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# Balancing Justice and Mercy: Redemptive Ways of Dealing With Adolescent Substance Abuse

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# BALANCING JUSTICE AND MERCY:

## Redemptive Ways of Dealing With Adolescent Substance Use

**P**art of growing up for teenagers and young adults in most Western cultures is the search to achieve independence and control of their lives, often through exploration and experimentation. Their curiosity frequently leads to experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.<sup>1</sup> Substance abuse<sup>2</sup> by teens and young adults has received widespread public and media attention in recent years. While popular movies and television programs focus on the fun and humor of high school and college parties (and binge drinking in particular), research clearly reveals that alcohol is a major contributing factor in injuries, assaults, sexual abuse, promiscuity and other unsafe sexual activities, academic problems, accidents, and death.<sup>3</sup>

For nearly the entire century and a half of their existence, Seventh-day Adventists have placed major emphasis on health

and healthy behaviors. As a part of this focus, the church's academies and higher education institutions have developed clear policies prohibiting alcohol and drug possession and use. However, even within the restrictive and protective environment of an Adventist school, some teens and young adults will experiment with alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. These rates increase as students get older. Adventist college students are, however, much less likely to drink and smoke than the average student attending a secular university.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, though most students know that these substances are harmful, temptation is not always overruled by good judgment. Whether it's at a party, in a car in the parking lot, or in the woods behind the school, many do experiment with harmful substances. Some will try a drink or smoke once or twice and decide never to do so again. Others will start drinking

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or smoking occasionally at parties. A few will continue to drink or smoke and will begin getting into trouble that rapidly spirals out of control.<sup>5</sup>

Given the reality that teens are often curious and want to try new things, how should Adventist academies respond when they have evidence that students are using alcohol and other dangerous substances?<sup>6</sup> How can schools find a balance between rigid enforcement of a zero-tolerance policy<sup>7</sup> and an overly permissive approach that turns a blind eye toward dangerous and unhealthy behaviors? Is it possible to be loving and redemptive toward a repentant student without making other students think they can get away with being a little bit bad without getting expelled? And perhaps the most important question: How can our schools create policies that uphold clear standards against harmful substances while at the same time responding to student mistakes in ways that acknowledge their error AND create pathways to resolution and redemption?

This article will briefly describe the range of policies relating to drug or substance possession and use that are found in the boarding and day academies of the Lake Union Conference (in the North American Division). Next, we will deal with the areas of screening, discipline, and referral to appropriate services. Finally, using case examples of two very different student experiences with illegal substances, we will offer some policy recommendations for dealing redemptively with substance abuse by students.

### High School and University Substance-Abuse Policies

Before describing existing substance-use policies, it is important to briefly review the relevant literature on the role that institutional policies can play in deterring substance use. Because we were unable to find publications relating to substance-abuse policies on church-affiliated campuses, we are including a brief, selective review of high school- and university-based substance-abuse policies that are relevant to this article.

Research on zero-tolerance policies has shown that this approach is generally not effective in reducing high-risk youth behaviors. One study reviewed findings from a large number of articles that explored the impact of zero-tolerance policies relating to school disruption such as violence, bullying, drug and alcohol use, harassment, and other anti-social behaviors.<sup>8</sup> The authors concluded that these policies did little or nothing to change the negative behaviors of students or improve school safety. Similarly, the American Psychological Association con-

ducted its own extensive review of the literature on zero-tolerance policies and found that the few good studies that did exist on this topic indicated that such policies were generally ineffective in changing student behavior and in some cases negatively affected the relationship between school officials and students.<sup>9</sup>

Researchers have found that one important factor in reducing substance use among youth is for the policies to be clearly communicated to all students. This includes knowing about the existing discipline steps and any rehabilitative policies. Researchers in one study found that although students were aware that the school had a policy on alcohol use, they could not recall the details. In addition, students did not know treatment options were available if a user was caught. This lack of knowledge would naturally diminish the effectiveness of a policy that encourages self-disclosure and treatment-seeking behaviors.<sup>10</sup>

