

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF STUDENT
SUBSTANCE ADDICTION



ATTENTION SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS!

- Are you a special education teacher serving students with emotional/behavioral disorders who struggle with substance (mis)use?
- Do you want to contribute to research aimed at improving services for these students?
- Could you use a \$25 gift card for just one hour of your time?

If you answered YES to all of those questions, then I have an opportunity for you!! We at University of Vermont are conducting a research study on the experiences of special education teachers working with students struggling with substance abuse issues.

If you are interested in learning more and possibly participating in this project, please review the attached information form. If you decide to participate, please email the PI, Dr. Justin Garwood, at Justin.Garwood@uvm.edu. Your name will be added to a list of participants and a Teams invite for a forthcoming online focus group will be sent to your email address. We anticipate focus groups will take place between February and April, with an anticipated meeting time of 4-5pm.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via the contact information below. Thank you!

Justin D. Garwood, Ph.D.

Professor

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University of Vermont Research Information Sheet

Title of Study: Project CLEAR (Classroom Educators' Approaches to Responding to Substance Use among Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders)

Principal Investigator: Justin Garwood, Ph.D.

Sponsor: Osher Center for Integrative Health at University of Vermont

Introduction

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a special education teacher in Vermont or New York who has experience working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders with substance abuse issues. This study is being conducted by Dr. Justin Garwood at the University of Vermont.

Purpose

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) represent one of the most vulnerable populations in schools. National data show that students with EBD are significantly more likely than their peers to engage in risky behaviors, including substance use. Rates of substance use among students with EBD are nearly double those of the general population of students with disabilities, underscoring the urgent need for targeted, effective responses. Despite this, school-based approaches to students' substance use remain overwhelmingly punitive. The use of suspension, expulsion, or referral to law enforcement reflects a disciplinary paradigm that prioritizes compliance over care. Research has demonstrated that exclusionary discipline not only fails to reduce substance use but also exacerbates disengagement from school, increases the likelihood of dropout, and contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Special education teachers occupy a uniquely important role in this landscape. They work daily with students with EBD, develop individualized education programs (IEPs), and are often the most consistent adult presence in these students' lives. Yet, while extensive research has examined the epidemiology of youth substance use and the outcomes of punitive discipline, very little attention has been paid to the perspectives of the educators who are most directly engaged with these students. Teachers' insights into the lived realities of responding to student substance use, their perceptions of barriers, and their ideas for more supportive strategies are absent from current models of intervention. The current study aims to better understand the lived experiences of special educators serving students with EBD who struggle with substance abuse.

Study Procedures

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in an online focus group via Microsoft Teams. The focus group is expected to last 45m-1h and will be audio-recorded using Microsoft Teams for later transcription by graduate students using Microsoft Word. Sample questions you may be asked include, "What are your experiences serving students facing substance abuse struggles? How do you respond if you suspect a student is under the influence of a substance during school hours?" After data collection, we will provide a summary of the data and ask you to confirm whether or not it accurately reflects your experience from the focus group.

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there may be direct benefit for you as you hear from professional colleagues regarding their professional experiences and approaches to serving students with EBD; additionally, information from this study may benefit other people in the future.

Risks

We will do our best to protect the information we collect from you and avoid any potential risk for an accidental breach of confidentiality.

Costs

There will be no costs, other than your time, for you for participation in this research study.

Compensation

For taking part in this research study and completing the focus group, you will be reimbursed for your time and inconvenience in the form of a \$25 digital gift card to Amazon. The gift card will arrive via email within two weeks of completing the online focus group.

University of Vermont Research Payment Information Requirement

You will be required to provide your name and address each time you receive payment. You will also be requested to provide your social security number if the amount of the payment is \$100 or if the total payments from UVM are equal to or greater than \$600 in a calendar year. If you are not a US Citizen or Permanent Resident, you will be required to complete additional paperwork including your immigration status for payment. This information will be strictly confidential and will be used for tax withholding and reporting purposes only and will allow the University to determine your US residency for federal income tax purposes.

Confidentiality

We will collect your email address and name, as well as a recording of your voice and interview answers, during the study. All of these data will be kept on secure, UVM servers.

Please note that email, social media, and text communication is neither private nor secure. Though we are taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through these methods could be read by a third party.

Only members of the research team will have access to audio recordings and transcriptions of the focus groups. All demographic information will be reported only in aggregate form.

In the focus groups, questions are directed to the group, not to individuals. You have the right to not answer a question or withdraw from the study at any time in the process. We will ask that everyone in the group not repeat what they have heard others say, but there is always the chance that someone will repeat what you have said. Everything you say will be kept confidential by the researchers.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. You may choose not to take part in this study, or if you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study.

Participant data (e.g., names and email addresses, as well as demographic information) collected is held on a secure UVM server. If you choose to withdraw your data from the study, you may do so by emailing the principal investigator with your request.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact me, Dr. Justin Garwood, at the following phone number, 802-656-2712. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact the Director of the Research Protections Office at irb@uvm.edu or (802) 656-5040.

It is recommended you save this information sheet for your records before continuing.