The Unplugged – Substance Abuse Prevention Program

GRANT: IKEA Social Initiative


PROJECT HOLDER: Mentor Foundation International

PROJECT LEADER: Martina Feric Slehan, PhD; University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Unplugged program is based on the positively evaluated European Union Drug Abuse Prevention (EUDAP) initiative that has been developed, piloted and positively evaluated in 7 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden) over the past five years. From 2009 to 2010 program was implemented in 5 new European countries, including Croatia, within the project Unplugged: European Drug Abuse Prevention (EUDAP): Adaptation, Pilot and Evaluation of a Substance Abuse Prevention and Health Promotion Initiative for 12-14 year olds, The Mentor Foundation (International). Process evaluation and effectiveness evaluation were planned and organized by Piedmont Centre for Drug Addiction Epidemiology (Torino, Italy).

The program is based on CSI comprehensive social influence model (elements from life skills (Botvin) and normative beliefs) that (1) promotes positive and healthy behavior, and (2) impacts on the prevention of the use of addictive substances (smoking, alcohol use and other addictive substances).

Program has two components: component for students and component for parents.

Component for students consists of 12 workshops: three on information and attitudes, three on development of students’ interpersonal skills, and three on development of students’ intrapersonal skills. Workshops for students are led by class masters or teachers.

Parent component contains work around following topics: (1) Understanding better the teenagers; (2) Parenting a teenager means growing up together; (3) A good relationship with my child also, means setting up rules and limits. Parents meetings are led by school counselors and class masters/teachers.

The program includes training for teachers and school counselors who implement the program in
Schools. Education is led by a team of experts\(^1\) from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb and with the support of the national Teachers Training Agency (AZOO).

Program implementation in Croatia followed the project steps: first cycle of program implementation aimed to test the cultural sensitivity of program materials and to identify eventual technical problems in program delivery (program implementation in 2 schools), second cycle of program implementation was the program effectiveness evaluation cycle – 5 experimental schools and 6 control schools and in the third cycle, the program was implemented in all 13 schools as a step toward dissemination.

Since the end of the project (2009-2012), the program was implemented in more than 25 schools across Croatia, with the support of the national Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), local authorities and/or NGO sector.

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