Another study found that strict policies alone did not deter the use of alcohol and other drugs; however, their findings proposed an “environmental-management approach” where enforcement of substance-use policies was combined with prevention, educational programs, and student-centered, individualized responses to incidents involving alcohol and drug use. This approach reduced the frequency and severity of alcohol and drug use.<sup>11</sup> Other researchers found that schools with only prohibitive substance-use policies were less effective in deterring substance use on their campuses. However, strong policies with clear consequences, combined with treatment opportunities such as drug-awareness programs, individual therapy, or recovery support, were more successful in their quest to reduce harmful substance-use incidents.<sup>12</sup>

Research on compliance with treatment has shown that students who were given a choice of treatment options and received recovery support were more highly motivated to stay in treatment and to remain substance free.<sup>13</sup> Another study revealed that students with substance-abuse problems were more likely to reach out for help and to self-report these problems when the school had an alternative to expulsion. In this particular study, the school policy encouraged substance-abuse treatment while allowing the student to remain in school.<sup>14</sup>

Research on compliance with treatment has shown that students who were given a choice of treatment options and received recovery support were more highly motivated to stay in treatment and to remain substance free.<sup>13</sup> Another study revealed that students with substance-abuse problems were more likely to reach out for help and to self-report these problems when the school had an alternative to expulsion. In this particular study, the school policy encouraged substance-abuse treatment while allowing the student to remain in school.<sup>14</sup>

### Seventh-day Adventist Academy Substance-Abuse Policies

While most colleges (both secular and religious) have adopted prevention and intervention programs to help their

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students deal with substance use and abuse on their campuses, the same is not always the case with high schools and academies. To better understand Adventist academy substance-use policies, we first referenced the online bulletins/student handbooks from all seven 12-grade boarding and day academies in the Lake Union Conference of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, which encompasses the states of Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Illinois. While the number of academies is small and not a worldwide sample, the Lake Union's schools do provide examples of the broad range of policies in effect at Adventist secondary schools. All of the Lake Union academies have explicit statements in their school handbooks stating that their campus is a drug-free environment. However, while these schools also have more specific policies regarding drug use on their campuses, their policies take two distinct tracks in regard to disciplinary action.

We categorized academy policies on substance use from most restrictive/punitive (Approach No. 1) to least restrictive/most redemptive (Approach No. 2). Both approaches contain policies on drug searches and testing. Approach No. 1, followed by most academies, generally results in expulsion if the student is found to possess or use a banned substance; Approach No. 2 allows for individualized and graduated steps of action, which could include regular drug testing and referral to drug treatment. (It should be noted, however, that while the schools included in Approach No. 1 may describe a zero-tolerance policy, they may, in practice, sometimes allow for a more individualized approach.<sup>15</sup>)

**Drug Search and Testing:** Drug search policies usually include requiring the suspected student to submit to a search of his or her room, locker, or vehicle. Four of the seven academies (57 percent) state in their handbook that suspected students may also be required to submit to drug testing, while three academies (43 percent) state that refusal to submit to drug testing may result in suspension or expulsion. If a student tests positive for substance use, two of the seven academies (29 percent) state that they will notify local law enforcement and suspend the student.

### Consequences—Approach No. 1

**Immediate Dismissal or Expulsion:** Immediate dismissal generally involves expelling the student if he or she is caught possessing, selling, or using drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Five of the seven schools (71 percent) maintain this policy, although six (86 percent) allow for some flexibility by stating that such involvement will result in disciplinary action and *may* include expulsion. While these schools may include education on the dangers of substance use (in classes or other forums), the policies in their student handbooks do not describe these activities.

### Consequences—Approach No. 2

**Possible Suspension/Referral to Treatment:** Two of the seven academies state that, if a drug test reveals that the student has been using banned substances, he or she will be suspended from school as an “alternative to expulsion,” and will be required to participate in a drug-education program or enter a drug-treatment center. One academy states that parents will be notified and must give permission for drug testing prior to the

administration of the test. If the student tests positive for drugs or alcohol, the parents must pay for their child's school-approved drug treatment in order for him or her to remain enrolled in the school. The other five academies do not specifically mention the possibility that the student could enroll in a treatment center or rehabilitation program as an alternative to suspension/expulsion.

