



Aberdeen School District, Grays Harbor County Washington State Incentive Grant 1st Year Community-Level Evaluation 1999-2000

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Executive Summary

Aberdeen School District is one of eighteen Washington State Incentive Grant community grantees. Eighty-five percent of State Incentive Grant funds are allocated to communities to prevent the use, misuse, and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs by Washington State youth.

This document is a baseline community-level evaluation report, examining the history of the Aberdeen community's partnership efforts within the last decade, substance abuse prevention efforts in Aberdeen, and the community's initial challenges and successes in prevention services for youth. Reports are provided as feedback on Aberdeen's efforts to date and as a record of those efforts for state and federal funding sponsors.

Challenges

Aberdeen, a rural town of 16,420 population on Washington's Pacific Coast, has experienced two periods of drastic downsizing in the timber industry in the last twenty years, and sharp declines in the fishing industry as well. The entire coastal area suffers from a lack of opportunity compared to other areas in the state; unemployment is at 8%. Aberdeen's higher than average rates of poverty and substance abuse are blamed for the area's high rates of domestic violence and child abuse. Grays Harbor County's rates of adults in alcohol or other drug treatment, domestic violence, and child abuse are all significantly higher than state rates. Youth substance abuse is also high, with juvenile drug arrest rates higher than those for similar counties and juvenile alcohol arrest rates over twice that of the state rate.

Prevention History and Resources

Prior to the State Incentive Grant, prevention services at the elementary school level were primarily provided by the Aberdeen Police Department through the D.A.R.E. (Drug Awareness and Resistance Education) program. Aberdeen was the second D.A.R.E. site in Washington State, and many residents are proud of the D.A.R.E. program. Educational Service District 113 (ESD 113) provides prevention, intervention, and treatment services, through the True North program, for high school students. The Teen Safe and Sober Community Coalition represents teams from ten high schools in Grays Harbor County.

Coalition students provide prevention programs and demonstrations with guidance and assistance from Grays Harbor County Public Health and Human Services. Public health educators provide substance abuse prevention education as part of their health education at all county schools. Aberdeen's one junior high, Miller Jr. High, has a 21st Century Community Learning Center, administered by ESD 113. Family Fun Nights provide pro-social events at Aberdeen elementary schools several times per year. Aberdeen Parks and Recreation provides periodic after school programming on site at Aberdeen elementary schools.

Prevention Program Selection Process

Despite these prevention efforts, the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB) indicated that Aberdeen students are initiating alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use at an early age. Of Aberdeen sixth graders surveyed, 23% reported that they had used alcohol within the last thirty days, nearly 13% had used tobacco in the last thirty days, and 10% had used some other drug in the last thirty days.

A work group of Aberdeen School District principals prioritized risk and protective factors based on the WSSAHB and their experience with the community and the children they serve.

Prioritized Risk Factors

- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Family history of the problem behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict

Prioritized Protective Factors

- Bonding: Family Attachment
- Bonding: School Attachment

School attachment is seen as a crucial element for children's success in Aberdeen. Since the area's historically predominant industries, timber and fishing, did not require a high school diploma, many Aberdeen residents have not traditionally placed a high value on education. Principals reported a high degree of rebellious behavior by some students. Over 25% of sixth grade students reported low attachment to school in the most recent WSSAHB.

The work group felt that the goals of the substance abuse prevention program, FAST (Families and Schools Together) were a good fit for their at-risk elementary school students and families. FAST is a rigor level 5 program, indicating that research has found the program effective in multiple geographic and demographic settings.

Program goals include the following:

- Enhance family functioning
- Prevent the target child from experiencing school failure
- Prevent substance abuse by the child and family
- Reduce the stress that parents and their children experience from daily life situations

Successes

The Aberdeen School District State Incentive Grant ran its first session of FAST in the spring of this year. Families from two of the district's six schools met together at the McDermoth Elementary School Library one night each week for eight weeks. In addition to the other staff and volunteers who made up the FAST team, both principals participated. Five families graduated from the Aberdeen FAST program this year. At the end of the program, principals reported that some of the parents, who had not previously had a positive relationship with school staff, were now approaching principals and staff as partners in helping their children. Principals also reported that some of the FAST children were showing improved attitudes and work patterns at school.

This summer the FAST team sent two staff to Wisconsin to become FAST trainers. They will train additional staff and volunteers. Experienced and new staff and volunteers will combine to create two new FAST teams as the Aberdeen School District FAST program expands to serve the remaining four elementary schools in the district next year.

Aberdeen School District, Grays Harbor County Baseline Community-Level Evaluation

Introduction

The Washington State Incentive Grant

Aberdeen School District #5 is one of eighteen Washington State Incentive Grant community grantees. Eighty-five percent of State Incentive Grant funds are allocated to communities to prevent the use, misuse, and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs by Washington State youth. The grant consists of a three-year, \$8.9 million award from the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention to Washington State through a cooperative agreement with Governor Gary Locke's office. State agencies participating in the State Incentive Grant have goals of coordinating resources and reducing duplication of effort. Communities will reduce key risk factors and promote protective factors in their efforts to reduce youth substance use, misuse, and abuse. Specific goals for communities are stated in the *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Plan*, pages 4 and 5, published in March 1999, by the Governor's Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory committee. Appendix A contains a detailed list of those objectives. They are summarized here:

Goals:

1. Prevent alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drug use, misuse and abuse by the state's youth.
2. Make the community-level system more effective.

