



# VCU Institute for Drug and Alcohol Studies

## Be Our Partner in the Virginia Preventure Project

### Contact Information:

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## Preventure: Substance use prevention intervention shown to reduce drug and alcohol use in adolescents by 30-80%

**Description:** Preventure is an evidence-based prevention intervention recently [featured in the New York Times](#) and the Surgeon General's [Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health](#).

It was developed in Canada by Dr. Patricia Conrod, a Professor of Psychiatry at University of Montreal. Though never tested in the United States, studies from Canada, UK, Australia, Netherlands and the Czech Republic show that the intervention is associated with 30-80% reductions in alcohol and drug use in adolescents at two-year follow-up.

Dr. Jasmin Vassileva's research team at VCU is the only group in the United States that has been fully trained by Dr. Conrod in how to deliver Preventure and will seek federal funding to conduct a clinical trial with Preventure in Virginia. This provides a unique opportunity to make Virginia the first state where Preventure could be put into effect.

**Risk:** Onset of alcohol or drug use before 14 years of age is strongly related to increased risk of developing substance use disorders and associated mental health and physical problems, suicidal behavior, injuries, risky sexual behavior, compromised academic performance, and school drop-out.

**Primary Goal:** To delay onset and reduce rates of adolescent alcohol and drug use and associated mental health problems and risk behaviors.

**Secondary Goal:** To examine neuropsychological factors implicated in the predisposition to substance misuse in adolescents and to evaluate the beneficial effects of Preventure on decision-making, cognitive development, academic performance, and mental health.

## How does it work?

1. Research has identified four key personality traits that increase risk for substance misuse in adolescents:

1. impulsivity
2. sensation seeking
3. anxiety sensitivity
4. depression / negative thinking

Prevention targets students who show increased levels of these personality traits relative to their peers.

2. The four personality traits are identified by a 23-item personality questionnaire, which is given to all 9<sup>th</sup> graders at each participating school to identify high risk students. In this way, we can identify ~90% of the high-risk children.
3. Along with the 23-item personality questionnaire, students are also given brief questionnaires asking about alcohol/drug use and mental health, as well as short computerized neurocognitive tests of decision-making, impulse control, and working memory. The full assessment requires less than 60 minutes.
4. After the assessment, two 90-minute coping-skills training workshops, introduced as 'sessions to channel your personality toward success', are offered to the high-risk students. Most students sign up and about 45% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students go through the program.
5. The workshops teach students cognitive behavioral techniques to address their most troublesome trait and encourages them to use these tools. In short, they are life-skills training workshops.
6. The workshops are administered by Dr. Vassileva's research team. Interested schools can also have their school staff trained by Dr. Vassileva in the delivery of the intervention, which can increase their efficacy in addressing substance use problems among students in a self-sustainable manner.
7. Each student receives an intervention manual for the specific personality trait that they display, which is theirs to keep and use in the future as needed.
8. Two follow-up assessments (~60 minutes each) are conducted at 1- and 2-years after the intervention, to assess its effects on substance use, mental health, and cognitive outcomes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How much does it cost?

The program would be of no cost to you, pending NIH funding. Delivery of this intervention in schools across Virginia is dependent on obtaining federal funding to cover its costs. Once funding is obtained, all materials (screening tests, intervention manuals) and delivery of the intervention are provided free. Optional training of school staff in administering the intervention will also be provided free.

### 2. When would it start?

The grant application to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will be submitted in early February 2017. The earliest start date for the project would be January 2018.

### 3. Does it take up class time?

It doesn't have to. The assessment takes less than 60 minutes and the program itself requires two 90-minute sessions administered in a group format for each of the four high risk categories. The assessment and the interventions are typically given during school hours but they could also be administered during after school hours.

### 4. How many sessions would be going on at one school?

There are two sessions for each of the four personality traits, for a total of eight sessions per school, administered in group format (group size 10-14 students).

### 5. What if a student scores high on multiple troublesome traits?

Only the most troublesome trait (on which the student shows the highest score) will be addressed.

### 6. Who takes the classes?

Students with extreme scores on one of the four personality traits (1 standard deviation above the school mean) will be invited to attend the workshop targeting their most troublesome trait.

### 7. Who administers the screening tests and the intervention?

Dr. Vassileva and her research team will administer all the screening tests and the intervention. The complete screening lasts less than an hour and will be administered three times: before the intervention, 12-months and 24-months after the intervention.

### 8. What age is eligible?

Most research with Preventure has been conducted with 9<sup>th</sup> graders. So initially, only 9<sup>th</sup> graders will be eligible with plans to expand to other age groups.

### 9. What schools are eligible?

Public or private high schools in Virginia, within about an hour drive from Richmond.

## Benefits for your School

Partnering with us on this project will allow your school to receive training and intervention tools, materials and methods relevant to the Preventure Project at no costs to your administration. The technique can be applied by your school staff to secondary students of subsequent years long after the project is complete. This initiative will greatly expand your school's drug and alcohol prevention measures.

### Data Collection Procedures

**(Pending approval and funding by the National Institutes of Health)**

<b>Number of students required:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 per school ( average)</li> </ul>
<b>School Staff involvement:</b> <b>(Optional)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced counselors, educators, or teachers</li> <li>• Staff can be trained to implement the Preventure program</li> <li>• 12 to 18 hours of training for interested staff</li> </ul>
<b>Participation dates (approximate):</b>	<p><b>Application to NIH will be submitted in Feb 2017. Tentative start date of the project: Jan 2018 (pending NIH funding)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One baseline assessment, one post-intervention assessment and two annual follow-up assessments.</li> <li>• Assessment periods: September to November.</li> <li>• Intervention periods: January to April.</li> <li>• Intervention period lasts from 1-3 months depending on the size of the school and its resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Time required with students:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 minutes (at least one class period) for the annual assessment for all Grade 9 students (Years 1- 3 of the project)</li> <li>• 3 hours for the interventions (workshops) for ~45% of the students (Year 1 of the project)</li> </ul>
<b>Costs to school</b>	<b>NONE.</b> All materials (screening tests, intervention manuals, etc.) will be provided by the research team.



**Beacon Tree**

advocates for youth mental health

Beacon Tree Foundation has partnered with VCU/IDAS to support the implementation of this program in Virginia