**Individualized Policy:** Four of the seven academies state in their handbook that “disciplinary action” will be applied on an “individual basis” as deemed appropriate by the school administration.

**Graduated Steps of Action:** Two of the seven academies describe the steps that will be taken when disciplining a student involved in substance use. However, four of the academies provide various actions that must be undertaken by the student in order to maintain his or her enrollment status. These steps include submitting to discipline and/or a requirement to participate in a drug-education program, a referral to drug treatment, or monitoring and drug testing.<sup>16</sup>

• **Discipline and Drug-Education Programming:** For experimental substance use (generally first-time use), students may be disciplined and/or required to attend educational programming on the dangers of substance use.

• **Referral to Treatment:** If the student is assessed by a substance-abuse counselor (usually based on a referral to a local counseling or drug-treatment facility) as being chemically dependent on a substance, several schools require the student to enroll in either an inpatient or outpatient treatment program.

• **Monitoring and Drug Testing:** Referral to a treatment program generally includes signing a written behavioral contract between the school and the student, providing ongoing evidence of compliance with the treatment plan, and/or submitting to possible random drug testing as part of the compliance monitoring process. If a student fails to comply with all the disciplinary measures required by the school, he or she may be subject to mandatory withdrawal, dismissal, or expulsion.

### Challenges in Initial Screening, Discipline, and Referral to Appropriate Services

Screening generally refers to the process used by early responders to determine if a teen might have an alcohol or drug-abuse problem. Several challenges often emerge for teachers and school administrators in relation to this initial screening process. First, students may not feel comfortable disclosing their substance use. If the student does not feel safe sharing this information with a teacher or other school official, either because the adult is obligated, by policy, to expose and expel the student, or because the student is not certain that he or she can trust the teacher or administrator to maintain confidentiality, the student is likely to lie or minimize his or her use. Research studies have shown that the presence of trusted adult mentors is strongly associated with young people making wise, accountable decisions.<sup>17</sup> Providing a safe environment where students can talk openly about their struggles, without fearing that they will be exposed or condemned, is key to the success of a redemptive approach. However, the trusted adult must also

maintain consistency in holding the student accountable for his or her actions, implementing agreed-upon sanctions when the student fails to uphold the pact.

Second, many teachers and school administrators have not been trained how to accurately identify and inquire about the signs and symptoms of substance abuse. Although screening is a simple procedure that involves either preliminary physical



testing for the presence of alcohol or drugs or asking the student a series of structured questions about recent use, many teachers and administrators do not know how to do this. Accordingly, they may miss subtle signs and symptoms of substance use, resulting in a missed opportunity to obtain help for the student.

Some teachers or administrators may choose to perform a simple screening test to detect the presence of alcohol or other drugs, using one of the many available screening tools.<sup>18</sup> However, great care should be taken when conducting these screening tests since the adult's lack of understanding about substance abuse could lead him or her to misdiagnose or overreact to a student's substance use. The best solution to this challenge is

to refer the student to a certified substance-abuse counselor who can provide a thorough assessment of the student's background and circumstances surrounding the substance use event(s). It is important for the counselor to be aware of the unique spiritual and cultural perspectives of Adventism so he or she clearly comprehends the student's situation and beliefs and the school's policies and can make appropriate recommendations.

A third reason screening is challenging is that, for some Adventist school administrators, any *use* of substances, whether experimental, recreational, or otherwise, is automatically classified as substance *abuse*. But even a guidance counselor or mental-health professional can have difficulty determining the difference between a teenager who has just experimented with a substance and a person who has a full-fledged chemical dependency or addiction. (This further underscores the importance of consulting a certified substance-abuse counselor who uses standardized, well-recognized tools in the screening and assessment process.)