Objectives:

1. Establish local prevention partnerships.
2. Use a risk and protective factor framework for the community prevention plan.
3. Participate in joint community risk and protective factor and resource assessment.
4. Select and implement effective prevention actions.
5. Use common reporting tools.

What is the purpose of this report?

The State Incentive Grant evaluation, of which this report is a part, is a research evaluation intended to provide feedback to state agencies and communities on their progress toward goals stated in the *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Plan*. Interim reports are provided as an integral part of that feedback. Research methods are described in Appendix B.

This document is a baseline community-level evaluation report, examining the history of substance abuse prevention efforts in Aberdeen within the last decade, the community's partnership efforts, and their initial challenges and successes in providing prevention services for youth. Reports are provided as feedback on Aberdeen's efforts to date and as a record of those efforts for state and federal funding sponsors. Future reports will include discussions of program effectiveness, community partnerships, and plans for continued funding beyond the State Incentive Grant.

Background

The State Incentive Grant represents a new level of collaboration in Aberdeen, a community with a long history of collaborative efforts. This new project embodies a shift in thinking, on the part of Aberdeen school principals, county-funded programs, ESD (Educational Service District) 113 prevention services, and community social service agencies towards utilizing social services within the school infrastructure to assist parents and their children to succeed (Kalkwarf, 2000).¹ Aberdeen School District elementary principals have worked closely with Grays Harbor County Public Health and Human Services (GHCPHHS) personnel to do the groundwork necessary to secure SIG funding to provide Families and Schools Together (FAST), a Best Practice program, to at-risk fourth through sixth graders throughout the Aberdeen School District.

A work group of Aberdeen School District principals prioritized risk and protective factors based on the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior (WSSAHB) and their experience with the community and the children they serve. WSSAHB data was valid only for eighth grade students, as too few students in other grades participated.² School attachment is seen as a crucial element for children's success in Aberdeen. Principals interviewed reported that many Aberdeen residents have not traditionally placed a high value on education. The following risk and protective factors were prioritized:

Risk factors

- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Family history of the problem behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict

Protective Factors

- Bonding: Family Attachment
- Bonding: School Attachment

¹ Personal communication.

² Becker, Linda et al. 1999 County Profile on Risk and Protection for Substance Abuse Prevention Planning in Grays Harbor County. Olympia, WA: Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis.

The program's creator, Lynn McDonald, explains the FAST program as follows:

The FAST program supports development of relationships among parents, schools, and the community to enhance children's academic and social performance. FAST meetings are structured around social activities for parents and families. In this eight-week program families gather together for a family meal and a variety of social activities, which include music, drawing, family games, children's sports, a parent group, and a chance for parents to interact with each other. It is hoped that, after participating in the FAST program, students will experience fewer social or behavioral difficulties, which may also promote children's academic performance, and that the FAST parents will have become friends and will offer social support for one another over time (McDonald, L., 2000).³

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is a prevention program designed to strengthen and bring families closer together by emphasizing communication and listening skills, while providing an atmosphere which encourages bonding between participating families. It is categorized as a "selective" program, which means that it is intended for use with at risk youth and their families. Aberdeen selects youth based on teachers' reports of behavioral problems, and referrals to the principal for discipline. Since school staff are included in the FAST team, principals feel that the program will improve relationships between families and schools. After the eight weeks are over, families are expected to continue to meet in a self-directed two-year follow up program, FASTWorks.

The Community

Aberdeen, with a population of 16,420,⁴ is located on Grays Harbor on the Pacific Coast of Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. The resource-based economy, long fueled by timber and fishing, has suffered greatly over the last few decades due to severe reductions in those industries. Higher paying milling and logging jobs have largely been replaced with lower paying retail and service industry jobs.

The coastal area suffers from a lack of opportunity compared to other areas in the state, with the exception of occupations in the professional sector, for which few local people are qualified. The average annual wage for Grays Harbor County is \$24,908, \$8,154 less than the average for the state. At 8%, its lowest level in the last twenty years, unemployment in Grays Harbor is still considerably higher than the state's current jobless rate of less than 5%.⁵ Respondents unanimously felt that many Aberdeen residents suffer profound poverty, with 6% of Grays Harbor residents receiving TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families), over 10% receiving food stamps, and 20% receiving Medical Assistance, compared to statewide figures of 3%, 6%, and 13% respectively.

³ *Fast Tour*, FAST web site: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/fast/tour/index.html>

⁴ Population and income assistance statistics in this section are from the *State of Washington 1999 Data Book*, Washington State Office of Financial Management.

