



# Substance Abuse Policy Research Program

An RWJF national program

## SUMMARY

The Substance Abuse Policy Research Program (SAPRP), first authorized by the Board of Trustees of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) in July 1994, funds investigator-initiated projects that identify and assess policies to reduce the harm caused by substance abuse. Projects analyze the feasibility, effectiveness and likely consequences of these policies. The program helps ensure that the understanding gained through these analyses will be used by decision-makers in the public and private sectors.

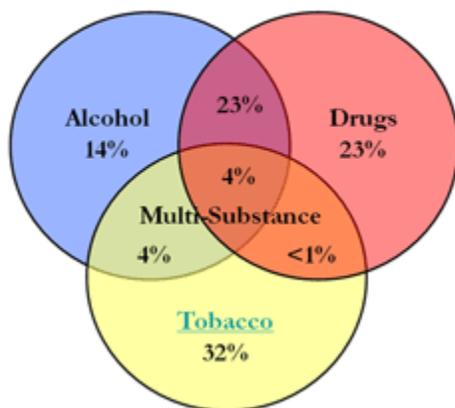
SAPRP seeks proposals from experts in diverse disciplines such as medicine, health economics, political science, public health, sociology, criminal justice and law, who seek to use evidence gained in policy-focused research to inform substance abuse policies. The 2006 authorization is the final one under which SAPRP will have a focus on tobacco.

The national program office is located at the Center for Creative Leadership.

## Key Results

Through December 2007, RWJF has funded a total of 338 research projects under SAPRP; 72 were active and 266 had closed.

## SAPRP Grants Funded by Area



On the program's [website](#), each project has a brief description linked to the title in the list of completed projects in that topic area. Topics areas can be access from the home page, via the "View Topic Area" drop-down box. Projects covering more than one topic (e.g., alcohol and tobacco) are listed in both topic areas. This diagram shows the breakdown of SAPRP grants by substance area.

Grants can also be searched by the name of the principal investigator, a list of specific subtopics—such as clean indoor air, harm reduction, prevention/education, social norms, access and availability, welfare reform and college drinking—and by date.

Examples of policy changes informed directly by SAPRP research include:

- Impact of Medicaid policies on drug therapy for addiction.
- Seven states have enacted Per Se Drugged Driving legislation-Delaware, Michigan, Nevada Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.
- N.Y. City Clean indoor air laws.
- Synar Amendment to restrict youth access to tobacco.
- Effect of youth's exposure to antismoking messages.
- Impact of cigarette excise taxes on smoking rates among pregnant women.
- Cigarette excise taxes and attitudes of African-American smokers/nonsmokers.
- A link between state/local alcohol policies and fatality rates.
- Two studies of safe and drug-free schools.
- Opiate treatment in clinical settings.
- Substance abuse provisions in the welfare reform reauthorization process.
- Drugged driving and state laws.

SAPRP completed grants have produced a mean of 2.5 publications in scientific journals and a total of 835 reported publications to date.

For each RWJF dollar invested in SAPRP projects, investigators report an additional \$2.60 of research support from other sources—thus leveraging \$146.6 million in additional support.

SAPRP's efforts to grow the field include:

- 525 active external reviewers of proposals.
- 40 percent of investigators reporting that they are new to the field.
- 19 percent of principal investigators reporting ethnic minority ties.

## Evaluations

Two evaluations by the Lewin Group in 1997 and 1999 found that SAPRP is an important funding resource for substance abuse policy research, especially for descriptive studies, studies that address the combined effects of multiple substance abuse policies,

legal/ethical analyses and policy process studies, which are rarely supported by federal agencies or private foundations. Evaluators also concluded that SAPRP is demonstrating progress in building the field of policy research in four ways:

- Bringing new researchers into the field.
- Increasing the number of experienced investigators doing policy research.
- Expanding funded research projects to areas not previously studied.
- Leveraging existing research findings to stimulate subsequent work.

