to the D.A.R.E. Board, the D.A.R.E. Haunted House, and the unique team of dedicated police officers, school teachers, and concerned parents as the real heroes.

### What is the secret for a successful program? Kevin Pettingill puts it like this...

“It is about believing in the youth—that their dreams can come true. They really want to do what’s right. Our job is to see that they know how.”

**D.A.R.E.**<sup>®</sup>  
TO RESIST DRUGS  
AND VIOLENCE.