⁵ Employment and migration information from the Washington State Labor Market Information web pages: <http://www.wa.gov/esd/lmea/labrmrkt/byarea.htm>

Traditionally, formal education has not been highly valued in this community, as high-paying timber and fishing jobs did not require it. General hopelessness on the part of low-income Aberdeen residents following the loss of most of the area's customary livelihoods is seen as one of the causes for generational alcoholism and drug abuse. One respondent said that alcohol abuse has been a long-term community problem, citing a history of loggers and mill workers seeking relief from the strains associated with difficult and dangerous labor by drinking after work.

Continuity is highly valued in the Aberdeen community, as is reflected in the sample of respondents for this report, the majority of whom were long-term or lifelong residents of Grays Harbor County. Several respondents expressed a hope that new opportunities in the area will help stem the tide of outmigration that has accelerated in the years since welfare reform has been instituted. A lack of living wage jobs for untrained workers in Grays Harbor County is sending welfare recipients out of the area to seek employment. Those seeking a career on the professional level generally leave the area to go to college, often working outside the Aberdeen community for at least part of their career.⁶ Some do return, though, when local opportunities become available. Reasons for living in Aberdeen, cited by respondents, include family and community ties, as well as a scenic environment with plenty of outdoors recreational opportunities.

Respondents noted that, except for those with low-incomes, Aberdeen residents are optimistic about the prospects for Grays Harbor County. This optimism is due in part to a recent upsurge in growth. Here is a list of new developments in the county:

- The Olympic Gateway Mall
- The newly opened Quinault Beach Resort, in nearby Ocean Shores, heralded as a destination resort, with a casino, restaurants, spa, and convention facilities, is expected to employ 350 people
- Stafford Creek Corrections Center, an adult medium security prison, recently opened, is expected to eventually employ some 600 people in family wage jobs
- A new YMCA facility, under construction, will serve all of Grays Harbor, replacing separate and dated facilities in Aberdeen and Hoquiam
- Satsop Development Park, zoned light industrial, utilizing the infrastructure of the abandoned Satsop nuclear power plant
- Safe Harbor Technology Corporation, a dot-com company that provides customer service support, located in the Satsop Development Park
- Removing the large, derelict Finch Building from downtown is credited with improving Aberdeen's appearance, and its residents' outlook for their town

⁶ Grays Harbor College offers associate degrees, and through distance learning agreements, students can obtain baccalaureate degrees from The Evergreen State College and Washington State University.

- Increased tourism, largely in response to various festivals held in Grays Harbor and additional services in the ocean beach areas, is also causing some optimism about the future of the economy.

As *The Seattle Times* reported, efforts to create a sustainable economy for Grays Harbor have required new levels of collaboration in Grays Harbor:

Nine cities and towns collaborated with the county, various civic groups, the chamber, the Port of Grays Harbor, Grays Harbor Community College, the (Quinault) tribe, and others to retrain dislocated loggers and millworkers while luring new businesses, such as Safe Harbor Technology, that would not rely on natural resources (Anderson, 2000).⁷

Cooperation among social service agencies is highly valued in Grays Harbor County. Those interviewees working to address the social needs of Grays Harbor community members spoke often of the high-level of cooperation among both public and private non-profit social services agencies and expressed optimism about collaborative efforts underway to create positive social changes. The collaborative environment of service provision is seen as a way to optimally meet community needs, with a limited pool of human, infrastructure, and funding resources. Aberdeen professionals are used to working together to get things done, and expressed that the community is quick to help, and will help without reservation, if they see value in a project. An example of this—and community members’ generosity—is Grays Harbor’s annual participation in the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life. Last year, Grays Harbor ranked ninth in the nation for money raised per capita for this event. This year, Grays Harbor participants raised \$188,926, nearly \$25,000 more than last year (*The Daily World*, 2000).

One major community collaboration led to the creation of the non-profit umbrella agency, Coastal Communities Action Program (CCAP). CCAP houses such diverse non-profit organizations as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Housing and Community Services, Washington Volunteer Legal Services, and Community Mobilization Against Substance Abuse (CMASA), to name just a few. CMASA has taken on the responsibility of keeping the community resource directory up to date, and is currently working to provide an online version of the directory, which will ultimately be easier to keep current. Paper versions of the directory will still be published quarterly to accommodate agencies or individuals without Internet access.

Respondents reported that, by and large, Aberdeen residents are computer literate. Grays Harbor County residents have three Internet access providers from which to choose. Emphasis on computers is a goal of the Aberdeen School District. Aberdeen schools have taken advantage of technology grants and upgraded their computer resources. McDermoth Elementary, for example, has a new computer center in its library, stocked with twelve Apple iMAC computers,

⁷ Anderson, R. (February 20, 2000): “Hopes and jobs returning to Grays Harbor County, Can struggling milltowns be saved by a casino and a prison?” *The Seattle Times*, Seattle, Washington.

available to students and staff. Community groups may rent time in the computer center. Each classroom also has four to six computers for use during class time.

Community Attitudes toward and Resources for Youth

Almost universally, respondents expressed the view that members of the Aberdeen community are very concerned about children and that area agencies actively work together for the benefit of children. The community's support of bond issues to remodel, renovate, or replace dated school buildings, despite low incomes and a general distaste for taxes, is evidence of this support.

