

## History of D.A.R.E.

If you went to school during the 1980s to early 2000s, there is a chance that you learned about drug resistance through the D.A.R.E. program. This program, alternatively known as Drug Abuse Resistance Education, was first established in 1983 by Los Angeles Police Department in an effort to reinforce substance misuse education and to lower substance misuse rates among youth. The model incorporated training from police officers to provide educational sessions to resist peer pressure and live drug-free lives. Since its inception, approximately 75% of school districts in the U.S. have implemented the program, and it has reached approximately 70,000 students, becoming one of the widely recognized prevention programs.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, D.A.R.E. became successfully implemented across 43 nations outside of the U.S making it one of the most popular prevention programs.



### Timeline of the D.A.R.E. Program<sup>3</sup>

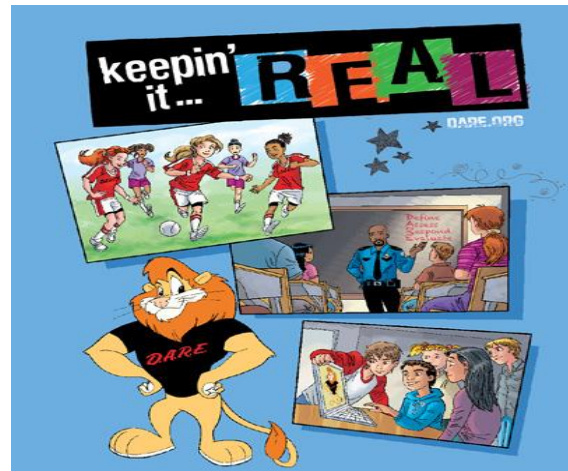
Although D.A.R.E. was becoming widely implemented across schools in the U.S., there were little or no studies indicating the success of the D.A.R.E. program.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> According to Berman and Fox, more than thirty evaluations have indicated negligible long-term impacts on substance use.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence noted that children who participated in the traditional D.A.R.E. program were more likely to use substances as compared to those who did not participate in the program.<sup>4</sup>

Due to the myriad of research findings indicating D.A.R.E.'s ineffectiveness in curbing substance use, there was a loss of federal funding in 1998.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the proponents of the D.A.R.E. program learned from the negative research findings and implemented significant improvements to the program.

*This document is for informational purposes only and is not intended to endorse or discredit any programs outlined.*

## D.A.R.E. /Keepin' it REAL

In 2001, the program incorporated Taking Charge of Your Life (TCYL) as a way to improve the original D.A.R.E. program. However, studies indicated those who participated in TCYL actually increased subsequent drug and alcohol use leading to the abandonment of the program.<sup>3</sup>



## What is Keepin' it REAL?

Keepin' it REAL (KiR) is comprised of "R.E.A.L.": Refuse (Saying no, I don't want something), Explain (Saying why involved in) and Leave (Taking myself out of a situation I don't want to be involved in). According to National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP), the KiR program is a multi-cultural, school-based substance use prevention program targeted for 12 to 14 year olds. The new D.A.R.E. program now incorporates D.A.R.E. and KiR, targeted towards elementary and middle school students.

NREPP is one of many available resources for identifying evidence-based and promising practices. When using resources to find strategies, it is critical to consider the strength of evidence provided as well as the feasibility and fit of the strategy to meet the identified need of your community.

The program comprises of a ten-lesson curriculum taught by uniformed police officers, with booster sessions delivered in the following year.<sup>6</sup> The recent Surgeon's General Report, "Facing Addiction in America," indicated that D.A.R.E. KiR program has been recognized as a selected program for applying social, emotional, cognitive, and substance refusal skills that deliver accurate information on rates and amounts of peer substance use.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the researchers found that students enrolled in KiR interventions had reduced alcohol and marijuana use, future intentions to accept substance offers, and more realistic perceptions of peer substance use.<sup>8</sup>

Some key findings of the *Keepin' it REAL* program present only short-term effects from the program. Studies indicated that effects of the *Keepin' it REAL* program may have lasted up to 14 months for alcohol use and marijuana use, while up to eight months for cigarette use.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, students who participated in the program did not show significant effects on substance use behaviors or the curriculum development skills (i.e., participants' refusal efficacy, use of resistance strategies, decision making style, substance use norms, expectations or intentions.)<sup>9</sup> Similarly, some studies concluded that KiR in elementary schools was unsuccessful at reducing substance use as well.

The major drawbacks included:<sup>3</sup>

- KiR has only been tested on a narrow audience. Thus, research is critical to ensure that KiR can be implemented across the broad spectrum of elementary and middle school students.
- KiR may not be effective in reducing substance use among elementary school students.
- The new version of KiR implemented by D.A.R.E. (D.A.R.E. KiR and D.A.R.E. KiR Elementary) has never been directly tested to compare the effectiveness of the original KiR and the D.A.R.E. KiR program. Therefore, this warrants research to be done to ensure the programs are effective.
- Most of the studies of KiR are co-authored by KiR developers, Dr. Michael Hecht, and/or Dr. Flavio Marsiglia, therefore raising concerns about potential researcher bias. (i.e., many evaluations can't be considered as independent evaluations).

A majority of the study findings of the D.A.R.E. KiR program have indicated that there is limited research to support KiR as an effective school substance use prevention program. This largely attributes to the fact that the KiR program study findings have been solely focused on short-term effects and not long-term effects.

## Future

### Recommendations

Although NREPP has ranked KiR as an evidence-based strategy in 2006, the ranking of substance use resistance remains at an all-time low of 1.7 out of 4.0.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the recommendation to continue further research is required in order to recognize *Keepin' it REAL* as a robust substance misuse prevention program for elementary and middle school students.

## References

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