

REPORT ON DRUG EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE ARRESTED
FOR THE POSSESSION OF A SMALL AMOUNT OF MARIJUANA

Submitted To: The 1978 Minnesota Legislative Session
By The: Department of Public Welfare
In Response To: Minnesota Laws 1976, Chapter 42
Section 3

STATEWIDE DRUG EDUCATION
FOR MINIMAL MARIJUANA VIOLATOR

1. SUMMARY:

Since April 11, 1976 when the legislature directed the state's courts to refer "small amount" marijuana possessors into a state certified, drug prevention program, 2,881 young Minnesotans (mean age 19.5) have been referred. Five of these people have been re-arrested on marijuana charges. Independent evaluation by the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Program Office of the University of Minnesota has reported that 60+ percent of those attending the program have anonymously indicated that exposure to the program has led them to alter their use of intoxicants toward less high risk patterns. Annual cost of the program is \$74,000.

This statewide program received the 1977 Pacesetter Award from the National Institute of Drug Abuse. This award is given to one program in the United States each year for efficiency and appropriateness in drug abuse programming.

2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The program involves a judicial determination that the drug education alternative would be an appropriate referral for the violator into the drug education program. A referral form is filled out by the clerk of court and dispatched to a central location where classes are scheduled throughout the state. There are presently 40 locations throughout the state where classes are conducted. Classes are scheduled on the basis of need with frequency relating to the number of referrals. There is a goal that an individual directed to attend the class should not have to travel for more than one-half hour to attend the program.

The class generally lasts two nights for two hours each night. After the program has been completed, each participant is given an evaluation form designed by the University of Minnesota to anonymously assess the degree to which they felt the class served their needs or provided valuable information regarding the use and misuse of intoxication. Appendix I includes the evaluation instrument and a review of a random sample. Even though participants are forced to attend the class by court order and are often hostile toward the program, over half indicated that their behavior will be improved regarding their use of intoxication because of exposure to the program.

Each of the 26 Area Mental Health Centers in the state have reviewed and either formally or informally agreed to support the program. Forty-five individuals are trained to present the program throughout the state. Usually they are high school or community college instructors or counselors who have experience in drug education and have been specially trained in a two day workshop. A total of 242 classes for offenders have been conducted throughout the state by the forty-five educators.

Based on the total number of minimal marijuana convictions, it appears that over 90 percent of those arrested for possession of a small amount of marijuana are referred to and attend the drug education. Appendix II lists the number of referrals by county since the inception of the program. Appendix III displays the referral rate per month from April 11, 1976, until February 1, 1978.

3. NATIONAL AWARD:

Shortly after the program's inception, the National Governors' Conference subcontracted with the accounting firm of Peat, Marwick and Mitchell, Inc., to review the Minnesota marijuana program in terms of potential public savings. Although the firm found it difficult to document exact savings, they reported to the National Governors' Conference that there seemed to be a substantial savings to the state because of the adoption of the new response.

Savings are simply based on the assumption that drug education costs substantially less than the previous pattern of referral into therapeutic services, incarceration, and/or probation. The report cited a study (conducted by the Minnesota program itself) which indicated that savings may be in excess of \$7 million annually.

Following the National Governors' Conference report, the National Institute of Drug Abuse in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare dispatched special investigators to Minnesota to review and monitor the program. Based on those reports, the Chemical Dependency Division of the Department of Public Welfare and the Minnesota Behavioral Institute (the contracted vendor) both received the National Pacesetter Award from the federal government "in recognition for outstanding accomplishment and direction in developing and implementing a statewide alternative program on drug abuse." This award is given out annually to one program in the United States which exemplifies a major break-through in cost effectiveness and human sensitivity in the area of drug abuse programming.

Since then, thirty-two states have made inquiries and requested specific information regarding the Minnesota response.

4, PROBLEMS:

Presently, a more intense evaluation process has been implemented, including a three, six and nine-month review of a selected random sample of those who participated in the program under court order.

Because of the uniqueness of the program, there was no comparable information concerning program cost or alternate source of funding, such as client fees. Because the average age of participants is 19.5 years, the program is reaching the most under-employed and unemployed group in the state. Even so, client fees collected continue to increase as both the courts and program coordinators have become more insistent upon participant fee reimbursement.