For the most recent major community collaboration prior to SIG, the Aberdeen community came together to create the non-profit Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). The CAC was started in response to concerns expressed by law enforcement, social services and a few community members, who felt that child victims of abuse should not have to tell their stories numerous times to several different people. One hundred community members, including representatives of all of the area's social services agencies, attended the original meeting. Open for the past year, CAC provides an environment that allows the child to talk to one interviewer, and have their case reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel made up of representatives from all concerned agencies.

Respondents felt that passage of the bond issue to renovate the aging Robert Gray Elementary School is, in light of Aberdeen's difficult economic situation, a major affirmation of community members' commitment to the wellbeing of children. Interviewees also cited the building of the new skateboard park, as an example of concern for the needs of youth. The park was built, with help from the City of Aberdeen, in response to requests from area young people for a skateboarding venue.

Respondents reported a great deal of excitement in the community around the collaboration of the communities of Aberdeen and Hoquiam to create and fund the new YMCA.⁸ Designed to serve both communities, this project is seen as a milestone in collaboration. Historically, members of these two communities have seen their towns as competitors for limited resources. Through this project, they have discovered the power of working together toward a common goal. The new YMCA will have facilities far exceeding those available in either town's existing facility, and is expected to provide a wide range of family recreational opportunities for all Grays Harbor residents.

Athletic involvement is the type of activity most valued by the Aberdeen community. For example, 53 teams play slow pitch baseball in the adult league. Children are encouraged to be involved in baseball, football, soccer, and other sports. Organized sports are available in schools starting in the fourth grade. When the Aberdeen High School football team plays its rival, neighboring

⁸ The Aberdeen-Hoquiam YMCA is scheduled to be completed in 2001. A \$10,000,000 project, the new YMCA is being funded primarily by donations from the community, including donations of materials and labor from local contractors.

Hoquiam High School, 5,000 or more spectators, including members of every segment of the Aberdeen and Hoquiam communities, can be expected to attend games.

While there is great deal of sports involvement on the part of Aberdeen area youth, several respondents noted that athletic involvement often presents challenges in transportation, scheduling, and costs that are beyond the resources of most low-income families.

Aberdeen currently lacks places where youth can hang out at night. Aberdeen's Neutral Zone—an adult-supervised gym on Saturday nights that included free food—closed its doors due to the small pool of volunteers operating the center. They were overworked and becoming exhausted. The community is currently discussing how and where to open a new youth center.

Aberdeen School District

Respondents reported that Aberdeen's elementary schools act as neighborhood centers. Children play at the playgrounds during off-hours, and various community groups frequently use school facilities. Aberdeen School District elementary schools are currently being extensively upgraded one by one. A.J. West Elementary School was the first to be modernized, followed by McDermoth, with the Robert Gray improvement project underway now. Plans are underway to refurbish Stevens Elementary next.

Aberdeen's six elementary schools, A.J. West, Alexander Young, Central Park⁹, McDermoth, Robert Gray, and Stevens Elementary all have higher participation in free and reduced lunch programs than the state average. Robert Gray and Stevens have the highest rates in Aberdeen, with Robert Gray at over 70% and Stevens at over 80%.¹⁰ Respondents reported students living in poverty, even in schools located in wealthier neighborhoods. McDermoth, located in one such neighborhood, has 50% of its students receiving free or reduced cost lunches. One principal reported having between 20-25% of his students on IEPs (Individual Educational Plans), indicating that nearly one-quarter of all students in that elementary school have experienced serious academic difficulties. Principals also report a high number of conduct violations at their schools.

Respondents blame Aberdeen's higher than average rates of poverty and substance abuse for the area's high rates of domestic violence and child abuse. Grays Harbor County's rate of adults in drug or alcohol treatment is nearly 14 per thousand residents, compared to 10:1000 for Washington counties with similar characteristics (Counties Like Us),¹¹ and a state rate of 9:1000 for the

⁹ Central Park is located just outside of Aberdeen on the main road toward Olympia, but is included in the Aberdeen School District.

¹⁰ As reported by the principals of those schools.

¹¹ Counties Like Us, in the case of Grays Harbor County, include other rural counties with similar characteristics: Clallam, Cowlitz, Island, Jefferson, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, San Juan, Skagit, and Wahkiakum. For information about how this county grouping was created, see the 1996 County

year 1997. Domestic violence arrests, which rose steeply in the years following the mill closures in 1992, are declining now, but they are still higher than the state average.

In 1998 the domestic violence arrest rate was 10:1000 for Grays Harbor County, with a rate of 7:1000 for Counties Like Us and the state overall. Victims in accepted Child Abuse Referrals (a report of suspected child abuse) are at a rate of 88:1000 in Grays Harbor County, compared to 63:1000 for Counties Like Us, and a state rate of 40:1000, for the year 1997. Respondents noted that Grays Harbor County has more than its fair share of social problems, and social services are stretched to their limits. Several respondents expressed a concern that the State of Washington does not sufficiently fund social services for Grays Harbor County, because of the formula it uses to calculate an area's needs. Aberdeen, they say, does not fit the state's profile.

