

Should High School Athletes Be Given Drug Tests?

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School administration ensures a secure, supportive, and healthy institutional environment where children can study and exploit their full potential and capacities. This encompasses the taking of preventive measures against the abuse of tobacco, alcohol, as well as other drugs and substances among students. Historically, learning institutions preferred the use of prevention initiatives such as D.A.R.E.; however, research studies indicate that the effort is not valid. Some school administrators have, therefore, resolved to use a more punitive and controversial approach rather than showing support for the implementation of already proven practices. The controversial procedure entails drug testing for students. The addiction to drugs and the desire to get high among youths has sparked a heated debate as to whether it is essential and of any significance to administer drug tests on high school athletes. This essay will focus on both sides of the discussion before concluding.

One time or another, there will be the necessity to respond to the fact that we are facing an epidemic of drug and substance abuse. This problem has taken a real toll on young individuals in the United States. This is true not only for impoverished or inner-city teens whose only desire is to escape from the harsh realities of social and economic challenges, but also for suburban youths who have access to every resource and opportunity. Despite the fact that alcohol and marijuana are a point of concern as well, children also abuse other substances. Most teens are addicted to snorting heroin, which is readily available in every population or community in America. Far worse, medical drugs such as Adderall used in the treatment of attention deficit disorders are ground and snorted. Most youths are stealing prescription drugs, such as Percocet and Klonopin, from their homes or buying them on the streets and taking them. Research has also indicated that aerosol products and cleaning supplies are also abused, with some going to the extent of purchasing and using products such as Salvia (Laure et al, 133-138).

Based on formulated workplace drug testing policies, specific groups of learners, such as those who belong to a sports club or team, are required to undergo drug testing at school by Random Student Drug Testing (RSDT). Drug tests are often conducted in the form of urinalysis, which helps in the detection of cocaine, marijuana, PCP, amphetamines, and opioids. The outlined goals and objectives of such an initiative are the identification of students with possible concerns about [drugs and substance abuse](#) and ensuring early intervention (Laure et al, 133-138).

RSDT, together with other strict and punitive school approaches such as the zero-tolerance policies were established in the “War on Drugs” method used in the 1990s. Nowadays, learning institutions, as well as the authorities, apply these approaches with the intended objective of singling out the students who may be facing substance use challenges and referring them to necessary helping

departments, such as guidance and counseling, and hospitals. However, there have been instances where more punitive steps, such as expulsion or dismissal from extracurricular activities, occurred. Currently, no federal laws exist regarding school-based drug tests. However, public schools have been mandated with the authority to conduct drug tests in particular instances by two Supreme Court Cases. These cases are the 1995 case, where the court ruled that schools can do random drug tests on their student-athletes, while the second case was in 2002, where the court ruling was expanded to encompass the learners who took part in competitive extracurricular activities such as chess clubs or marching band (Goldberg et al, 16-25).

After the Supreme Court's constitutional ruling on the legality of drug tests on student-athletes, the then-head of state, President George H.W. Bush, initiated federal funding for their use, and their popularity grew. By 2008, almost 2000, or 16 percent of the U.S. School districts had embraced a drug testing initiative. While there has been an end to the federal funding for these actions, as have other more efficient types of school-based prevention measures, school districts in the nation have persistently continued using and expanding the drug testing programs already in existence or have adopted new forms using their capital (Lisha & Steve, 399-407).

Although the Supreme Court rulings have been limited on the legality of random drug testing on students who participate in athletics, among other activities, some institutions have expanded this program, conducting it on different groups of learners. Such students include those who attend school dances, those who drive to school, or even those who are part of the student fraternity. The legality of these expanded programs is still unclear. According to the Supreme Court, it is necessary to test athletes for drugs since they are role models and can impact the drug culture and beliefs of any institution. Additionally, athletics and drug use are a risky combination. This similar reasoning was expanded to the extra-curricular activities. While security and safety remain a legitimate concern, this topic has become one of the significant areas of disagreement and is perceived as a "slippery slope," particularly when learning institutions have been mandated with the freedom to implement and use school-wide testing (Yesalis & Michael, 25-35).

Like any other controversial policy, there are two opinions and sides of the debate. The proponents argue that drug testing facilitates earlier and timely detection and intervention on the issue. Further, they say that learners have an inbuilt mechanism and reason to desist from [peer pressure](#), which is a commonly given reason as to why children experiment with drugs. Also, other than fulfilling the school's duties and responsibilities in promoting a secure and drug-free environment, drug testing will enhance morals, which increases the chances for the kid to have a better and more prosperous future (Lisha & Steve, 399-407).

Opponents, on the other hand, are of the opinion that it is costly to conduct tests and that the funds used to cater to such initiatives can be spent better on more effective and efficient preventive measures. They argue that a student may bring another person's urine sample to cheat on the tests. They may also turn to the abuse of other drugs, such as synthetic marijuana or alcohol which cannot be detected during the trial. While it is not right to punish the students who test positive for drugs,

research studies indicate that 8 percent of the learners in a sample have been expelled from their learning institutions. It is in the view of the proponents that tests are capable of disproportionately impacting and affecting students of color. They also term athletics and extracurricular activities as pro-social activities that could be protective of substance use or abuse. There can be detrimental effects due to the suspension from such activities once a student tests positive for drugs (Laure et al, 133-138).

However, most people are concerned with the question of whether drug testing is efficient and effective, regardless of the pros and cons. Reports given are mixed and inconclusive. Some indicate that school districts that apply this measure do not record lower drug use reports, while other researchers suggest a link exists between drug testing and a reduction in the prevalence of drug use. Consequently, no systematic studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of this initiative as compared to other preventive strategies. As is the opinion of the opponents, drug testing has a lot of unintended repercussions, which no research study has taken into account. Due to the lack of scientific information in support of the effectiveness of this measure, I would take a firm stand to oppose the use of drug tests as a measure of preventing drug use.

Work Cited

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