

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program**

**AGENCY:** Department of Education.

**ACTION:** Notice of Final Principles of Effectiveness.

**SUMMARY:** The Secretary announces final Principles of Effectiveness for recipients' use of funds under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFC) Program. The Secretary takes this action to promote the most effective use of limited resources. The Principles of Effectiveness will govern recipients' use of funds under the State and Local Grants Program of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) for fiscal year 1998 and future years.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** These Principles of Effectiveness take effect on July 1, 1998.

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**Note:** The official version of a document is the document published in the **Federal Register**.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The SDFSCA, as reauthorized in 1994 by the Improving America's Schools Act (Public Law 103-382), offers States, school districts, schools, and other recipients wide latitude in using SDFSCA State and Local Grants Program funds to implement the kinds of drug and violence prevention programs that they believe best serve their needs. While the Administration favors local discretion over Federal prescription in the use of SDFSCA State and local grant funds, the Administration also has a responsibility to promote the most effective use possible of these limited resources. In many instances these funds are the only financial assistance available to help local schools address their youth drug and violence problems. With the increasing availability of information about promising and successful drug and violence prevention programs, State and local decisions about which prevention programs to implement should be guided by research on best practices. Furthermore, schools and community organizations that initiate programs designed to prevent youth drug use or violence without conducting a high-quality needs assessment or establishing clear and objective measurable expectations about program outcomes have difficulty determining whether their programs are successful.

Therefore, as one of a series of activities designed to improve the quality of drug and violence prevention programming implemented with SDFSCA funds, the Secretary is adopting these final SDFS Principles of Effectiveness. The Principles will require grant recipients to use SDFSCA State and Local Grants Program funds to support research-based drug and violence prevention programs for youth. These SDFS Principles of Effectiveness, in conjunction with existing statutory and regulatory provisions, will ensure that State and local educational agencies, Governors' offices, and community-based organizations plan and implement effective drug and violence prevention programs.

On July 16, 1997, the Secretary published the draft SDFS Principles of Effectiveness in a Notice of Request for Public Comment in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 38072). In response to comments received, the Secretary made minor modifications, as noted in the following section—Analysis of Comments and

Changes—of this notice of final Principles.

**Analysis of Comments and Changes**

In response to the Secretary's invitation to comment on the proposed SDFS Principles of Effectiveness, the Department received letters from 19 commenters. These included State and local educational agencies, other State agencies, non-profit organizations, and individuals. An analysis of the comments follows. Comments are grouped according to each of the four SDFS Principles of Effectiveness; a section on general comments is also included. Minor editorial changes—and comments recommending changes the Secretary is not legally authorized to make under the applicable statutory authority—are not addressed.

*Principle 1—A grant recipient shall base its program on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems in the schools and communities served.*

*Comments:* Several commenters expressed concerns about difficulties associated with collecting assessment data. One difficulty mentioned included the provisions of the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), which require parental permission before administering a student survey regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Another difficulty cited was the problem of developing scientific and rigorous sampling methods.

*Discussion:* PPRA establishes requirements that must be met when students participate in surveys, analyses, or evaluations that (1) reveal information about several subjects, including illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, and demeaning behavior; and (2) are conducted using U.S. Department of Education funds.

Although meeting the PPRA requirements may add an additional step to the collection of survey data, grantees are encouraged to consider using student surveys as part of their needs assessment efforts.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the definition of "objective data" include information other than "archival data" because it would cost some small LEAs more than the SDFSCA allocation they receive to conduct a thorough assessment.

*Discussion:* Grantees are encouraged to develop the broadest possible needs assessment that will provide a comprehensive picture of drug and violence problems among local youth. Grantees may want to complement objective data with subjective measures, such as perceptions of teachers,

students, or administrators about the youth drug and violence problem. However, grantees should not limit needs assessment to such subjective measures, because they need such hard data as rates of student drug use or numbers of violent incidents to guide program selection and measure fully the effectiveness of their programs.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that LEAs be encouraged to present the results of their needs assessments in terms of prevention needs.

*Discussion:* Currently, many needs assessments prepared by grantees focus on short-term interventions rather than long-term preventive strategies. For example, grantee needs assessments may focus on increased disciplinary sanctions to prevent current conflicts among middle school students, rather than on introducing conflict resolution strategies to the students in an earlier grade. Although the latter is perhaps more desirable, the former approach is acceptable.

*Changes:* None.

*Principle 2—A grant recipient shall, with the assistance of a local or regional advisory council, which includes community representatives, establish a set of measurable goals and objectives, and design its activities to meet those goals and objectives.*

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that LEAs adopt multi-year objectives with annual milestones to support a prevention perspective in planning strategies.