Principals interviewed for this study reported additional challenges for low-income families ranging from high mobility to lack of a work culture. With inter-generational poverty, some families in Aberdeen have never experienced employment and do not understand the importance of timeliness in work and school culture. For these families, getting their children to school on time, or, in some cases, on a regular basis, is often not a priority.

School staff reported that children having difficulties at school often have serious worries at home, sometimes including a parent who is in jail. Adult arrest rates for Grays Harbor County are higher than rates for the state, especially drug-related arrests.¹² Law enforcement and other respondents reported a great deal of drug traffic and meth-amphetamine production in the area, as well as a large amount of marijuana grown in the forests surrounding Grays Harbor. Some school staff reported that they meet an unexpectedly high number of students, some in the primary grades, who talk knowledgeably about sex and drugs. Aberdeen school counselors have only been available one-quarter time at each elementary school, which has made it difficult for them to develop trust relationships with those students needing help. An additional counselor has recently been hired, so that each school will now have a half-time counselor.

Parents and school staff may have very different expectations for student behavior. Serious behavioral problems in classrooms and on school playgrounds, caused by various stress factors at home, often create disciplinary problems for schools. Parents and school staff, especially principals, often meet under difficult circumstances, such as when a child's behavior warrants disciplinary action. Principals reported that some parents are reluctant to enter school grounds due to negative experiences from their own schooldays.

Profile. Data presented here are from the *1999 County Profile on Risk and Protection for Substance Abuse Prevention Planning in Grays Harbor County*.

¹² 1999 County Profile, see footnote above.

Existing substance abuse prevention services

Prior to SIG, DARE was the primary substance abuse prevention program in the Aberdeen elementary schools. Respondents indicated that Aberdeen community members are enthusiastic about the DARE program, and are proud of being the second community in Washington State to institute DARE.

Following are details about DARE and other prevention programs and activities in the Aberdeen School District.

- Teen Safe and Sober Community Coalition—supported by GHCPHHS staff, high school students from ten teen prevention teams in the county work together to identify prevention needs in their schools and implement research-based prevention actions.
- True North—school-based prevention, intervention, treatment, and continuing care for middle and high school students, including intensive outpatient services are available onsite in Harbor High School’s old theater. These services are provided by ESD 113, in conjunction with the Aberdeen School District, and funded through the Office the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Safe and Drug Free Schools and Student Assistance, DASA Prevention/Intervention, and GHCPHSS Youth Treatment Services.
- 21st Century Grant—administered by ESD 113, through the Western Washington Community Learning Center Consortium. This grant created a 21st Century learning center at Miller Jr. High School. The learning center is open from 2:30-6:00 and provides after-school activities, food, tutoring, and social skills building for at-risk students.
- Public Health educators—GHCPHHS public health educators visit schools providing educational sessions on various health topics, including substance abuse.
- Tobacco Coalition—headed by GHCPHHS, providing tobacco education to the Grays Harbor Community.
- DARE (Drug Awareness and Resistance Education)—provided by the Aberdeen Police Department. DARE includes a 17-week program of weekly DARE sessions at the 5th grade level, four sessions for K-12 students, and five sessions for 3rd and 4th graders in all Aberdeen elementary schools.
- SCOPE (Students and Cops Opting for a Positive Environment)—The Aberdeen Police Department School Resource Officer (SRO) provides education to high school students, in student-led sessions, about the consequences of violence, including the role that substance abuse sometimes plays in violence.¹³
- SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere)—Student-directed anti-violence education and events, with the SRO acting as an advisor.

¹³ SCOPE and SAVE were both active for four to five years, until the first School Resource Officer left town to pursue other career opportunities this year. The current SRO, a longtime Grays Harbor resident, is hoping to pick up these programs and continue them in the 2000-2001 school year.

- Family Fun Nights—Community Mobilization Against Substance Abuse (CMASA) helped schools get these family activity nights started. Sponsored by Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs), businesses, community members, and the Aberdeen Police Department, Family Fun Nights include a free meal and an activity, with ATOD prevention education.
- Periodic after-school activities and summer school are provided by Aberdeen Parks and Recreation Department (APRD)—an aide or teacher is hired at each school, who determines what activities will be offered there, funded by APRD. Some activities, such as gymnastics, are organized by APRD, and provided for a short time at each school in turn. Activities are not regular or frequent enough to serve as a latchkey or daycare program and no transportation is provided. APRD has had to eliminate trips to ocean beaches and Camp Bishop in Shelton that relied on public transportation, due to passage of I-695.¹⁴
- Lunch buddy mentoring programs at most elementary schools pair students with adults or high school students for pro-social interaction.
- School counselors provide periodic prevention services to students on an individual and group basis, but counselors have only been available one-quarter time at each elementary school.

Despite the prevention efforts thus far, results of Aberdeen’s Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behaviors (WSSAHB) indicated that a large number of Aberdeen sixth graders had initiated ATOD use. The 1998 WSSAHB indicated that 23% of Aberdeen sixth graders had used alcohol in the last thirty days, with 58% having tried it at some time in their lives (lifetime use); 10% had used some other drug in the last thirty days, with 23% reporting use in their lifetimes; and nearly 13% had used tobacco in the last thirty days, with nearly 40% having tried tobacco at some point in their lives.¹⁵ Aberdeen elementary school principals and GHCPHHS looked at prevention research and their WSSAHB information and concluded that more prevention was needed at the elementary level.