For students who have been caught experimenting with cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana at a party, the consequences of an inflexible, zero-tolerance policy can be devastating and humiliating for the youth and his or her family. The resulting suspension or expulsion from the school can have a significantly negative effect on the student's future. When the penalty is applied rigidly and automatically, this can lead to accusations of injustice and lack of compassion, which, if unresolved, can result in alienation from the school and church.<sup>19</sup> One suggestion for avoiding this problem is to replace a zero-tolerance policy with an approach that acknowledges the complexity of each student's unique circumstances and attitudes regarding substance use. We suggest such a policy below.

Fourth, challenges can emerge in the discipline phase of a substance use/abuse event; it is possible to both over- and under-react to a student's transgression of the rules. As noted above, an overly harsh response such as automatic expulsion can drive the student away from the church and damage his or her future educational opportunities. We suggest a more nuanced approach to discipline. 2 Peter 3:9 says that "The Lord is . . . patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (NRSV).<sup>20</sup> Peter argues that God is patient in dealing with erring humans as He encourages them along toward repentance and redemption. Similarly, school administrators can provide opportunities for students to redeem themselves through the graduated

steps of action we have proposed in this article. The Bible also encourages us to love and honor the Lord in a holistic manner. This point can be readily seen in Deuteronomy 6:5: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your [mind and] heart and with your entire being and with all your might" (Amplified).<sup>21</sup> This text implies that God not only wants us to foster a relationship with Him, but also that He realizes humans are not fragmented beings. Rather, the body, mind, and spirit are all interconnected. Ellen White underscores this point by stating, "True religion brings man into harmony with the laws of God, physical, mental, and moral."<sup>22</sup> When a student steps outside of God's ideal by using alcohol or drugs, our redemptive approaches must focus on holistic rehabilitation, which addresses issues related to mind, body, and spirit, so the student's life course is not negatively altered due to the use of substances and foolish choices during this time period. Avoiding overreaction also means that students who experiment with alcohol or marijuana may not always need to enter a formal treatment facility, but they will need education on the consequences of drug use and individual or group counseling to help them sort out their spiritual, academic, and social priorities.

On the other hand, underreaction or, worse yet, no acknowledgement that a student has violated a school policy and has a problem, can cause students to think that using substances is no big deal and has no social or moral consequences. In this case, a student who used or abused substances at an early age but does not receive any sanctions or intervention may be set up for future negative consequences such as failing to graduate from high school or dropping out of college. Crafting an individualized response that is "just right" can be challenging, but we believe the use of graduated steps of action, including education about the dangers of substance use, random drug and/or alcohol testing, referral for drug treatment (if appropriate), and graduated penalties for failure to remain substance free can effectively and redemptively deal with these challenges.

A fifth challenge that many schools have to address is when students are caught dealing illegal drugs such as marijuana, methamphetamine, or cocaine to other students. When a student has made the choice to sell or supply drugs to other people, administrators will need to take firm action. At that point, the student has moved from experimentation or even occasional use into tempting and endangering other students. Thus,

the appropriate policy response is immediate expulsion and contact with local law-enforcement personnel in order to protect the rest of the students and others to whom the student may be supplying drugs. However, even when a student has been dismissed for dealing drugs, administrators or teachers should seek to maintain supportive contact with him or her in order to foster a redemptive relationship, which can convince the student that the school, and ultimately the church, cares about his or her wellbeing. The dean or principal may, for instance, go to court with a student who has been arrested for selling drugs to show his or her moral support.

One final challenge relates to finding appropriate treatment services for young people who are genuinely struggling to overcome an addiction. It can be particularly difficult to find good treatment services for adolescents in rural areas. One way to locate nearby drug treatment facilities in the U.S. is to visit <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>. This Website uses mapping technology to identify both substance-abuse and mental health-treatment providers based on zip code locations. Although a few Adventist treatment facilities do exist, they are often far away and can be expensive.<sup>23</sup> Working with a competent, local substance-abuse counselor can help the student to sort out these issues and provide the school with guidance as to appropriate action to take as the student goes through the recovery stage.