*Discussion:* The establishment of multi-year objectives is desirable, and States certainly may encourage their LEAs to adopt them. As their implementation proceeds, local grantees may become increasingly comfortable with designing multi-year objectives for their prevention programming. However, it is important for grantees to have the flexibility to adopt objectives on an annual, as well as multi-year, basis.

*Changes:* None.

*Comments:* Several commenters suggested that "program outcomes" be defined. One commenter suggested including in the definition improvements in youth knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors related to drug use or violence prevention; another recommended including attitudes and behaviors that research has shown to be precursors to or predictors of drug use.

*Discussion:* The SDFS Principles of Effectiveness require that program outcomes include information about changed behaviors or attitudes about violence or drug use. Although information about knowledge and skills

is an important part of assessing implementation quality, that information is not sufficient to measure program outcomes.

*Changes:* Based on these comments, the Secretary has modified explanatory language accompanying this principle to clarify the meaning of the term "program outcomes".

*Comment:* One commenter urged the Secretary to recognize that it will take as much as two or three years for many LEAs to adopt outcome-related measurable goals and objectives even with the support of an appropriate measurement instrument.

*Discussion:* While it may take several years for LEAs to perfect the identification of outcome-related measurable goals and objectives, the Department expects that by July 1, 1998, when the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness take effect, LEAs will be able to develop satisfactory goals and objectives that will help improve accountability for their drug and violence prevention programs. In addition, the Department intends to provide technical assistance and guidance to help grantees develop their goals and objectives.

*Changes:* None.

*Principle 3—A grant recipient shall design and implement its activities based on research or evaluation that provides evidence that the strategies used prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior.*

*Comments:* Several commenters noted a lack of available research-based programs in drug and violence prevention that meet local needs. One of those commenters stated that the high standard imposed by the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness would create a "cartel" or monopoly since very few programs can meet the standard established.

*Discussion:* While a significant body of research about effective programs that prevent youth drug use and violence exists, even more needs to be done to identify a broader group of programs and practices that respond to varied needs.

*Changes:* Based on these concerns, the Secretary has modified the explanatory language accompanying this Principle. These modifications broaden the scope of the term "research-based" approach to include programs that show promise of being effective in preventing or reducing drug use or violence.

*Comments:* Several commenters expressed a concern that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness do not address intervention services, staff development, parent training, and other

activities supported with SDFSCA funds by many LEAs.

*Discussion:* Grantees that choose to implement the kinds of interventions mentioned by the commenters must take care to observe the requirements embodied in the principles. It may be difficult to find research-based programs in the areas mentioned by the commenters that link directly to changes in rates of youth drug use or violence.

*Changes:* A change has been made to this principle to clarify that the "research-based" requirement is limited to programs for youth.

*Comment:* One commenter requested that the Secretary provide guidance about how LEAs may structure a program that is both comprehensive and research based.

*Discussion:* The comment identifies two separate requirements. First, by statute, an LEA must use all SDFSCA funds to support a comprehensive drug and violence prevention program. The program may also receive funding from other State and local sources. Second, under the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness, all specific programs for youth funded by the SDFSCA must be research based. The Secretary believes that these two requirements are consistent and compatible, and the Department will provide guidance on how local programs may be structured to meet both requirements.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter noted that effective approaches to preventing youth drug use and violence may not always be able to show results for a wide variety of reasons, including missed lessons, inconsistent application, and insufficient time given to the program.

*Discussion:* Research-based programs that have demonstrated success in reducing drug use and violence are dependent upon strong, consistent implementation with sufficient time provided. The implementation problems cited in the comment would undermine any program, research-based or otherwise, and limit its ability to produce results.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter expressed concern that implementation of the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness may force rural LEAs to replace "old favorite" programs that they feel have been working for them with prevention programs that have been proven to work in other socio-economic areas—such as high-population urban LEAs—but may not be appropriate to their needs.

*Discussion:* The Department plans to provide technical assistance to help

LEAs obtain information about effective, research-based programs appropriate for an LEA's demographics. The purpose of SDFS Principles of Effectiveness is to ensure that funds available to grantees under the SDFSCA are used in the most effective way. This allows LEAs to continue "old favorite" programs if they are effective or show promise of effectiveness.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter expressed concern about being required to implement a research-based program with fidelity, preferring to take the best components from many programs without duplicating any one program exactly.

*Discussion:* Replication with fidelity is crucial to implementing a research-based program and producing the desired outcomes. If an LEA takes the best elements from many programs without replicating one program with fidelity, the resulting mix of activities is not a research-based program that has been proven to be effective. Grantees are cautioned not to assume that components of research-based programs can be extracted and implemented, alone or in combination, to produce effective results.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness should ensure that the program to be implemented is applicable or transferable to the cultural or other characteristics of the target population.