Due to the high rates of early initiation into ATOD use, Aberdeen school and social services respondents felt that they should begin prevention programs with younger age groups. When the State Incentive Grant became available, a workgroup of Aberdeen School District principals, with guidance from GHCPHHS, studied the risk and protective factor framework for providing prevention services, and examined the WSSAHB results for their schools. While those already providing prevention services in Grays Harbor County have been using this theoretical structure for some time, it was a new perspective for the

¹⁴ Initiative 695 reduced licensing tax from a percentage of the automobile’s value, to a flat fee of \$30.00. This has reduced state funding to city and county governments, particularly for transportation. Most of Grays Harbor Transit’s bus routes have been retained, however, due to a ballot measure in which Grays Harbor residents voted to increase sales tax to make up for the loss of transit monies.

¹⁵ These data should be viewed with some caution, as only 40% of Aberdeen sixth graders participated in the 1998 survey: *1999 Grays Harbor County Profile on Risk and Protection for Substance Abuse Prevention*.

elementary school principals, allowing them to approach their students' problems from the standpoint of building strengths. With some Aberdeen families exhibiting high numbers of risk factors, and weak bonds to schools, they felt it would be best to target those at-risk families.

The workgroup decided to implement the FAST program at the elementary school level because the goals of the FAST program, which are to strengthen parent-child and family-school relationships, were seen as a good match for local families' needs.¹⁶

The Aberdeen School District FAST Program

Families and Schools Together—FAST—is designed to empower parents to take control of their families. The program provides time for parents to practice listening skills and learn how to ask non-threatening questions, in one-to-one time with their child. Parents learn to communicate with their children, including talking about expectations and setting limits. They also have time to talk with other parents and learn that they share many of the same challenges. Targeted children meet as a group with a counselor, while their non-targeted siblings have supervised playtime. Because FAST meets at school and school staff are part of the FAST team, parents and school staff become more comfortable with each other as they share the informal settings of meal times and large-group activities.

Prevention programs are categorized by a rigor scale, created by the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Rigor is the extent to which the program has been shown, through scientific research methods, to be effective in different locales and with multiple populations. The highest rating is rigor 5; the lowest, rigor 1. FAST is rated at rigor level 5.

FAST Partners

The following partners bring FAST to at-risk students and their families in Aberdeen:

- Aberdeen School District #5 provides meeting facilities, school counselor for FAST group sessions with targeted students, staff to coordinate activities for non-targeted students, volunteer help as needed.
- GHCPHHS provides social services administration and resources, the parent educator for the program, and volunteer help as needed.
- A Healing Change, a private practice counselor, provides counseling services to parents as the Mental Health Partner.
- Aberdeen Parks and Recreation and Grays Harbor YMCA will provide activities for the supervised playtime in the future FAST programs. Volunteers, including the school principals, provided those services for the first year of the program.

¹⁶ See FAST Program Goals in Appendix C.

- Aberdeen Police Department will provide substance abuse prevention education to parents in FASTWorks.
- Grays Harbor Juvenile Services works with the FAST team to provide services to students who are in the juvenile justice system.
- ESD 113 provides the Substance Abuse Prevention Partner who teaches the substance abuse prevention component of FAST, as well as providing other help as needed.

In addition to these partners, the Aberdeen FAST team is hoping to recruit volunteers from the Grays Harbor Community Network and CMASA for future FAST sessions.

Aberdeen's first year of FAST

FAST was held for eight sessions at McDermoth Elementary School, with families from both McDermoth and Robert Gray elementary schools attending. To recruit families for the FAST program, letters explaining FAST were sent home to all parents of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders at the two schools. School staff targeted key families to receive additional information about FAST at conference time, and those families also received a home visit to encourage their participation. Five families graduated from the FAST program this year, two from Robert Gray Elementary and three from McDermoth Elementary.

The McDermoth and Robert Gray principals reported improvements in relationships between some FAST families and school staff, especially the principals. The two school principals both participated in FAST as volunteers, and helped supervise activities for non-targeted siblings. Students in the FAST program were able to see their principal in a new light and a new role, rather than as just a disciplinary figure, when their principals acted as emcees, played games with the group, sang the FAST song, served food, and played with siblings. Principals reported improved relationships with those children, and, in one case, a child who had given up on herself academically was trying again in school after being in the FAST program.

Some FAST parents, who formerly had a somewhat adversarial relationship with school staff, have begun to enlist the principals' aid on various problems with their children. Principals felt that there had been a shift in those parents' perception: from viewing principals as authority figures to feeling that their school principal was someone with whom they could work to help their child.