### **National Program Self-Assessment**

In 2003, the national program office conducted a variety of surveys of principal investigators to look at the following questions; answers follow each one:

**1. *What is the evidence that SAPRP-funded research is policy relevant and has informed policy-making?***

**Answer:** The substantive topics studied by SAPRP-funded researchers have mirrored the key policy issues on the national agenda. SAPRP-funded research has been utilized by public and private policy-makers at all levels, by the media and by advocacy organizations (e.g., welfare reform, clean indoor air, perinatal substance abuse). Examples include:

- N.Y. City Clean indoor air laws.
- The Synar Amendment to restrict youth access to tobacco.
- The effect of youth's exposure to antismoking messages.
- The impact of cigarette excise taxes on smoking rates among pregnant women.
- The link between state/local alcohol policies and fatality rates.
- Opiate treatment in clinical settings and substance abuse provisions in the welfare reform reauthorization process.

**2. *What is the evidence that SAPRP has generated scientifically high-quality research?***

**Answer:** As of spring 2004, 139 projects (out of 226) have received 528 total publication citations in more than 200 different journals, and 68 percent of completed grants have at least one citation.

**3. *Is SAPRP still filling a needed niche given other funders and funding?***

**Answer:** There is little evidence of an overlap between NIH funding and SAPRP priorities. There is also little evidence that SAPRP has "infected" the decision-makers

that set the agenda of NIH substance abuse research. Anecdotally, there is no evidence that foundations other than RWJF have invested in substance abuse policy research in any systematic, sustained or financially substantive manner.

**4. *How has SAPRP contributed to "growing the field"? Have investigators obtained subsequent grants for studies building on SAPRP ones?***

**Answer:** Researchers who are young and/or new to policy are applying to SAPRP and competing successfully for funding.

- Some 22 percent of funded researchers are 24 to 35 years old.
- Ten percent have 0–1 year of experience, and 28 percent have two to five years of experience with policy research.
- SAPRP now has a respectable proportion of minority applicants and grantees: 17 percent of applicants and 20 percent of funded researchers are members of minority groups.
- Some 64 SAPRP projects have leveraged 133 funded grants. Among projects whose directors responded to the survey, the total SAPRP funding awarded is \$14,737,598. The total amount of leveraged funding obtained is \$105,241,034—7.14 times the original amount.

**5. *How has SAPRP staff interacted with RWJF staff and staff from other RWJF-funded programs in their work?***

**Answer:** SAPRP staff have collaborated with many other RWJF programs, including: Join Together (a national resource for community substance abuse initiatives); *Bridging the Gap: Research Informing Practice for Healthy Youth Behavior* (a program to improve the understanding of the role of policy and environmental factors in youth substance abuse); *Partners with Tobacco Use Research Centers: Advancing Transdisciplinary Science and Research Studies*; and the *Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids*.

SAPRP staff has communicated regularly with a variety of federal, state and local government agencies, as well as with policy organizations. These include:

- Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT).
- National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD).
- National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL).
- Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

## Funding

RWJF's Board of Trustees authorized the program in July 1994. Total authorizations through December 2007 total \$65.5 million.

## THE PROBLEM

An analysis by the Schneider Institute for Health Policy at Brandeis University published by RWJF, *Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem*, reported that "There are more deaths, illnesses and disabilities from substance abuse than from any other preventable health condition. Of the more than 2 million deaths each year in the United States, approximately one in four is attributable to alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use."

Moreover, "The abuse of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs places an enormous burden on the country. As the nation's number one health problem, it strains the health care system and ... harms family life, the economy and public safety. It gives many children a poor start in life." No population group is immune from substance abuse and its effects, although substance abuse disproportionately affects disadvantaged people.

Researchers at Brandeis further concluded that the use of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs fluctuated during the past century in response to shifts in public tolerance of substance use and the effect of political, economic and social events. Overall, smoking began to decrease in the mid-1960s, drug use in the late 1970s and alcohol consumption in the early 1980s.