### **A Redemptive Substance Abuse Policy Proposal**

This article proposes a redemptive policy that can be implemented at the academy level (see Table 1). It incorporates elements from current policies in several Lake Union academies and integrates them into a single policy recommendation that contains two alternative tracks. Both tracks are redemptive in nature, with the first alternative designed to deal with situations where school administrators discover illegal substance use by a student. The second alternative is recommended when the student voluntarily seeks out a teacher or administrator to ask for help with a substance abuse problem. Both of these policy tracks can comfortably exist within the same school handbook.

#### **Applying the Policy in a School Setting**

We asked a school guidance counselor at one of the Lake Union academies to describe two cases that illustrated these

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**Table 1. Recommendations for Creating a Redemptive Substance-Abuse Policy for Students Using Harmful/Illegal Substances\***

Suggested policy statement: “\_\_\_\_\_ Academy supports the Seventh-day Adventist ideal of abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, and other harmful substances, believing that such a policy encourages spiritual formation, character development, and a healthy lifestyle. The school reserves the right to evaluate any substances that are in the possession of students to determine the appropriateness of their possession and use; and to discipline students for use of forbidden substances.”

\* A list of commonly abused drugs can be found at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs>. A list of emerging drugs that are becoming popular in some locations in the U.S. can be found at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/emerging-trends>.

Track 1	Track 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School administrator conducts or hires an organization to conduct drug searches and/or testing if a student is suspected of using illegal substances or alcohol.</li> <li>• Student is disciplined by school administration in accordance with school guidelines.<sup>24</sup></li> <li>• Parents/guardians are notified of their child’s drug possession and/or use and of the school’s plan of action for their child.</li> <li>• Administration consults with community consultation team if necessary to formulate a redemptive, customized plan of action.</li> <li>• Student may be required to attend substance-abuse counseling and/or drug/alcohol education, with open communication between the counselor/organization and school administration.<sup>25</sup></li> <li>• Student may be subject to monitoring via drug testing and accountability meetings with school counselor or other staff member.</li> <li>• Student may be subject to suspension/termination if he or she does not comply with redemptive measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student can self-disclose to school counselor, residence hall dean, or to other trusted school official that he or she is struggling with a substance-use problem and in need of assistance. The student is provided with a conditional promise of confidentiality, contingent upon continued honesty and compliance with administrative requirements.<sup>26</sup></li> <li>• Student and school counselor (or designated school official) develop a detailed and individualized plan of action to curtail substance use and provide a holistic approach to recovery within the framework of school policies and regulations.</li> <li>• School counselor advises the principal/dormitory dean of the situation in somewhat ambiguous terms in order to maintain student confidentiality.</li> <li>• School counselor or other designated person works with the student to develop a plan of action for dealing with his or her substance abuse problem.</li> <li>• School counselor or designated person closely monitors student’s progress and compliance with graduated plan of action, which may include education about the dangers of substance use, random drug or alcohol testing, referral for drug treatment (if appropriate), and escalating penalties for failure to remain substance free.</li> </ul>

**Expected Outcome**

The student will be exposed to a supportive environment for healing from substance-abuse problems. He or she will be expected to be accountable for his or her actions while learning and practicing appropriate behavior in a redemptive environment.

policies in action. Although the situations were real, the counselor disguised the names and details of the cases to protect confidentiality.

**Case Studies for Tracks 1 and 2: Brent and Robert**

The following case studies describe two individuals who represent two different variations in how alcohol and drug-abuse policies were implemented at one Adventist academy. The names of both individuals are pseudonyms to protect their privacy and ensure confidentiality.

**Track 1:** Brent was an 11th-grade student with a history of family problems, some depression, and recent social changes that included acquiring a new group of public school friends. The guidance counselor became aware that Brent had attended a party where drugs and alcohol were available, and that the police had been called. The counselor took Brent aside, mentioning that she knew about the party, hoping that Brent would disclose his substance use to her. Instead, he was evasive and refused to discuss the party, other than to say that he was there but hadn’t been drinking.

