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# Issue Brief

# The Walsh Group

ADVANCING PUBLIC POLICY THROUGH RESEARCH

## Evaluating Random Student Drug Testing in High Schools

The Walsh Group (TWG) has just completed the third year of a research project evaluating the effectiveness of random drug testing (RDT) to reduce drug use by high school students. Three public high schools in New Jersey, with a total population of over six thousand students, are participating in the research (Hunterdon Central Regional High School, North Hunterdon High School, and Voorhees High School). The study is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

The schools' random testing policies are designed to be therapeutic rather than punitive. The regional boards of education have created a policy where participation in school-sponsored athletics or competitive

extracurricular activities is contingent on participation in the random testing program. Students can also volunteer to participate in the program, which runs throughout the year.

If a student fails a random drug test, the student's parents are notified, meetings with the school student assistance counselor are arranged, and the student may not participate in extracurricular activities until he/she has successfully completed required drug education and counseling sessions and passed a follow-up drug test. Students do not miss any classes, and may resume extracurricular activities when the prerequisites are met. The goal is to deter use and identify students who are using drugs so they can get the necessary help.

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*Random Drug Testing aims to get students into treatment, not trouble*



## John Moulden Joins The Walsh Group

The Walsh Group announces the addition of its newest staff member: Mr. John Moulden, former President of the National Commission on Alcohol and Drug Driving (NCADD).

Mr. Moulden has over 33 years of professional experience in the field of highway safety in the public and private sectors. He has served as Special Assistant to the Chairman and Transportation Safety Specialist, National Transportation Safety Board; as a Research Psychologist, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and as the President of the NCADD. Mr. Moulden also served on the National Board of Directors of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and was elected as MADD's first Vice President for Public Policy.



## High School Study Extended for a Fourth Year

*The Department of Education has extended the project for a fourth year to continue evaluation of RDT's impact, and to explore role of high school socialization and seasonal variations on student drug use*

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All test results are confidential and do not appear on a student's permanent record.

The RDT programs have run smoothly at all three participating schools and are now an accepted part of the normal course of business. There have been no problems or complaints and there has been no evidence that students have stopped participating in athletics or extracurricular activities in order to avoid being in the RDT pool.

The preliminary results from this complicated study are quite promising. We have found positive correlations between being in the RDT pool and lower rates of drug use; however, we cannot impute causality at this time. More data is needed.

The study's preliminary results have also brought some other interesting things to light. There is strong evidence that student drug use patterns change over the course of the school year, and that the greatest rates of drug-use increases are among the freshman and sophomore classes as they assimilate into the high school culture.

Both of these patterns have important implications for the design and implementation of RDT and other prevention programs. The Department of Education has now extended the study for a fourth year so that TWG can gather more data on the impact of RDT programs on student drug use as well as further investigate seasonal variations in student drug use and high school socialization.

## Setting the Standards

*TWG Hosts Drugged-Driving Experts Meeting in Talloires, France*

A major problem in assessing the impact of drugs on driving is the fact that the variables being measured across studies vary significantly. In studies being reported in a growing literature the basic parameters being assessed, the analytical techniques being used, and the drugs being tested for, are simply not comparable due to a lack of standardization in the field.

In early September, The Walsh Group organized and hosted a 4-day meeting of experts in "Drugged Driving" research. The international experts in attendance represented nine countries and three continents. The meeting was co-sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, The European Commission, The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs & Drug Addiction, The International Council on Alcohol, Drugs and Traffic Safety, The International Association of Forensic Toxicologists, and the French Society of Analytical Toxicologists. The meeting was held at the Tufts University European Center in Talloires, France.

The goal of the meeting was to develop a set of standards for "Drugged Driving" research designed to insure the comparability of data from country to country. Recently, the European Commission has funded a 4-year / 25M Euro research project, Project DRUID [Driving Under the Influence of Drugs]. This project involves some 40 research teams in 17 different countries, and standardization of data collection is imperative. The product from the Talloires meeting is a draft "standards" document integrating the discussions and recommendations posed throughout the proceedings.

Utilizing the Delphi Method, the draft document will be posted on the ICADTS and TIAFT websites where comments will be solicited from the greater drug-impaired driving research community. It is anticipated that the final version of the Standards Document will be available for distribution at the joint TIAFT/ICADTS meeting in August 2007 in Seattle.



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## NOTABLE & QUOTABLE: Recent Publications

### & Presentations



### Presentations

The University of Maryland and its Center for Substance Abuse Research [CESAR] recently hosted a meeting of former Drug Czars on the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the appointment of the first Drug Czar, Dr. Jerry Jaffe (advisor to President Nixon). Eight of the eleven former Drug Czars attended and spoke about their experiences and thoughts about the successes and failures of strategic drug policies. Dr. Walsh was invited to the meeting to speak about "Lessons from the future from the past" on a panel with Sally Satel, Mark Kleiman, John Ball, and Peter Bensinger.

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TWG Senior Systems Analyst Andy von Brand presented a poster at the Annual Society of Forensic Toxicologists (SOFT) Meeting, on October 5<sup>th</sup> in Austin. The poster, titled "Evaluating Workplace Testing Results from a Medical Review Officer Data Source", presented work from a collaborative effort with Research Triangle International (RTI) and SAMHSA.

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TWG Senior Research Scientist Dr. Randy Atkins will present a paper, "On-line Recovery: Mutual-aid support groups & the use of the Internet" at the International Conference for Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS) on November 18, 2006 in Los Angeles.

### Call for Papers!

Dr. Walsh is the co-chair [with Prof. Jørg Mørland] of the Scientific Program for the Toxicology of Alcohol, Drugs, & Traffic Safety Track of the Joint ICADTS/TIAFT 2007 Meeting in Seattle. The call for papers is now open. For complete details, please visit:  
[www.icadts2007.org](http://www.icadts2007.org)