

SDRG 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

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Mission of SDRG

To understand and promote healthy behaviors and positive social development among diverse populations, we:

- Conduct research on factors that influence development
- Develop and test the effectiveness of interventions
- Study service systems and work to improve them
- Advocate for science-based solutions to health and behavior problems
- Disseminate knowledge, tools, and expertise produced by this research

Dear friends,



Every day I am reminded—personally and professionally—of the value of prevention and the importance of risk and protective factors. The seeds planted by our founders, J. David Hawkins, PhD, and Richard F. Catalano, PhD, are bearing fruit.

Evidence that preventive interventions have a positive impact on health and development is instrumental in building public support and political will for investing in effective prevention at scale.

SDRG researchers have demonstrated long-term impact in three rigorous longitudinal studies of two of our interventions, Communities That Care and Raising Healthy Children:

- Communities That Care (CTC) is a science-based community prevention planning and capacity-building system designed to prevent behavioral health problems among youth community-wide. A community-randomized trial showed that, when CTC was implemented in middle school, it continued to prevent common risky behaviors like gateway drug use, antisocial behavior, and violence 11 years later, when the participants were 21 years old.
- The Seattle Social Development Project (SSDP) used a multi-component preventive intervention called Raising Healthy Children (RHC) to increase positive functioning and decrease problems such as delinquency and substance use. We tested RHC in a cohort of Seattle public school students when they were in grades 1 to 6. We continued to interview this cohort to age 39 and found that those who received the RHC intervention engaged in healthier behaviors and had better mental health into their late 30s.
- SSDP's Intergenerational Project (TIP): In this follow-up study, we showed that the benefits of RHC even extend to the next generation. Children of parents who received the RHC program when they were kids in the previous study had significantly better academic skills, fewer developmental delays, less teacher-rated externalizing behavior, and less initiation of drug use than children of parents who did not receive the RHC intervention.

These three studies were presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Prevention Research in June 2017.

SDRG and its collaborators published **31** articles/book chapters in 2017.

The past year brought other welcome news to SDRG. Recognizing the potential risks to health from the legalization of retail marijuana and the power of prevention to reduce those risks, Colorado has invested \$16,125,000 of FY16-18 marijuana tax revenues in the Communities That Care (CTC) approach. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is providing resources, training, and coaching to 50 Colorado communities implementing the CTC system with assistance from the UW Center for Communities That Care. CTC was also recognized by the *New York Times* on Nov. 27, 2017, as an example of a system that engages entire communities in a shared opioid prevention effort—one that does so with solid evidence of effectiveness.

SDRG has been wrapping up work on a NIDA-funded project developing a new module for Connecting, a family-focused, substance abuse and risky sexual behavior prevention program for teens in foster care and their caregivers. The new module is designed to strengthen teen-caregiver relationships and increase caregiver acceptance and support. The module was developed using feedback from focus groups with LGBTQ+ youth in foster care, foster caregivers, and child welfare workers, and theater tested to assess its usability. We hope to make this module available as part of Connecting and as a standalone tool.

The Connecting study was one of two new recruiting efforts for longitudinal studies by our Survey Research Division this past year. The other was the First Years Away from Home study. This project looks at the effectiveness of a self-administered handbook designed to be used interactively by parents and their college-bound children (students entering their first year at Washington State University), with the goal of increasing academic success and preventing substance use and other risky behaviors. Both studies offered many learning opportunities for recruitment strategies and study participation.

The year 2017 brought several new collaborations and opportunities to continue our work. In addition to the work on Connecting, we received funding from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to continue the International Youth Development Study, which focuses on understanding the impact of national and state-level drug policy and substance use through age 31 in the United States and Australia. The Annie E. Casey Foundation funded our work with Friends of the Children, a professional mentoring program that was recently expanded to work with children in the child welfare system. In addition, SDRG received a 5-year grant from Spalding International to act as the evaluation partner for the National Training and Development Curriculum for foster and adoptive parents.

The year also brought significant staffing changes. Our founder and first director, J. David Hawkins, PhD, officially retired, although he continues to serve the UW School of Social Work as Endowed Professor in Prevention Emeritus. Project director and principal investigator Karl G. Hill, PhD, left SDRG after 22 years to continue his work at the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado.

We are grateful to all of our partners and funders, who make it possible to continue our many strands of work. We look forward to continuing collaboration in 2018.



Kevin P. Haggerty, PhD
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