A few weeks later, the academy principal received an official police report that included Brent's name. Because Brent had not taken the counselor's invitation to confess the situation and confidentially request help, the standard academy policy went into effect. The principal confronted Brent, took him to the nearby medical center to be tested for illegal drugs and alcohol, and then presented his case to an administrative committee whose responsibility was to recommend further action. The committee outlined the steps Brent needed to take in order to remain a student and notified his parents. A plan was developed that included regular sessions with a community counselor who specialized in substance-abuse issues. The school guidance counselor had full access to Brent's progress with the community counselor.

Brent had a few subsequent slip-ups, including drinking alcohol one weekend and using marijuana once, but since he maintained the therapeutic relationship with his community counselor, told the guidance counselor about his mistakes, and followed the required recommendations of the administrative committee, he was allowed to remain at the school. He graduated on time with his academy class the following year.

**Track 2:** The second case study involved Robert, also an 11th grader. Robert confidentially approached the guidance counselor and asked for help because he wanted to change his life. He had been heavily involved with marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol, although he had experimented with many other types of drugs. Since Robert had voluntarily initiated the request for help, the guidance counselor was able to keep him under a sort of "zone of protection." While the guidance counselor told the principal that she was working with a student on a substance-abuse issue, she did not volunteer, nor was she asked, to provide details about his situation. The guidance counselor sought the advice of a Community Counseling Team, comprised of a youth pastor and an educator with substance-abuse counseling background to determine how to proceed. The committee recommended that Robert maintain daily contact with the guidance counselor as he worked to overcome his addictions. Robert also decided to inform his parents about the situation.

Because Robert had become physically addicted to alcohol and cigarettes, he struggled to achieve sobriety. He sometimes checked in three to four times a day with the guidance counselor to get candy and encouragement, and to ask for occasional prayer. He sometimes slipped up, and although it was a struggle, Robert finally overcame his addictions and graduated on time with his class the following year.

The two case studies provide illustrations of two policy approaches described earlier. Brent's case illustrates a Track 1 policy approach. Because he was unwilling to talk openly with the school counselor about his involvement in the party, he became subject to a series of restrictive actions once school personnel were notified of underage drinking by the local authorities. These more restrictive policies allow less room for individualization, as the infraction had already passed through legal and administrative channels. In such cases, measures such as random drug screening, extensive parental involvement, and the use of a community substance-abuse specialist may be neces-

sary to provide holistic and redemptive treatment.

Robert's case provides an example of a Track 2 policy approach. Because he initiated the contact with the school counselor, he was able to maintain confidentiality, even though he was struggling with some very serious drug problems. When Robert self-reported his substance abuse, his verbal acknowledgement showed that he recognized that he had a problem and wished to receive assistance. Robert knew from the school substance-use policy that help was available, so once he brought the problem forward, the school counselor was able to offer assistance by developing an individualized plan that combined support, spiritual development, and accountability. *It is important to note that no matter which track is chosen, consistency in implementing the policy approach is key to its success.*

Throughout the Bible, we see that we as humans are fallen from God's ideal and, as such, we make mistakes and commit sin. The plan that God created to provide a way back to Him should also guide policy development so that we mirror Christ's example in tailoring His redemptive actions to people's needs. As such, substance-abuse policies should not provide either a harsh overreaction or an easy way out for students. Rather, the goal of a redemptive intervention is to provide a clear way for students to address their issues within a loving and supportive atmosphere, while at the same time training them to be accountable for their actions and the resulting consequences. To that end, we recommend a two-track policy that maintains clear standards against harmful substances while at the same time responding to student mistakes in ways that acknowledge their error and create pathways to resolution and redemption. ✍

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The policy recommendations in this article were primarily developed from an American perspective. When developing policies for schools in other countries, readers should consult and follow the laws of their own nation. In addition, we recommend that all policies be reviewed by the legal counsel of the local conference or union to determine whether any statements or policies are out of compliance with the laws of the local jurisdiction.

