

Terry-McElrath, Y. M., Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., & Yamaguchi, R. (2005). Substance abuse counseling services in secondary schools: A national study of schools and students, 1999-2003. *Journal of School Health, 75*, 334-341.

Abstract

This study focuses on (a) American 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students' access to, and use of, substance abuse counseling services via schools and (b) associations between such access and student substance use prevalence. From 1999 through 2003, student data were obtained from the Monitoring the Future study; and school data were obtained through the Youth, Education, and Society study, resulting in nationally representative data from 113,008 students in 855 public and private schools. Results indicate that in contrast to relatively stable student heavy-drug use prevalence rates, internal counseling availability and participation decreased significantly over time, as did reported student referral to external counseling. Availability of internal counseling, as well as student participation in both internal and external referrals, differed significantly by school characteristics—school level, grade size, sector, population density, school socioeconomic status, majority student body race/ethnicity, and geographical region. Student use of counseling services did not show any relationships with school-level heavy drinking rates; however, student participation in external counseling referrals was positively associated with school-level prevalence rates for the use of illicit drugs other than marijuana and showed indications of a similar relationship with marijuana prevalence rates. The decreasing access to, and use of, counseling, the lower probability of counseling availability in middle schools, and the lack of association between heavy-alcohol use rates and counseling services, all suggest missed opportunities and a greater need for counseling services to reduce high-risk drug use.