

# Research Brief

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Richard F. Catalano  
*Director*

Kevin P. Haggerty  
*Assistant Director*

J. David Hawkins  
*Founding Director*

## MISSION of SDRG

To understand and promote healthy behaviors and positive social development among children, adolescents, and young adults by:

- ◆ conducting research on factors that influence development;
- ◆ testing the effectiveness of interventions;
- ◆ studying service systems and working to improve them;
- ◆ presenting science-based solutions to health and behavior problems; and
- ◆ disseminating knowledge produced by this research.

## A Test of Communities That Care: Community Coalitions Can Prevent Youth Substance Use and Delinquency

Original research presented in *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* (2009)

**Many communities** face problems with youth substance use and delinquency. Local coalitions of community stakeholders have great potential for producing community-wide reductions in youth problem behaviors by implementing well-chosen prevention practices. But despite the availability of tested and effective programs and policies to prevent youth substance use and delinquency, community-driven, community-wide efforts to prevent these problems often fail.

**Communities That Care (CTC)** is a prevention planning system that helps community stakeholders and decision makers with the selection and implementation of tested and effective programs most appropriate to their community's needs by using strategic consultation, training, and research-based tools. CTC does not focus on preventing use of a single drug or a particular problem behavior, but rather, focuses on elevating protective factors and reducing risk

factors that predict early initiation of substance use as well as other health-risking behaviors. Results from the first randomized experimental trial of CTC demonstrate the success of this coalition-driven community prevention approach.

**The Community Youth Development Study (CYDS)** is a seven-state randomized controlled trial of CTC in 24 communities. In this study, 12 intervention communities received training and technical assistance to establish a CTC coalition, prioritize risk and protective factors based on local data from the Communities That Care Youth Survey, and select and implement preventive interventions to meet their community's specific needs.

A longitudinal sample of 4,407 students in the 12 CTC and 12 control communities were surveyed annually, beginning in fifth grade.

### Key Findings

Within four years of coalition implementation of the CTC system, communities using CTC experienced significant reductions in youth substance use and delinquency among students completing the eighth grade, compared to control communities:

- 23% less alcohol use in the past 30 days
- 49% less smokeless tobacco use in the past 30 days
- 37% less binge drinking in past two weeks
- 31% fewer delinquent acts in the past year

Furthermore, youth in CTC communities were less likely to begin using drugs and to engage in delinquent behaviors for the first time by the eighth grade:

- 38% less likely to start using alcohol
- 57% less likely to start using smokeless tobacco
- 45% less likely to start smoking tobacco
- 29% less likely to start delinquent behaviors

 Social Development  
Research Group

 SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK  
UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

9725 3rd Avenue Northeast  
Suite 401  
Seattle, Washington 98115  
206-685-1997

[www.sdrp.org](http://www.sdrp.org)

Email: [sdrg@u.washington.edu](mailto:sdrg@u.washington.edu)

## Results

By eighth grade, students in the CTC communities were significantly less likely to initiate delinquent behaviors and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco compared to students in control communities. Figure 1 shows the difference between CTC and control communities in the proportion of students who used alcohol and engaged in delinquent behaviors for the first time in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

