



Minnesota Counter Drug Task Force

Drug Demand Reduction

Adventure Program Overview



What is the Drug Demand Reduction mission?

The Minnesota National Guard Counterdrug Task Force (MNCDTF) is a vital member of a coalition of National Guard members, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), and local communities involved in a multi-front battle against narco-terrorism, drugs, and drug-related violence. The mission of the program is to provide high-quality military personnel and equipment to support federal, state, and local drug LEAs as well as community based organizations that work to reduce the demand for drugs.

Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) programs are part of the MNCDTFs ongoing mission of combating use of illicit drugs in Minnesota. Through law enforcement support and drug abuse education, the MNCDTF provides beneficial community programs pursuant to the National Guard mission of service to nation and state. The Adventure Program is an integral part of MNCDTF DDR in the state of Minnesota.

What is the Adventure Program?

The Adventure Program incorporates experiential learning activities and problem solving initiatives to present individuals and groups with experiences that build life skills as well as drug resiliency skills.

What is the Adventure Program based on?

The Adventure Program is based on the highly successful Project Adventure "Ropes" challenge courses. Ropes challenge courses were developed in the late 1960s by the Outward Bound movement. By the 1970s Outward Bound offshoot Project Adventure had created a variety of Ropes challenge courses for use outdoors, indoors, and even classrooms. Ropes challenge courses are successful internationally with anywhere from 6,000 to 12,000 courses currently in use worldwide.

What is the overall Adventure Program philosophy?

The Adventure Program operates using the Project Adventure philosophy of "Challenge by Choice." Challenge by Choice is the idea that all participants are aware that they are to exercise personal choice about whether or not to attempt or complete any activity. The Adventure Program expands on this idea by presenting students with the "Full Value Contract." The Full Value Contract has students voluntarily agree to certain guidelines to interact more effectively and achieve group goals. These guidelines include:

- **Playing Hard:** Students agree to give their full effort physically and intellectually
- **Playing Safe (Physically and Emotionally):** Students agree to follow all safety guidelines given by facilitators and to not devalue or discount either themselves or others
- **Playing Fair:** Students agree not to cheat as the Adventure Program maintains that real behavior change must take place in an honest, non-coercive atmosphere
- **Mutual Respect:** Students agree to respect and be respected by facilitators and other students

The Challenge by Choice/Full Value Contract philosophy is based on choice not coercion. A student can opt to not do a certain part of an activity, but they are still part of the group. The individual can still support the group, and the group can support the individual.

What is the concept behind the Adventure Program?

The Experiential Learning teaching/teaching model is the heart of the Adventure Program. Experiential learning is the concept of having a "hands on" approach to teaching and learning. For example, people intellectually understand the concept of kicking a ball. To explain in simple terms, one must approach a ball, position their non-kicking foot to the side of the ball, retract their kicking leg in an opposite direction of the ball

in line with a desired direction, and then thrust their leg and ultimately their foot into the ball along a predetermined line.

Despite an intellectual understanding of kicking a ball, one could not understand the concept fully until it is experientially learned. It is not until one has experience of kicking a ball, or experientially learning, that one internalizes the concept, and more importantly learns how to kick effectively. Eventually, the concept is so internalized that it becomes a natural movement, and with more detailed experiential learning one can learn to control a ball as proficiently as a soccer player. Experiential experience is an essential part of the education process.

The value of experiential learning can be seen in the work and research of respected psychologist Carl Rogers, the highly influential teaching philosophies of educator John Dewey, and is an integral part of the demanding Montessori School early childhood development curriculum. All Adventure Program activities use experiential learning to reinforce the program objectives.

What are the Adventure Program objectives?

The Adventure Program seeks to facilitate anti-drug resiliency skills in communication, critical thinking, team building, problem solving, and trust. The Adventure Program activities are used to reinforce the Adventure Program emphasis on creating resilient kids. Research has shown the kids that are identified as resilient are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, commit crimes, or join gangs. Resilient kids are described as having a strong sense of identity, personal goals, leadership, high self esteem, effective communication skills, creative problem solving skills, decision making skills, and an appreciation of others. With these tools in hand, students are better prepared to face not only the threats of drugs and alcohol, but any potentially harmful situations presented to them throughout adolescence. The Adventure Program seeks to give students these tools.

Adventure Program effectiveness

To measure effectiveness, the Adventure Program administers pre and post assessment for students, along with an evaluation that the teachers can complete. Assessments are predicated on the Search Institute's extensive research that created "40 Developmental Assets" to enhance positive decision making, personal responsibility, and a concern for the needs of others.

All of the materials are available on our web page or a hard copy can be brought to the school if requested. In addition, the Adventure Program Lead Facilitator is certified through the Project Adventure Programming Certification. A Mobile Education Training Team from Project Adventure has also conducted continuing education instruction. All of our facilitators receive a rigorous fifty four hour training course and all facilitators receive annual refresher training.