FAST Year Two

The first challenge facing the FAST team, now, will be to transition this year's graduate FAST parents into the FASTWorks follow-up program. In FASTWorks, parents run their own monthly meetings to act as a support group for each other and to continue providing pro-social experiences for their children. FAST team staff will provide assistance and guidance to graduate parents, gradually disengaging themselves from the operations of that group and letting

the parents take control, but remaining available for support. The goal is for parents to continue to function as an independent unit, supporting and guiding new parents graduating from FAST as subsequent sessions are completed.

Next year, the remainder of Aberdeen's elementary schools, A.J. West, Alexander Young, Central Park, and Stevens Elementary School will also be able to offer FAST. This will require the creation of two new FAST teams: Team 2 will serve A.J. West and Alexander Young elementary schools, and Team 3 will serve Stevens Elementary School—a high needs area. Families from Central Park Elementary School will have their choice of attending FAST sessions at any of the three FAST sites. Beginning with Year Two, Aberdeen will offer FAST to two cohorts at each site, one in the fall, and one in the new year, totaling six FAST programs in the district per year.

Two members of the Aberdeen FAST team were sent to Wisconsin to be trained as FAST trainers. They will train volunteers and staff for the new FAST teams.¹⁷ They will also oversee the progress of the new FAST teams. FAST partners that did not participate in the first year's program will provide services during the second year.

The FAST team is hoping that parents from this year's FAST team will have spoken to their friends about their experiences with FAST, and that this will increase the number of Robert Gray and McDermoth parents who interested in FAST from the outset of the school year. It is also hoped that those parent graduates will help with the schools' FAST recruiting efforts at orientation events in the fall.

There are other expectations associated with SIG, in addition to carrying out substance abuse prevention services. These involve changes in the system by which local prevention services are planned, delivered, and evaluated. Aberdeen has made a major change to this system already by bringing substance abuse prevention services and contact with community social service providers to families in a comfortable and accessible format at their neighborhood schools. While the county, law enforcement, ESD 113, Aberdeen Parks and Recreation, the YMCA, have each worked with Aberdeen Schools before, they are now all working together in the schools. Aberdeen Schools are expanding their community connections to include new members, too, such as A Healing Change, Grays Harbor Community Network, and CMASA, to accomplish their SIG goals. Working together, these agencies are utilizing the FAST program as a starting point for families to get help in strengthening their children to resist risky behaviors.

¹⁷ The trainers will be qualified to train and certify new FAST sites.

As a way of measuring progress toward the goals for communities of the *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Prevention Plan*, grantees are expected to participate in the SIG community-level evaluation. This evaluation has four components:

- **Process evaluation**, which examines organizational capacity and prevention planning.
- **Program implementation fidelity**, what was actually done and how it compares to what was planned.
- **Program effectiveness**, how effective the program was, measured by participant pre- and post-tests.
- **Long-term community-wide changes in substance abuse prevalence and risk and protective factors**, which are assumed to result from changes in community organization and planning and the provision of prevention program services to targeted populations, measured by the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior (WSSAHB). For long-term outcomes, the WSSAHB will be administered to sixth, eighth, tenth, and twelfth, graders at all Aberdeen schools every two years through 2006.

For the Aberdeen School District, seven items will be important during Year Two:

1. Continued implementation of prevention programs.
2. Continued participation in program effectiveness monitoring (Everest database and other agreed upon measurement methods when the Everest database is inappropriate for use with a particular program).
3. Participation in program implementation fidelity measures.
4. Continued development of a system for community-wide prevention planning, delivery, and evaluation.
5. Continued participation in process evaluation, consisting of interviews and document review.
6. Ensuring the Aberdeen School District's participation in the Autumn 2000 administration of the Washington State Adolescent Health Behavior Survey (WSSAHB).
7. Developing specific plans to track progress toward and achieve anticipated immediate changes from the Community-Based Prevention Action Plan Implementation Matrix (column 7) and the community-level goals from the *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Plan* (see Appendix A).

Appendix A:

Community-Level Goals and Objectives¹⁸

Goal:

Communities selected to receive State Incentive Grant funds will work to prevent alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse by the state's youth in these communities. They will develop and implement prevention plans which will foster changes in the prevention system at the community level to make the system more effective.

Objectives:

1. To *establish partnerships* which include existing agencies and organizations, and families, youth, school, and workplaces to collaborate at the local level to prevent alcohol tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse by youth.
2. To *use a risk and protective factor framework* to develop a community prevention action plan which reduces factors which put youth at-risk for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug abuse and increase factors which protect or buffer youth from these risks.
3. To *participate in joint community risk and protective factor and resource assessment* by collecting, assessing, and prioritizing community-level information for: a) youth alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse; b) risk and protective factor indicators; and c) existing resources and service gaps.
4. To *select and implement effective prevention actions* that address priority risk and protective factors in the community by filling identified gaps in resources.
5. To *use common reporting tools* which provide information on what works and what does not work to reduce youth alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse.

¹⁸ Governor's Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee. 1999. *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Prevention Plan*. Olympia, WA: Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, State Incentive Grant Project.

