**Seal of Approval: Program Selection and Implementation**

The Department of Public Health (DPH) and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) have reviewed and given their “Seal of Approval” to all of the evidence based substance use prevention programs that meet the listed required ratings unique to each of the clearinghouses identified in the attached appendix. The following guidance was created to support selection and implementation of evidence based initiatives for substance use prevention in schools.

No one initiative should be expected to achieve its evidenced outcomes as a stand-alone effort. Positive prevention outcomes are most often the result of a systematic, data informed process that requires communities to examine local conditions, identify and prioritize needs, and select a comprehensive multi-component set of evidence-based initiatives to address those needs across multiple sectors including, but not exclusive to schools/educational institutions. Often this comprehensive approach also includes assessment, creation, and revision of policies and practices across the community where the initiatives are being implemented. Schools are encouraged to collaborate with local state and federally funded prevention efforts where they exist to ensure that initiatives in the community are aligned with ongoing prevention work in the school.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) provides substantial guidance for the selection and identification of evidence based programs as part of the development of a comprehensive prevention plan. This guidance was foundational to the process of establishing standards for a Massachusetts “Seal of Approval” and can be [found here](https://www.samhsa.gov/capt/sites/default/files/resources/identifying-and-selecting-evidence-based-interventions-samhsa-2009.pdf). These have been and continue to be the processes and standards that inform and guide all of the state funded substance misuse prevention work happening across Massachusetts.

# Selecting an effective program and/or prevention strategy:

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), prevention programs and strategies with evidenced track records of success are more likely to produce the desired positive effects. It is not enough, however, that an intervention is solely evidence-based. It is important that the selected intervention is the right “fit” for the community and/or population it serves and that its evidenced outcomes address the identified needs of that population. With this is mind, schools and districts should consider the following when selecting a program and/or prevention strategy:

**Recognized Registries or Clearinghouses of Evidence-Based Model Programs:**

“Massachusetts” has selected “seven” national clearinghouses that conduct systematic research reviews to identify what works. These clearinghouses evaluate policies, community programs, treatment, interventions, and school based prevention programs. The attached appendix identifies the required “rating” in each clearinghouse, which DPH and DESE believe are necessary to ensure a program or intervention has a sufficient evidence base.

While each clearinghouse uses slightly different procedures, criteria, and terminology, all use the same overall approach. First, they review and summarize rigorous evaluations of different programs. Such studies must use research designs that involve valid and reliable comparison groups, such as randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs. Next, the clearinghouses rate the programs based on this information. In general, the ratings reflect the program's level of evidenced effectiveness, as well as the quality and quantity of that evidence over time.

Through application of this standard DPH and DESE have reviewed and given their “Seal of Approval” to all of the evidence based substance use prevention programs that meet the listed required ratings unique to each of the clearinghouses identified in the attached appendix.

1. [CARA Grant Award Recipients](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FY-2018-CARA-Grant-Award-Recipients-June-2018-Web.pdf)

[Drug-Free Communities Support Program Recipients (New)](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FY-2018-CARA-Grant-Award-Recipients-June-2018-Web.pdf)

[Drug-Free Communities Support Program Recipients (Continued)](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CArobinson02%5CDesktop%5CSeal%20of%20Approval%5CDrug-Free%20Communities%20Support%20Program%20Recipients%20%28New%29)

[BSAS Funded Prevention Programs](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/01/wc/bsas-prevention-unit-programs-and-resources-overview.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)