

SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, & MARIJUANA USE

Indian River County, Florida, is devoted to providing adolescents and teens with the tools and skills needed to build confidence, courage, self-esteem, and to successfully handle challenging situations. They have implemented the Botvin *LifeSkills Training* (LST) program in a comprehensive, community-wide effort to reduce the likelihood of teen use throughout their community. In doing so, the County has demonstrated its commitment to reducing the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence by targeting the major social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance use and other risky behavior.



The Substance Awareness Center of Indian River County (SAC) in cooperation and partnership with the school board, superintendent, principals, faculty, law enforcement, and community members, provides all of the county's 7 middle schools with *LifeSkills Training*. In addition, high school students receive a *LifeSkills Training* booster session.

In 2010, of the 67 counties in Florida, Indian River County was ranked 9th worst with underage drinking. Today, they have raised their ranking by 26 slots--to 35th best. SAC cites *LifeSkills Training* as being the key to this turnaround.

Each week, the trained LifeSkills Facilitators, employees of SAC, serve more than 4,300 students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, from August to May.

Each LST Facilitator offers a special brand of magic on their campus. Some special programs that reinforce the LST program are a nutrition class, Career Day followed by a Dress for Success Day, LST Lunch Bunch, and A Day without Media--Together Let's Unplug, among others.

The LST Team also created a parent organization called F.U.S.E--Families Unite in Support and Engagement, and will be organizing small parent groups through PTAs, SACs (Student Advisory Committee), and in local neighborhoods to engage and unite parents to advocate for the health, safety, and well-being of every child.

LifeSkills Training is funded by a Prevention Partnership Grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families, United Way of IRC, Board of County Commissioners and private foundations.

Evaluation shows substantial, positive results from the LifeSkills Training program (LST). Among Indian River middle school students, LST produced significant improvements in health knowledge, anti-drug attitudes, and life and refusal skills.

6,100 students participated

2,500 students completed all 3 years since implementation in 2012

LST is in all four public middle schools, two charter schools and one private school

Schools included: Gifford Middle School, Oslo Middle School, Saint Helen Catholic School, Storm Grove Middle School, Sebastian River Middle School, Sebastian Charter Jr HS, and Imagine Charter School.

"LifeSkills Training has shown me that the most important thing is to set good examples and show pride. It's not always about being a part of the coolest clique or looking the best. Set goals, stand up for what you believe in, have good fun and make the most of life. LifeSkills has helped me a better person inside and out!" -Indian River County Middle School Student

2010 vs. 2014

Fewer Indian River middle school students are drinking alcohol
64% decrease

Fewer Indian River middle school students are smoking cigarettes
55% decrease

Fewer Indian River middle school students are using marijuana
29% decrease

Perception of harm and disapproval increased for all three

"What I have learned in LifeSkills? Say no to drinking, smoking, and drugs. Stand up for yourself even if you stand alone. Never bully or hurt someone's feelings, be kind to one another, be responsible, be respectful, be an "A" student which means have an awesome attitude and never give up! I have not had a fight with anyone for weeks because I am now controlling my anger. I also do the deep breathing to cope with my stress at home and in school. I want to be a role model to my younger brother. LifeSkills has taught me all of this and much more." -Indian River County Middle School Student

Data provided by the Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey

