



BACKGROUND

Towards No Drug Abuse (TND) is an evidence-based program designed to help youth reduce their tobacco, alcohol or drug use, and violent behaviour.

The program was implemented in Canada to determine if the intervention could contribute to changes in drug abuse patterns in Canada. The John Howard Society of Hamilton, Ontario implemented TND between July 2009 and September 2014 in at risk schools within the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Catholic School Board. The National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) provided \$1,556,000 in funding for the program.

The project's aim was to target youth in schools and in the community who were at a high risk of committing crimes related to substance abuse.

The objective of the evaluation was to assess the program's ability to increase participants' knowledge of the consequences of tobacco and substance abuse, and to increase participants' social skills, decision-making, self-control and coping ability. The evaluation also aimed to assess the program's ability to reduce the risk factors associated with drug-related crimes including cigarette use, hard drug/substance use, weapons carrying, and victimization.

METHOD

The evaluation for the school-based component used a quasi-experimental, repeated measures

between-group design. The comparison group used classes from schools that were not participating in TND during the semester. The within-group repeated measures involved the administration of self-reported questionnaires at four stages: pre-intervention (T1); immediately post-intervention (T2); 6 months post-intervention (T3); and 12 months post-intervention (T4).

The evaluation design for the community-component was a within-group repeated measures design similar to the school-based component, but with no comparison group. This type of design tests changes in the target group before the program and at various follow-up points after the completion of the intervention.

Data sources included pre- and post-intervention questionnaires administered in the school and community-based programs, 6- and 12-month follow-up online surveys, focus groups with school-based program participants, and key informant interviews with TND program stakeholders (i.e., teachers, principals, a representative from each school board, and community partners).

For the final analysis, the data from the school and community groups were pooled to allow for a more comprehensive multivariate analysis (ANOVA) that would allow for an analysis of how gender and risk levels were impacted by the intervention.

FINDINGS

The overall summary of findings for anticipated outcomes is that approximately six months after

participating in the program, TND participants look quite similar to the comparison group on many of the outcomes. This indicates that participation in TND is having a limited impact on the anticipated skills and behaviour outcomes at six months post-program. One exception is that on the knowledge outcome TND participants continued to have higher test scores than the comparison group¹ indicating that TND participation had a positive impact on knowledge. However, this increased level of knowledge does not appear to have been translated into similar positive changes in skills or behaviour.

Statistical tests were also conducted to determine if there were any differences between the original and modified versions of the model—findings indicated that compressing the module to fit within the Canadian semester system did not have an impact on the results.

IMPLICATIONS

Given the lack of demonstrated incremental impacts on identified outcomes for TND within the context provided, expanded or additional implementation of the TND Program within the Canadian context should be undertaken with caution. Although there were high levels of satisfaction with the program among students, facilitators, and stakeholders, the program would likely need to be further adapted and/or changed to obtain the intended impact among Canadian youth.

SOURCE

Goss Gilroy Inc. (2014). *Towards No Drugs (TND) Impact Evaluation: Final Report*. Submitted to: Donna Smith-Moncricieffe, Technical Authority, Public Safety Canada.

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¹ At post-test: $F=323.52$, $p<.001$; at 6-months: $F=8.64$, $p<.01$; at 12-months: $F=5.95$, $p<.05$