



UIC Neighborhoods *Initiative*

Building Partnerships for Stronger Communities and a Stronger University

Spring 1999

The University of Illinois at Chicago

Great Cities Institute

New Program Helps Prevent Drug Use

Substance abuse continues to be one of the most serious threats to our young people," said former Governor, Jim Edgar. "Every day in every Illinois community, thousands of young people are confronted with the decision of whether to use drugs. We need to do all we can to help them make the right choice."

The Communities CAN! campaign is a community based substance abuse prevention program. The campaign has committed to significantly reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs used by youths ages 12-17 by the year 2000. Communities CAN! has received 2.4 million in federal funding, which will be distributed among 27 community organizations, who will develop plans to support and coordinate preventative substance abuse programs.

CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, Paul Vallas, strongly supports the Communities CAN! campaign. Vallas has agreed that Chicago Public School students in junior high and high schools will participate in voluntary surveys to gather research for the project. The surveys will reveal possible drug habits among youth, in addition to serving as a basis for the action needed to prevent and decrease drug use in the future. A recent study done by the Illinois Department of Human Services revealed that three out of every 10 Illinois 17-year-olds have tried marijuana in the past month



Neighborhood children participating in an after school basketball program at the Macy-Newberry

The Coalition and the Agent

The West Side Consortium is the coalition that supports Communities CAN! The fiscal agent for the coalition is Windows of Opportunity, Inc. The coalition and the agent will use a portion of the funding to implement four programs on the Near West Side of Chicago that will serve approximately 625 youths each year. These preventative programs include peer-led components, mentoring, and alternative activity programming to promote drug-free environments.

The Four Programs

Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center Rockwell Grant School Youth Project -- this is a program, that provides intervention and intensive academic and social support and referral to medical and other services for at-risk youth and their families.

Urban Youth Leader Project -- this program is led by Don Hellison, professor in the department of Kinesiology at UIC. The program seeks to teach at-risk youth

personal and social responsibility, self-control, respect, self-motivation, team work and leadership by using sports and physical activity.

Marcy-Newberry Association Mentors Program -- this program teaches pro-social behavior, drug-free norms, and selfdiscipline by concerned adult mentorship.

West Side Future T.E.A.M (Teens Educating with Achieving Minds) Program -- this is a peer-to-peer program that trains teens for peer leadership roles.

The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative

In addition to the West Side Consortium and Windows of Opportunity, Inc., there are several community and university organizations that will make contributions to the Communities CAN! campaign. Among others are the UICNI, who supports the West Side Consortium's efforts to reduce drug use among youth on the Near West Side, by linking project staff and university staff with expertise in the field to resources related to drug use prevention.

"Our role is to locate the right university-community partners so that they fit into the project guidelines," said UIC Neighborhoods Initiative coordinator, Loomis Hayfield. "Our primary focus is on research and we help link the partnerships together by the research that is involved. Other agents such as Windows of Opportunity Inc., act as fiscal agents. It's all a collaborative effort where we try to strengthen the relationships between all parties."

(courtesy of NEWS October 26, 1998).

New Study Seeks to Create Safer Schools

Kids are bringing guns to schools because they're tired of being picked on," said Chicago Police Department 12th District Commander, Maurice Daily. "Some kids are skipping school altogether because they're scared."

Carrying weapons, excessive tardiness, and avoiding school have no place among our youth, yet it is the harsh reality for thousands of school children who on a daily basis are subjected to bullying .



New Partnerships in Collaboration

The UIC Police Department in collaboration with the 12th District of the Chicago Police Department have formed a partnership with four local elementary schools in Pilsen and on the Near West Side of Chicago. The purpose of this partnership is to examine and reduce bullying, intimidation, and threats that occur in these schools and neighborhoods.

Riis Elementary School in the Near West Side, Chicago

The UIC Police Department has received a one-year grant to conduct a study and use anti-bullying approaches in the four elementary schools. The study consists of surveys created by the students with assistance from UIC researchers, police officers, and school staff.

The Study

This study hopes to reveal and assess the perception and reality of bullying situations. Based on the results of the study, innovative approaches will be examined to include peer problem-solving forums, anger management, conflict-resolution training, intervention training for school staff to proactively recognize and disarm building problems. In addition, training for parents will also be provided so that they will learn to recognize behavioral indicators that may warn them that their children are being victimized or intimidated.

"Not only does our project have a positive impact on kids, but we are also strengthening our partnership and relationship with the surrounding communities," said UIC Police Sergeant, Mike Cherry. "We're hoping to create safer schools and neighborhoods for the future."

University Involvement

The UIC Neighborhoods Initiative and the Great Cities Institute have acted as consultants and mediators for the UIC Police in writing the grant proposal and seeking contacts to pursue the project. The UIC Jane Adams College of Social Work is another major player who has been recruited for the partnership project. The college has provided graduate assistants who will act as facilitators and advisors at each of the four schools during the study.

Jane Addams also provides professional training for the teachers at the four elementary schools, which include Riis and Smith on the Near West Side, and Perez and Orozco in Pilsen. The teachers have responded to the help from UIC and the Chicago police in an appreciative and positive way. In addition to the training, the schools have also been provided with computers, printers, scanners, a resource library, Internet hook-up, and Chicago police officers for daily school safety.

"The school staff will receive training on alternative ways and methods on solving conflicts and problems," said Cherry. These methods may involve students to design antibullying posters and create school rules, hence including students in finding solutions and making their voices heard.