



The Philosophy of SADD

SADD was founded on the simple philosophy that young people, empowered to help each other, are the most effective force in prevention. For two decades, SADD has been recognized as a national leader in alcohol and drug education and prevention. What began as a small town “grass roots” response to the tragedy of two teenage deaths quickly grew to become a nation-wide organization fueled by millions of young people across the country and around the world. Since the founding of SADD, teenage deaths due to drinking and driving have decreased by 60 percent. “Contract for Life” and “friends don’t let friends drive drunk” are now part of the teenage vernacular. At the same time, the world of teenagers has become more complex and substance abuse, violence, AIDS, and suicide compound the threat of drinking and driving. With its shift in focus to include other destructive decisions, SADD remains the premier youth-based education and prevention organization in America and maintains the ability to play a leading role in effective evidence-based prevention programming.

The Value of SADD

➤ *Information Dissemination and Access to Local Communities*

With thousands of chapters nationwide and a strong network of state coordinators and school-based advisors, SADD is uniquely positioned to help young people with the growing threats to their health, happiness and safety. Through their campaigns and activities, SADD chapters influence millions of people in schools, families, local community organizations, businesses, law enforcement agencies and the media. As an active, established youth program, SADD reaches into more schools and touches more young people for longer periods of time than any other program.

➤ *Integration of Prevention Principles*

In this era of science-based prevention and increased accountability, SADD is committed to strengthening and documenting the effectiveness of its activities and programming. Its strong name recognition and expansive chapter base puts SADD at an unparalleled advantage to take a leadership role in implementing model prevention practices within local communities across the country.

Much of the research literature available on effective prevention programming details a framework of science-based principles that SADD embraces. One of the foremost principles of prevention consistently cited is positive youth development. Positive youth development is the very essence of SADD. Through SADD membership, youth of all ages and backgrounds become skilled, educated agents for youth initiatives developed by local, state and national organizations working to promote youth safety and health. SADD students are valued as contributing members of their communities. Using the array of resources available in their cities and states, SADD members seek out and connect their school communities to information, ideas, educational materials and funding, training and program opportunities.

SADD contains elements of scientifically grounded prevention principles recognized and endorsed by NIDA (National Institute for Drug Abuse), CSAP (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention), CAPT (Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies), and NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health). As a youth prevention program that begins with and evolves from local level efforts, SADD is:

- Age appropriate. SADD is tailored for the cognitive and emotional proclivities associated with the age ranges of the student populations served.
- Culturally appropriate. SADD offers all youth the opportunity to get involved and lead prevention initiatives in their individual communities. With guidance from the adult advisor and assessment tools provided from SADD National, SADD students determine program needs for their communities and implement strategies that mirror the cultural values of the target youth population in their localities.
- Long-term. SADD is available for students through the school career, starting from 6th grade and continuing through college. SADD reaches into more schools and touches more young people for longer periods of time than any other program.
- Cost effective. SADD is free to all those who want to join. Fundraising, grants and donations pay for all programming.
- Strong in dissemination capability. With thousands of chapters nationwide, SADD is able to reach millions of youth across the country with prevention messages and programming. The activities of SADD chapters impact school populations, parents, local community organizations, businesses, law enforcement agencies and the media.

An important element in prevention theory is how risk and resiliency factors unify the description of community need and predict a framework for programming.¹ According to the research, prevention programs must be designed to enhance resiliency and protective factors and move toward reversing or reducing known risk factors.² SADD applies this prevention knowledge through its implementation design and strategies. Specifically, the SADD model and programming responds to the following documented risk factors:³

- Community-Based Risk Factors
 - Lack of opportunities for youth to become involved with the community
 - Easy availability of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
 - Community attitudes, practices, policies, or laws favoring substance use and misuse
- Individual-Based Risk Factors
 - First use of any substance during early teen years
 - Greater influence by and reliance on peers rather than on parents for advice and guidance
 - Friends who use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- School-Based Risk Factors
 - School policies, rules, and regulations not defined or enforced uniformly
 - Transitions between schools (e.g., from elementary school to middle school or from middle school to high school)

¹ 2000 Annual Summary: *Effective Prevention Principles and Programs*. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's National Center for Advancement of Prevention, Conference Edition, Fall 2000, p. 7.

² *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide*, pp. i-ii.

³ *Foundations of Prevention: Care, Knowledge and Practice*. Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, Module 3, 1998, v3, pp 3-6.

- **Family-Based Risk Factors**

- Family history of alcoholism
- Parents involving youth in the parents' use or misuse of alcohol, tobacco and/or other drugs; e.g., "light my cigarette"; "get me a beer"
- Unclear expectations of behavior, lack of monitoring and supervision, inconsistent or harsh discipline, lack of bonding and caring, and conflict between parents/caregivers
- Encouraging or ignoring teen use of alcohol and other drugs
- Parent/caregiver's use/abuse of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Concurrently, SADD tailors prevention efforts to foster youth resiliency by:

- Targeting all forms of drug use
- Promoting skills to resist drug offers
- Building social competency skills
- Promoting normative education designed to correct students' misperceptions about their peers' drug use
- Including a strong parent component
- Reaching out to all diverse populations including children with behavior problems or learning disabilities
- Providing interactive methods, such as peer discussion groups
- Launching youth media campaigns and lobbying for policy changes

➤ *Expansion and Collaboration of Services*

Active and vibrant SADD chapters spawn other chapters, increasing exposure of young people across the country to SADD's youth development initiatives and positive norms. Studies have shown that schools with an active SADD chapter have a student body more aware of and informed about the risks of underage drinking, drug use and impaired driving.⁴

Often, SADD chapters join other youth campaigns promoted by various youth organizations and governing agencies. Many SADD chapters have helped to establish trans-disciplinary, multi-systemic coalitions in their communities that utilize the resources of their local law enforcement agencies, departments of public health, community mental health centers, school systems, parent communities, businesses and other active youth agencies.

Summary

SADD chapters serve as a direct link to the heart of a school system and community. Using students themselves as primary agents and meaningful contributors, SADD chapters have become an efficient and effective avenue for quality programming to be implemented in thousands of schools and communities across the country. The SADD National Office supports its chapters and is taking a lead in developing programming grounded in the most up-to-date concepts, information and strategies from research and practice. Ultimately, SADD has the potential to lead the youth culture into a new era where young people passionately embrace their ability and desire to nurture and protect their minds, bodies, spirits and futures.

⁴ Preusser Research Group, Inc. *Evaluation of Youth Peer-to-Peer Impaired Driving Programs*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Transportation. 1995.

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