Appendix B:

Methods

Information Sources

Interviews

Audiotaped interviews were conducted with lead agency contacts, as well as prevention service providers and community members. Interviewees were informed at the beginning of each interview that the audiotapes were confidential, were for the purpose of ensuring accuracy, and would be erased as soon as notes were taken from them. Questions were based on an interview guide, as well as related topics that arose during the interviews. Interview guides were modified after initial site visits were completed based on the evaluation team's ability to obtain the desired information from the questions asked, and a shift in the evaluation focus toward more background history for this initial baseline report. Interview responses were compared and tallied to identify majority and minority opinions.

Document Review

- a. Aberdeen Approved State Incentive Grant Community Matrices: Prevention programs intended to address desired outcomes and associated risk and protective factors are described in detail in matrices created by the Aberdeen School District, as lead agency, and the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse (DASA) State Incentive Grant administrative staff. These matrices were used to guide inquiry into the process of achieving anticipated local outcomes.
- b. Aberdeen FAST Team (2000): *Welcome to FAST, Families and Schools Together, Guest Information and Program Packet*.
- c. Aberdeen School District State Incentive Grant Application, 1999.
- d. Aberdeen School District (2000): *The Robert Gray/Natatorium Replacement Project*, <http://www.asd5.org/asd/rgrem/rgfacts.htm>.
- e. Anderson, R. (February 20, 2000): "Hopes and jobs returning to Grays Harbor County, Can struggling milltowns be saved by a casino and a prison?" *The Seattle Times*, Seattle, Washington.
- f. Becker, L., et al (1999): *1999 County Profile on Risk and Protection for Substance Abuse Prevention Planning in Grays Harbor County*, DSHS Publication # 4.33-14, Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division for the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse.
- g. Community Assessment Steering Committee (2000) *Grays Harbor County Resource Directory*, Community Mobilization Against Drug Abuse.

- h. *The Daily World: Our View*, “Grays Harbor Shows its Best”, June 5, 2000.
- i. Educational Service District 113 Student Assistance Program (2000): *True North; Student Assistance: Statewide Statistics; and Student Assistance Program Logic Model*.
- j. Governor’s Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee (1999): *Washington State Incentive Grant Substance Abuse Prevention Plan*.
- k. Huffman, Matt (1997) “Changing Tides” *The Daily World Archives*: <http://www.thedailyworld.com/archives/>.
- l. McDonald, Lynn (2000): *Fast Tour*, FAST web site: <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/fast/tour/index.html>
- m. McDonald, Lynn (1999): *Families and Schools Together (FAST): 1988-1998, Ten Years of Evaluation*, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin—Madison, Madison, Wisconsin.
- n. U.S. West (1999). *Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Raymond, South Bend* (and smaller towns of Pacific and Grays Harbor counties) *White and Yellow Pages*. Local and area phone books were consulted for listings of social service agencies.
- o. Western Regional Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (1999). *Best Practices and Promising Practices*, Reno, Nevada, University of Nevada, Reno.
- p. Washington Employment Security Department (2000): *Washington State Labor Market Information, Labor Market Information by Area, Selected Economic Data*, <http://www.wa.gov/esd/lmea/labrmrkt/sed/graysed.htm>.
- q. Washington State Office of Financial Management (1999) *State of Washington 1999 Data Book*. Also available online at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/index.htm>

Meeting Observations

The FAST graduation for the first cohort of FAST families from both McDermoth and Robert Gray elementary schools was observed on May 31, 2000; FAST awards and FASTWorks training were observed on June 23, 2000.

Survey

Sub-recipient Checklist: COSMOS Corporation designed the Sub-recipient Checklist under contract with the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention to conduct a cross-site evaluation. It is intended to document prevention activities semi-annually. Questions are asked about the sub-recipient’s most important prevention program or actions, although more than one form can be completed if the sub-recipient wishes to describe other programs. The “most important” prevention program is defined as that which is most likely to produce measurable outcomes.

Accessing Informants

Key Informants: Informants were identified through the matrices for the Aberdeen School District SIG project, the Aberdeen School District SIG application, and referrals from FAST team members. These included school principals, agency directors, regional prevention coordinators, two representatives of the Aberdeen Police Department, prevention service providers, and community mobilization workers. A total of 12 community members and one regional substance abuse prevention coordinator participated in face-to-face interviews, with one conversation by telephone.

Appendix C:

Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program Goals¹⁹

I. Enhance family functioning.

- A. Strengthen the parent-child relationships in specific focused ways.
- B. Empower the parents to help them become the primary prevention agents for their own children.

II. Prevent the target child from experiencing school failure.

- A. Improve the child's behavior and performance in school, both short-term and long-term.
- B. Empower the parents in their role as partners in the educational process.
- C. Increase the child and family's feelings of affiliation toward their school.

III. Prevent substance abuse by the child and family.

- A. Increase the family's knowledge and awareness of substance abuse, and the impact of substance abuse upon child development.
- B. Link the family to appropriate assessment and treatment services, as needed.

IV. Reduce the stress that parents and their children experience from daily life situations.

- A. Develop an ongoing support group for parents of at-risk children.
- B. Link the family to appropriate community resources and services, as needed.
- C. Build the resilience and social networks of each family member.

¹⁹ McDonald, Lynn. 1999. *Families and Schools Together (FAST): 1988-1998, Ten Years of Evaluation*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.



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