Presently, all who attend the program are required either to pay \$25 to help reimburse state costs or explain in detail why they are unable to pay. If participants do neither, the matter is usually returned to the courts who take whatever action they deem appropriate. The expense of this statewide program for a one-year period of October 1, 1977 to September 30, 1978 is \$74,000. The project is supported from federal funds provided for drug abuse programs in Minnesota.

EVALUATION
MINNESOTA MINIMAL MARIJUANA VIOLATOR
DRUG EDUCATION RESPONSE

AUGUST 30, 1977

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

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EVALUATION

MINNESOTA MINIMAL MARIJUANA VIOLATOR DRUG EDUCATION RESPONSE

Summary

The sampling of 285 participants who had been directed to attend a drug education program by courts throughout Minnesota were asked subjectively to react to the program. Since the objective of the program is to modify behavior, subjective responses that indicated that the participants behavior would change were viewed as indicating the program may be accomplishing its goal. Similarly, they were asked to isolate parts of the program that seemed inappropriate. This second component was used managerially to help improve the program, but also was an attempt to determine whether or not there was a "Hawthorn effect" or "carry-over effect" of patronizing the instructors of the program out of fear of the criminal justice response, i.e., to the degree they felt comfortable criticizing the program, there may be less likelihood of a patronizing impact on indicating perceived behavioral impact.

60.4% of those who responded indicated that they felt that their behavior would change in ways that appeared to complement and improve public health relationship to intoxication. Similarly, 55% specifically criticized various components of the program. The inference seems to be that the majority of the participants are not intimidated to the point where they feel that they can't criticize on the instrument but, nevertheless, 60.4% have stated that they believe that their behavior will alter because of exposure to the program.

It's important to note that although a number of individuals indicated the program was enjoyable, since this was not an initial objective of the program, enjoying the program was not in itself viewed as positive.

Process

On April 11, 1976, Minnesota statutes were enacted which offered the judiciary in Minnesota an opportunity to direct those apprehended in possession of 1.5 ounces or less of marijuana into a drug education program certified by an area mental health center and the state of Minnesota.

State guidelines for the program have been established and the program was conducted through contract with the Minnesota Behavioral Institute (Minnesota State Drug Information Service).

There have been several suggestions for program content including a counseling oriented structure, education based on a highly emotive communications system, and the drug education program which initially was endorsed by both several area boards and the state, which involved an attempt to persuade minimal violators not to misuse in the future. The program is not conducted through a counseling or interpersonal inventory structure, but in a semi-didactic process. There is no assumption on the part of the program that the individuals are morbid or pathological in their pursuit of intoxication.

Presently there are 40 some program deliverers trained in delivering the program located throughout the state. They have been trained by the Institute in techniques of persuasion, program class delivery, psychopharmacology, and the basic public health patterns for misusing intoxication.

Subsequently, on a request from both the state of Minnesota and the Minnesota Behavioral Institute, the University of Minnesota Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Programming designed an evaluation instrument which was administered to a sampling of 285 of the drug education program participants. By August 15, 1977, 2,100 individuals had been processed through the program and the 285 sample consisted of the last 285 to go through the program.

It must be remembered that the Institute has an extensive training structure for program deliverers and also monitors programs rather closely. There has been a substantial turnover in program deliverers since the inception of the program.

The instrument attached in Appendix I is administered after the drug education program has been completed. It is passed out by the instructor and the instructor is directed to tell the participants not to put their name on the sheet and to answer the questions as honestly and directly as possible.

Since the program is informal and there are specific communications efforts to desensitize the audience, it was believed that a sense of "intimidation" because of criminal justice processing would not significantly pervade or eschew results of the questioning. One of the methods utilized to measure potential patronizing involved a question asking the participants to isolate a portion of the program that seemed unresponsive. If a substantial number found no problem, it could be assumed that patronizing may have a negative impact upon the validity of the instrument in terms of profiling what the participants consider to be measured behavioral impact due to the class.