*Discussion:* A grantee is not prohibited from making minor modifications in a research-based program, but should ensure modifications to address cultural or other characteristics of the target population will not prevent the grantee from replicating the program in a manner consistent with the original design.

*Changes:* None.

*Principle 4—A grant recipient shall evaluate its program periodically to assess its progress toward achieving its goals and objectives and use its evaluation results to refine, improve, and strengthen its program and to refine its goals and objectives as appropriate.*

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that every school system not be required to conduct an evaluation of its prevention programs, and rather that the Department concentrate on seeking separate funding for research that supports primary prevention through the re-enforcement of protective factors.

*Discussion:* The SDFS Principles of Effectiveness do not require a recipient that replicates with fidelity a research-

based program to pursue an outcomes-based evaluations of this prevention program.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended inclusion of "fidelity evaluation language" in the principle concerning evaluation.

*Discussion:* Grantees cannot hope to reproduce the results of an effective, research-based drug or violence prevention program unless that program is replicated with fidelity.

*Changes:* Based on this comment, the Secretary has modified the explanatory language accompanying this principle to require assessment of fidelity of replication.

*Comments:* Several commenters raised a concern about the difficulties—including the establishment of a control group—associated with collecting data to evaluate an intervention designed to prevent youth drug use and violence.

*Discussion:* Grantees need not evaluate for behavioral or attitudinal outcomes if they select and implement with fidelity a research-based prevention program that has already demonstrated through rigorous evaluation that it has reduced youth drug use or violence or changed attitudes that have been demonstrated to be precursors to or predictors of drug use or violence. If grantees wish to select a program that shows promise of effectiveness, those grantees must conduct an evaluation of outcomes in terms of youth behavior and attitudes. While a control group design would be excellent from a technical point of view, such a design can be complicated and expensive. There are other less rigorous but still valid options. The Department intends to offer technical assistance on evaluation.

*Changes:* None.

#### **General Comments on SDFS Principles of Effectiveness**

*Comments:* Two commenters indicated that it would be unfair to expect one organization, especially a school district, to be responsible for outcomes of reducing and preventing drug use and violence.

*Discussion:* A school district should not be held solely responsible for producing outcomes of reducing and preventing drug use and violence. However, the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness will help schools focus their efforts on programs that are likely to make the biggest contribution to community-wide efforts to reduce youth drug use and violence and to set goals for changed student behaviors. It is hoped that the school and community will work together in developing,

implementing, and evaluating these prevention efforts and will take appropriate responsibility for efforts to ensure their success.

*Changes:* None.

*Comments:* A number of comments concerned the extra burden and costs imposed by the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness at both the SEA and LEA levels. These commenters mentioned such factors as, at the SEA level, the need for a more extensive review process for LEA applications and, at the LEA level, the possibility of an insufficient allocation of funds or availability of staff resources to cover the costs associated with implementing the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness. One commenter suggested that SDFS should fund a coordinator for each LEA; another expressed a concern that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness will overshadow the Improving America's Schools Act's focus on increased flexibility.

*Discussion:* No additional burden is imposed by the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness. A major theme of the Improving America's Schools Act was an increase in flexibility in exchange for enhanced program accountability in order to make the best possible use of scarce resources. The commenter has focused on increased flexibility without sufficient regard for the need for accountability. The SDFS Principles of Effectiveness are designed to assist grantees in meeting their obligations for accountability that are implicit in the statutory framework provided in the SDFSCA by encouraging recipients to implement programs that are most likely to be effective.

*Changes:* None.

*Comments:* One commenter questioned how the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness would help to integrate SDFS efforts with those of other Federal programs.

*Discussion:* The SDFS Principles of Effectiveness apply to the SDFSCA SEA/LEA and Governor's Programs and the Program for Indian Youth, and impose no new requirements that would hinder efforts to integrate SDFSCA efforts with those of other Federal programs.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter recommended that grantees be encouraged to foster meaningful involvement by young people in the design, governance, and implementation of projects designed to prevent youth drug use and violence.

*Discussion:* While the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness do not explicitly require the involvement of young people in the design, governance,

and implementation of projects designed to prevent youth drug use and violence, the Secretary encourages recipients of SDFS funds to look for opportunities to involve youth in prevention programs in meaningful ways.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness more strongly emphasize the need for close coordination between school- and community-based prevention programs.

*Discussion:* Several of the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness address the issue of coordination and collaboration between schools and their communities, and the SDFSCA also includes provisions that require such coordination.

*Changes:* None.

*Comment:* One commenter suggested that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness be reviewed to ensure that terms (such as program, program activities, strategies, and approaches) be defined in order to reduce confusion and make the language more precise.

