

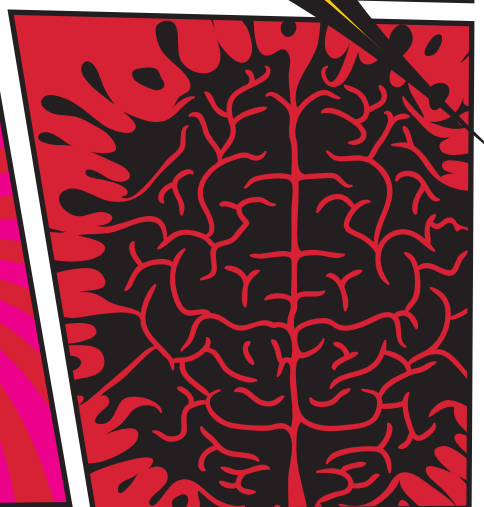


# CHOOSE TO REFUSE!

A Middle School Substance Abuse  
Education Prevention Program



Office of District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett



# CHOOSE TO REFUSE!

## A Middle School Substance Abuse Education Prevention Program



Jonathan W. Blodgett,  
Essex District Attorney

### FOREWORD

This program is based upon our high school programs, *Choose To Refuse: A Heroin and OxyContin Prevention Education Program* and *Choose 2 Refuse: A Heroin and OxyContin Education Presentation*. Both of these programs provide students with basic information about addiction, brain development, and specific substances. Students then engage in activities to aid them in developing specific decision-making skills that will assist them in handling a situation in which drugs are offered. Students develop strategies to either refuse the drugs or remove themselves from the situation.

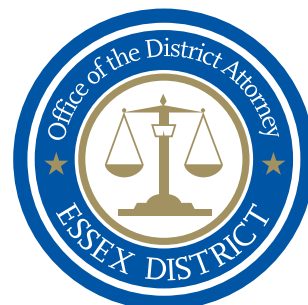
*Choose to Refuse for Middle School* is ostensibly a heroin/opioid program for middle school students; however, it addresses different substances such as e-cigarettes and edible marijuana. This is due to the fact that middle school students are more likely to encounter those substances rather than heroin. In addition, most heroin users generally start with substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana before moving on to more dangerous substances.

This program invites students to anticipate a situation where others may be using e-cigarettes or sharing a marijuana infused brownie and think about how they would handle the situation. This is an evidence-based approach based on the work of Dr. Elias J. Duryea with whom we consulted heavily when developing the first *Choose to Refuse Program*.

As District Attorney, it is my duty to uphold the law and protect the public's safety. I strongly believe in prevention efforts, especially when it comes to young people. There are many reasons why preventing young people from using drugs or drinking alcohol is a good idea. It improves school performance, reduces risk of injury, mental health issues and death, as well as reduces criminal behavior. Working together, we can give our young people the information and skills they need to reject this path in life and make positive decisions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan W. Blodgett". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jonathan W. Blodgett, Essex District Attorney  
March 2019



# INTRODUCTION

*Choose to Refuse: A Middle School Substance Abuse Prevention Education Program* is adapted from the original *Choose to Refuse: A Heroin and OxyContin Prevention Education Program* and *Choose2Refuse: A Heroin and OxyContin Education Presentation*.

The *Choose to Refuse Program* was developed using the tenets of inoculation theory, which proposes that an individual will better resist persuasive or threatening arguments if he or she learns the content of the arguments and practices resistance strategies beforehand. Thus, if young people are exposed to the addictive nature of substances and are taught strategies to avoid using substances before their exposure in real life, they will be less vulnerable when confronted with actual pressures to use substances. *Choose to Refuse* employs these concepts to educate youth about the hazards of alcohol, drugs, and nicotine. On completing the program, participants understand the negative impact these substances can have on their bodies and social consequences associated with using these substances.

**They also learn decision-making skills.\***

The program uses many evidence-based principles of prevention as defined by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The goal is to strengthen anti-drug-use attitudes and norms as well as life skills and drug refusal skills.

This *Choose to Refuse Program* is recommended for middle school children, grades 5 through 8. It is designed to be presented in 1 to 3 sessions. To ensure age appropriateness, we recommend that you view the presentation in its entirety before introducing it to participants.

## \*Decision-Making Skills

**FORECASTING:** Thinking through a future situation in terms of risks and benefits.

**AVOIDANCE:** Staying away from situations that one knows may be risky.

**REFUSAL:** Choosing, verbally or nonverbally, not to engage in risky behavior.

**VERBAL REFUSAL:** Rebutting or discrediting arguments that favor risky behavior.

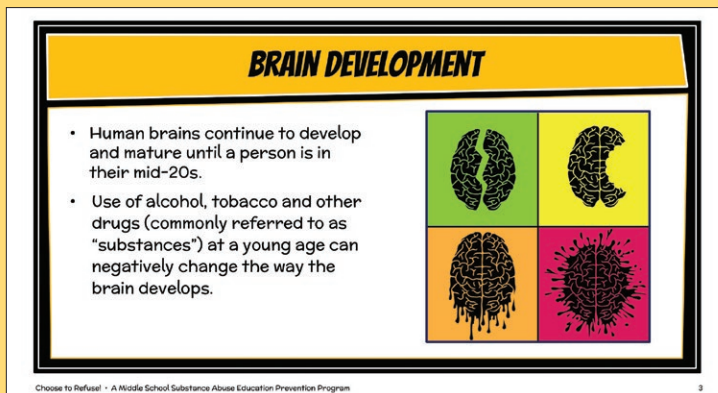
**NONVERBAL REFUSAL:** Communicating refusal by gestures, gaze, body language, touch, and/or use of space.

**EXIT:** Removing oneself from a risky or dangerous situation.





The program covers the following categories:



The *What is Addiction?* video was produced by the Addiction Policy Forum.