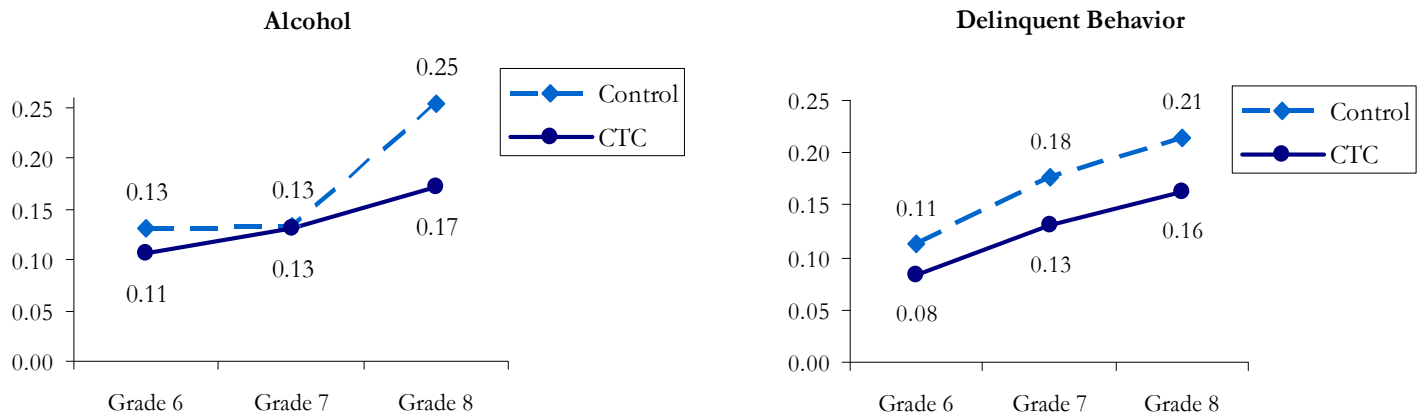
Figure 2 illustrates that eighth graders in the CTC communities were significantly less likely to be engaged in current use of alcohol, binge drinking (having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row), smokeless tobacco use, and delinquent behaviors. For example, the percentage of eighth-grade students in CTC communities reporting

current binge drinking was 37% less than that reported by students in control communities. The results were similar for alcohol and smokeless tobacco use, as well as the number of delinquent acts committed in the past year.

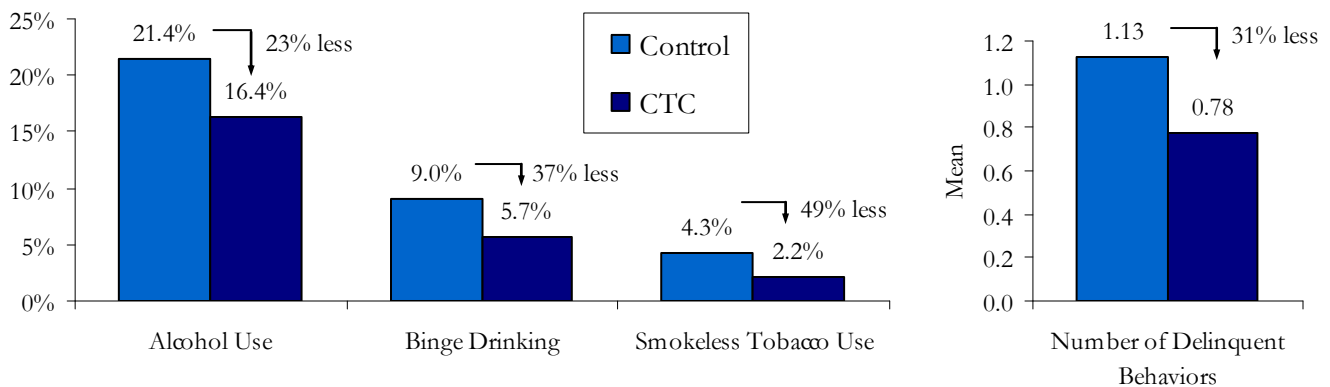
## Summary

Underage drinking and delinquency are strong predictors of later adult problem behaviors. Early initiation of cigarette use is related to a greater chance of daily smoking. Preventing early initiation of such behaviors may have long-term public health benefits. This research indicates that health-risking behaviors among youth can be prevented by a coalition of community stakeholders trained to use the CTC system to translate the advances of prevention science into well-implemented prevention practices.

**Figure 1: Proportion of students who used alcohol and engaged in delinquent behaviors for the first time**



**Figure 2: Current substance use and delinquent behaviors in eighth grade**



*For additional information on this topic, refer to the original article:*

Hawkins, J. D., Oesterle, S., Brown, E. C., Arthur, M. W., Abbott, R. D., Fagan, A. A., & Catalano, R. F. (2009). Results of a type 2 translational research trial to prevent adolescent drug use and delinquency: A test of Communities That Care. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 163(9), 789-798.