*Discussion:* The draft SDFS Principles of Effectiveness have been reviewed to ensure that terms are used consistently.

*Changes:* Modifications have been made in the principles and explanatory language that make the Principles more precise.

*Comment:* One commenter requested that the Department clarify that the SDFS Principles of Effectiveness are not standards, and that the Secretary change the title to Principles of Program Effectiveness.

*Discussion:* The SDFS Principles of Effectiveness do not attempt to provide detailed standards for the content or structure of individual prevention programs, but rather, create a framework to support the selection and implementation of the best possible youth drug and violence prevention programs. While standards for content and structure of prevention programs are implied by the third principle (requiring that programs be research based), adding the word "Program" to the current title would not serve to clarify that the principles are not standards.

*Changes:* None.

### **SDFS Principles of Effectiveness**

Having safe and drug-free schools is one of our Nation's highest priorities. To ensure that recipients of Title IV funds use those funds in ways that preserve State and local flexibility but are most likely to reduce drug use and violence among youth, a recipient shall coordinate its SDFSCA funded programs

with other available prevention efforts to maximize the impact of all the drug and violence prevention programs and resources available to its State, school district, or community, and shall—

- *Base its programs on a thorough assessment of objective data about the drug and violence problems in the schools and communities served.* Each SDFSCA grant recipient shall conduct a thorough assessment of the nature and extent of youth drug use and violence problems. Grantees are encouraged to build on existing data collection efforts and examine available objective data from a variety of sources, including law enforcement and public health officials. Grantees are encouraged to assess the needs of all segments of the youth population. While information about the availability of relevant services in the community and schools is an important part of any needs assessment, and while grantees may wish to include data on adult drug use and violence problems, grantees shall, at a minimum, include in the needs assessment data on youth drug use and violence;

- *With the assistance of a local or regional advisory council where required by the SDFSCA, establish a set of measurable goals and objectives and design its programs to meet those goals and objectives.* Sections 4112 and 4115 of the SDFSCA require that grantees develop measurable goals and objectives for their programs. Grantees shall develop goals and objectives that focus on behavioral or attitudinal program outcomes, as well as on program implementation (sometimes called "process data"). While measures of implementation (such as the hours of instruction provided or number of teachers trained) are important, they are not sufficient to measure program outcomes. Grantees shall develop goals and objectives that permit them to determine the extent to which programs are effective in reducing or preventing drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior among youth;

- *Design and implement its programs for youth based on research or evaluation that provides evidence that the programs used prevent or reduce drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior among youth.* In designing and improving its youth programs, a grant recipient shall taking into consideration its needs assessment and measurable goals and objectives, select and implement programs for youth that have demonstrated effectiveness or promise of effectiveness, in preventing or reducing drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior, or other behaviors or attitudes demonstrated to be precursors to or predictors of drug use

or violence. While the Secretary recognizes the importance of flexibility in addressing State and local needs, the Secretary believes that the implementation of research-based programs will significantly enhance the effectiveness of programs supported with SDFSCA funds. In selecting effective programs most responsive to their needs, grantees are encouraged to review the breadth of available research and evaluation literature, and to replicate these programs in a manner consistent with their original design; and

- *Evaluate its programs periodically to assess its progress toward achieving its goals and objectives, and use its evaluation results to refine, improve, and strengthen its program, and to refine its goals and objectives as appropriate.* Grant recipients shall assess their programs and use the information about program outcomes and fidelity of replication to re-evaluate existing program efforts. The Secretary recognizes that prevention programs may have a long implementation phase, may have long-term goals, and may include some objectives that are broadly focused. However, grantees shall not continue to use SDFSCA funds to implement programs that cannot demonstrate positive outcomes in terms of reducing or preventing drug use, violence, or disruptive behavior among youth, or other behaviors or attitudes demonstrated to be precursors to or predictors of drug use or violence. Grantees shall use their assessment results to determine whether programs need to be strengthened or improved, and whether program goals and objectives are reasonable or have already been met and should be revised. Consistent with Sections 4112 and 4115 of the SDFSCA, grant recipients shall report to the public on progress toward attaining measurable goals and objectives for drug and violence prevention.

### *Intergovernmental Review*

This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR Part 79. The objective of the Executive Order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism by relying on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance.

In accordance with the order, this document is intended to provide early notification of the Department's specific plans and actions for this program.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance  
Number 86.186, Safe and Drug-Free Schools  
and Communities Act State Grants Program)

**Program Authority:** 20 U.S.C. 7111-7116.

Dated: May 27, 1998.

**Gerald N. Tirozzi,**

*Assistant Secretary for Elementary and  
Secondary Education.*

[FR Doc. 98-14372 Filed 5-29-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4000-01-P