*An Epidemic Is Spreading* is a video published by The Real Cost.

## SESSION 1

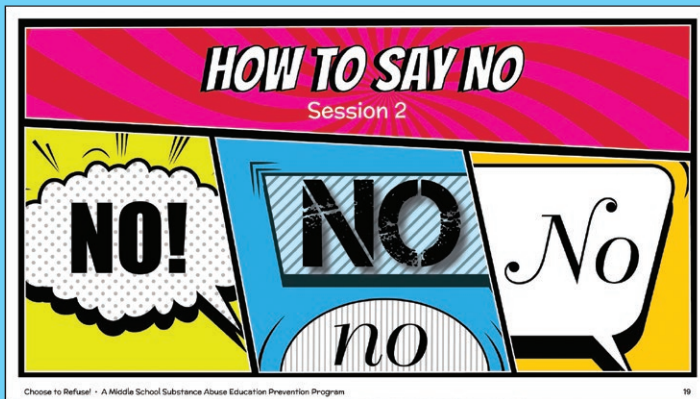
### Addiction

- ☒ Brain Development
- ☒ Healthy Brain
- ☒ The Limbic System: Basic Instincts & Survival
- ☒ Substances and the Brain
- ☒ *What is Addiction?* Video
- ☒ What is Addiction?
- ☒ What Substances are Addictive?
- ☒ Progression of Addiction
- ☒ Addiction is Preventable
- ☒ Prevention Tools

### Substances





- ☒ E-Cigarettes/Vapes
- ☒ *An Epidemic Is Spreading* Video
- ☒ Marijuana
- ☒ Marijuana Edibles
- ☒ Prescription Drugs

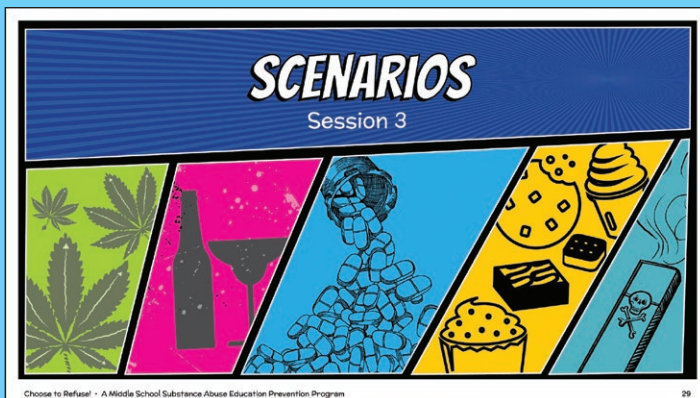




## SESSION 2

### How to Say No

-  Decision-Making Skills
  - Forecasting
  - Avoidance
  - Refusal
  - Exit
-  Do Not Be Afraid to Say No
-  Speak Up
-  Addiction in the Home



## SESSION 3

### Scenarios

The program presents 5 different scenarios wherein your students may find themselves.

Ask them to discuss what tools they would use to forecast, avoid, refuse, or exit. There are also optional additional activities in the addendum that correspond with the scenarios.

## Addendum

**Presenter Guide:** A Presenter Guide will be available via a pdf. The guide includes screen shots of the Powerpoint presentation along with the presenter notes and resources.

**Online Resources:** The Presenter Guide includes a list of additional online resources.

**Handouts:** (Available via pdf download)

- Four Additional Optional Activities
- Decision-Making Skills for Life
- Five Scenarios



*Presenter Guide  
Available via pdf download.*

# HOW TO ACCESS **CHOOSE TO REFUSE!**

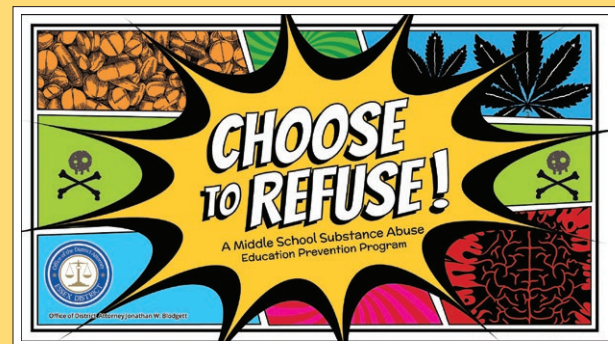
## **STEP 1.**

Go to the following URL: [www.mass.gov/essexda](http://www.mass.gov/essexda)

## **STEP 2.**

Look for the link/ graphic "Choose to Refuse! Middle School" and click on it.

You will be brought to the "Choose to Refuse!" program page.



The following downloads will be listed.

- "Choose to Refuse!" Powerpoint presentation
- Presenter Guide (*pdf*)
- Introduction Brochure (*pdf, this brochure*)

### **Handouts:**

- Four Additional Optional Activities
- Decision-Making Skills for Life
- Five Scenarios

## **STEP 3.**

Download the Presentation, Guide, and Handouts.

*NOTE: Make sure you have adequate space on the computer you are using for the presentation. The presentation is a large file.*

## **STEP 4.**

**RUN THE PRESENTATION.**

To run the presentation you will need a recent version of Powerpoint and an Internet connection.

***IMPORTANT: The videos need the Internet to run since they are sourced from YouTube.***

*NOTE: The slides are animated. To bring up the text simply click on your mouse or track pad.*



**SAY NO!**

Choose to Refuse: A Middle School Substance Abuse Prevention Education Program  
was funded by the Youth Opioid Prevention grant through the  
Massachusetts Attorney General's Office.





Office of District Attorney  
Jonathan W. Blodgett  
Ten Federal Street  
Salem, MA 01970  
(978) 745-6610

[www.mass.gov/essexda](http://www.mass.gov/essexda)