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- The terms *drugs* and *substances* are used interchangeably and are defined to include alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other illegal drugs; as well as a variety of other dangerous chemicals that are intentionally ingested, including prescription drugs that are used by someone other than the person for whom they were prescribed or in a manner other than that intended by the prescribing physician.
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- Rates at one Adventist university have remained stable over 25 years, with students using most substances at about one-half to one-fifth the rates found in secular colleges and universities in the U.S.
- A companion article on page 4 of this issue addresses policy issues on the university level.
- A zero-tolerance policy is one that calls for the expulsion of a student when he or she is caught with *any* amount of a prohibited substance.
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- Todd Monroe, "Addressing Substance Abuse Among Nursing Students: Development of a Prototype Alternative-to-Dismissal Policy," *Journal of Nursing Education* 48:5 (May 2009):272-278.
- Although this article is advocating a more nuanced and redemptive approach to student drug use, there may be schools that wish to retain their current zero-tolerance policy. In this case, we would strongly advocate high levels of prevention education for both parents and students to help convey the seriousness of the school's commitment to zero tolerance, as well as the possible health, legal, and relationship consequences that can result from alcohol and drug use. Such education should occur before the student is admitted into the school and in a more general way through class discussions and assemblies throughout the school's curriculum. We would also recommend that, following an expulsion, parents are provided with drug-treatment options and other resources to help them get their child the appropriate assistance.
- Many North American Adventist colleges and universities have substance-use policies that are much more detailed than the policies found in the Adventist academy handbooks that we reviewed. For example, some of the schools differentiate between experimental substance use and chemical dependency or addiction. Specific steps and consequences for non-compliance are then outlined based on the nature of the substance use.
- Gary L. Hopkins, et al., "Developing Healthy Kids in Healthy Communities: Eight Evidence-Based Strategies for Preventing High-Risk Behavior," *Medical Journal of Australia* 186:10 (2007):S70-S73.
- Iowa Substance Abuse Information Center, "Assessment Tools": <http://www.drugfreeinfo.org/for-professionals/tools/assessment-tools/>. Retrieved March 29, 2013.
- A zero-tolerance policy that includes continuing concern and support from the school after a student has been expelled may result in respect and appreciation for the school and the church as a whole. However, it is difficult to maintain a close, ongoing relationship with a student after he or she has been removed from the school. We have observed that the student is more likely to become alienated than reconciled to the church in such circumstances.
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- Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1958), p. 600.
- Further information on Adventist drug and alcohol treatment centers can be found in the online article by Curtis J. VanderWaal, *Adventists and Addictions*: <http://www.adventsource.org/as30/plusLine.article.aspx?id=703>. Retrieved April 23, 2013.
- Private schools in the United States are not generally subject to U.S. Constitutional provisions. Instead, there is a *contract* between the parents (or student, if he or she is an adult) and the school that largely determines a student's rights. "As private institutions, private schools are not subject to any restrictions in terms of violations of the rights of students. Hence, while a public school might have to prove that its violations are for a higher purpose or stem from its *in loco parentis* [school officials acting as parents] responsibilities, a private school may set limits arbitrarily": <http://www.usconstitution.net>. Retrieved September 5, 2013. This means that the school can set its own policies regarding drug searches and can even decide whether to tell the parents if their child has been found in possession of drugs or alcohol. However, parental permission would generally be required if the school wished to send the student to a substance-abuse treatment program.
- Schools can develop a variety of counseling partnerships or educational alternatives to fit their needs and resources. For example, one school requires students who are caught with harmful substances to complete the D.A.R.E. Program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)—see article on page 33 of this issue. Another school partners with the local police department's healthy-choices program, which pairs students up with adult mentors and requires the students to attend a number of evening educational classes.
- Within the United States, state laws vary widely regarding reporting procedures for possession of drugs and alcohol. See the Website for the National Association of State Boards of Education at [http://www.nasbe.org/healthy\\_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=3130](http://www.nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=3130). Retrieved September 5, 2013. Reporting requirements also vary a great deal at the local/community level. Educators are advised to consult with state and local law enforcement agencies when developing substance-abuse policies to make sure they are in compliance with the law.