Two important concepts must be remembered in reviewing the material. The measurement is whether or not the participants believe their behavior will change. It is quite possible for an individual to believe there has been no change when, in effect, there has been a change in behavior. Similarly, it is possible for an individual to believe a certain thing has somehow impacted the way his life will function when, in reality, there will not be behavior change.

The only real pattern for monitoring behavior change is some pattern of observation or follow-up monitoring which would probably not be statutorily permissible based on the non-criminal nature of marijuana violations. Asking the participants themselves whether or not there has been some level of change is probably the next best process for measuring impact. A more subtle instrument had initially been designed which attempted to subtly measure attitudes. However, because of the dynamics involved with individuals prior to administering the attitude analysis, the University determined that the attitude analysis process would not be likely to give accountable impact analysis.

Results

Because the instrument involves subjective answers, University staff first analyzed the nature of the answers and then logged them into categories without placing any value judgement on the impact level of the answer. The answers seemed to fall into certain clusters of responses. A computerized structure of logging the responses was finally employed after the categories had been defined.

Question 1: "What is most interesting to you?" The following are the lists of categories in the response. It must be remembered that while each program deliverer has leverage in terms of delivery, the program is basically modular and the same basic components are inherent in every program.

1. Movies	16.8%
2. Psychotropic effects of drugs	14.4
3. Why people like to get intoxicated (attitudes)	13.7
4. Discussion in general	13.7
5. Information regarding the procurement of street drugs, information regarding arrests and criminal law, information on "bad trips", information regarding buying and selling corrupted drugs, etc.	13.3
6. Instructor's presentation style	7.4
7. No response or the answer not responsive	6.0
8. Nothing	4.9
9. Marijuana information specifically	3.0
10. Everything	2.5
11. Self-reflection (personal awareness or understanding)	2.1
12. Legal aspects (current laws, civil rights, etc.)	1.4
13. Evaluations, tests, questions	.7

Question 2: "What new information did you get out of this class?"

1. Nothing	21.8%
2. Relationship of attitudes and behavior to the use or misuse of drugs	16.5
3. Street drug analysis - impure drugs illegally sold	11.6
4. No response or no answer	10.9
5. Legal aspects	10.5
6. Psychotropic effects of drugs	8.4
7. Facts regarding marijuana use	5.6
8. Self-reflection	5.3
9. Polydrug effects	4.6
10. Overdose treatment information	4.2

Question 3: "What, for you, was a waste of time?" Each group was asked to isolate one element that seemed not to be of value to them. Therefore, criticizing a portion of the program does not constitute an indictment against the entire program, but may have some inference regarding freedom to criticize.

1. Movies	29.8%
2. Nothing - nothing in the entire program was a waste of time	21.4
3. Everything in the program was a waste of time	17.2
4. No response or answer not responsive	14.4
5. Discussion in general	4.9
6. The cost of the class	3.9
7. Legal involvement	2.8
8. Filling out this questionnaire	2.5
9. Discussion about alcohol	2.1
10. Discussion about marijuana	1.1

Question 4: "In what way do you feel your day to day behavior may change as a result of this class?"

1. No change	34.0%
2. Think about appropriateness and inappropriateness of using drugs	27.7
3. Being more cautious about the use of drugs	18.2
4. Reduce use or otherwise change use	10.2
5. No response	5.6
6. Assume more responsibility regarding intoxication	3.2
7. Seek information	1.1

Analysis

Because the prime objective is always to impact behavior as opposed to simply having an enjoyable session or even increased information, those categories that seemed to reflect a behavioral change were rated as having highly positive characteristics. In the first question, any answer that seemed to indicate self-reflection regarding drug use, increased awareness and sensitivity to legal issues regarding drug use and how they may jeopardize career development, etc., psychotropic effect of drugs or the reasons for people becoming intoxicated, was viewed as potentially profiling behavioral impact. These were rated as highly positive and a composite of 35.1% answered in this category.

Those responses in the first question which related to simply enjoyment of the class or interesting components of the class, such as enjoying the movies, etc., were rated as positive. 54.4% answered in this category.

6.0% of the answers were not responsive and 4.9% of the responses indicated there was nothing of value in the class.

Using the same criteria, the second question, "What new information did you get out of the class?", 26.0% answered in patterns that would seem to indicate behavioral impact, such as self-reflection, relationship and attitudes regarding behavior and drug use, overdose treatment information, etc.

Similarly, 40.7% gave answers rated as positive, which seemed to indicate the class was enjoyable and more information was gained, such as marijuana facts, psychotropic effect of drugs, street drug analysis availability, etc.

10.9% did not answer or did not give responsive answers and 21.8% gave what would be labeled as negative answers, actually making statements that there was no new information that was of value to them.

Question 3, "What, for you, was a waste of time?", involved isolating one particular incident in the program that did not appear to be of value to them. Again, there was a subtle attempt to determine whether or not the group was honestly responding to the question. It would logically be unlikely that a substantial portion of the group would find nothing negative in the entire program.

21.4% indicated that nothing was a waste of time or that everything in the program was positive for them.

23.6% indicated that certain portions of the program were negative over which the program deliverers had no control, such as the actual legal process that brought them into the class, the cost of the class, and filling out the questionnaires.

55.1% isolated some section of the program as negative, such as the movies, the discussion about marijuana, the discussion about the law, etc.

The fourth and most significant question, focused on actually whether or not the participants perceived that there would be behavioral change. "In what way do you feel your day to day behavior may change as a result of this class?"

60.4% specifically indicated some pattern in which their behavior would change for the better, such as thinking more about appropriate use of intoxication, seeking more information before using a drug, more cautious or less use of certain kinds of chemicals, not using illegal substances, etc.

39.6% did not respond or indicated there would be no change.

Conclusion

Based on the observation that the participants were generally not afraid to find criticism with the program, there is some probability of honesty in the responses. It is clear that well over half, but below three-quarters, of the population appear to honestly believe that the information and the program, in general, will serve to alter their use of intoxication in a pattern that is more likely to safeguard their personal health.

APPENDIX I

Evaluation Instrument

Marijuana Education

Participant Summary Form

Age: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. What, during this four hour class, was most interesting to you?

2. What new information did you get out of this class?

3. What, for you, was a waste of time?

4. In what ways do you feel your day-to-day behavior may change as a result of this class?

5. What changes would you suggest to make this class more interesting/informative?

Appendix II

Aitkin	13	Norman	0
Anoka	299	Olmsted	76
Becker	2	Otter Tail	32
Beltrami	11	Pennington	22
Benton	10	Pine	5
Big Stone	0	Pipestone	2
Blue Earth	51	Polk	37
Brown	0	Pope	19
Carlton	33	Ramsey	288
Carver	24	Red Lake	1
Cass	4	Redwood	10
Chippewa	4	Renville	10
Chisago	13	Rice	37
Clay	46	Rock	0
Clearwater	0	Roseau	13
Cook	30	St. Louis	214
Cottonwood	5	Scott	137
Crow Wing	19	Sherburne	21
Dakota	137	Sibley	6
Dodge	0	Stearns	29
Douglas	32	Steele	2
Faribault	14	Stevens	0
Fillmore	11	Swift	4
Freeborn	30	Todd	1
Goodhue	9	Traverse	6
Grant	1	Wabasha	14
Hennepin	598	Wadena	0
Houston	2	Waseca	0
Hubbard	3	Washington	40
Isanti	4	Watsonwan	5
Itasca	39	Wilkin	35
Jackson	11	Winona	17
Kanabec	11	Wright	17
Kandiyohi	19	Yellow Medicine	0
Kittson	4		
Koochiching	26		
Lac qui Parle	1		
Lake	8		
Lake of the Woods	48		
LeSueur	11		
Lincoln			
Lyon	2		
Mahnomen	0		
Marshall	4		
Martin	43		
McLeod	6		
Meeker	29		
Mille Lacs	33		
Morrison	26		
Mower	60		
Murray	0		
Nicollet	25		
Nobles	30		

"SMALL AMOUNT" MARIJUANA VIOLATOR REFERRAL TREND 1976-1978

The number of "small amount" marijuana possession referrals received from Minnesota courts into the state approved drug education program from April 12, 1976 to February 3, 1978.