The decreases are attributed to:

- Increased awareness of the health risks.
- Government involvement in prevention, intervention and treatment efforts.
- Federal legislation to raise the minimum drinking age to 21 and to ban broadcast advertisements for cigarettes.
- Workplace smoking bans.
- The development of grassroots efforts and community coalitions directed toward decreasing substance abuse.

However, between the early 1990s and 1996, tobacco and illegal drug use increased among youth, and alcohol use among high school and college students remained widespread and problematic. Although the trends in overall use shifted downward again in the late 1990s, a heightened focus on strategies to reduce the harmful effects of substance abuse, especially on youth, remains important.

## CONTEXT

RWJF's mission is to improve the health and health care of all Americans, and one of its four grantmaking goals is to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse—tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.

### **Building on SAPRP's Predecessor: The Tobacco Policy Research and Evaluation Program**

RWJF created the *Tobacco Policy Research and Evaluation Program* (see [Program Results](#)) at a time when it was possible to influence the direction of the emerging field of tobacco policy research. Until the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the American Cancer Society's National Coordinating Committee for Tobacco-Related Research laid the groundwork in the 1980s, little empirical research existed to inform policy-makers about the likely impact of alternative policy measures on cigarette smoking.

In 1990, RWJF funded the Intergovernmental Health Policy Project at George Washington University to produce reports for state policy-makers on issues related to substance abuse (see [Program Results](#)). Soon afterwards, a broad spectrum of organizations and health professionals reached a consensus on the need for substance abuse research that could be used to inform policy decisions, and they identified priority policy topics.

In response to this consensus, RWJF created the *Tobacco Policy Research and Evaluation Program* and provided \$5 million in funding for 22 tobacco policy research projects from January 1992 through December 1994.

Building on the success of this program, the 1994 decision by RWJF program staff to expand the Foundation's policy research focus to include alcohol and illegal drugs was timely—the tobacco program had established RWJF's leadership in funding substance abuse policy research; no other programs had the same mission as SAPRP; and there was a growing need for credible research to inform the policy development process.

During the 1990s, several national events served to highlight the importance of substance abuse policy research. These events include:

- The proposed Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulation of tobacco.
- Litigation against tobacco companies that created a pool of funds through the Master Settlement Agreement.
- Increased concern about environmental tobacco smoke.
- Welfare reform.
- Policy debate about the health effects of needle exchange.

- Growing concern about underage drinking and adult intoxication.

These events and concerns pointed out the need for additional policy research to guide federal, state and local decision-making. The alcohol and tobacco industries—with billions of dollars in retail sales and advertising and product promotion—can influence public opinion and government policies regarding substance abuse. The public health community sought to counter this influence with effective policies and health promotion activities.

## **RWJF's Other Work in the Field**

Other RWJF national programs have helped advance the environment for policy research and both stimulate and use the findings from SAPRP research. These national programs include:

- *SmokeLess States: National Tobacco Policy Initiative*. A program supporting development and implementation of comprehensive statewide strategies to reduce tobacco use through education, treatment and policy initiatives. See [Program Results](#).
- *Bridging the Gap: Research Informing Practice for Healthy Youth Behavior*. A program to improve the understanding of the role of policy and environmental factors in youth substance abuse.
- *A Matter of Degree: Reducing High-Risk Drinking Among College Students*. A program to develop model approaches to reduce student high-risk drinking on campus and in the surrounding community by developing college/community partnerships.
- *Reducing Underage Drinking Through Coalitions*. A program to reduce underage drinking problems using strategies that include youth leadership development, coalition enhancement, alcohol policy development and public awareness campaigns. See [Program Results](#).
- *Fighting Back<sup>®</sup>: Community Initiatives to Reduce Demand for Illegal Drugs and Alcohol*. Support of communitywide efforts to reduce alcohol and drug abuse through public awareness strategies, prevention, early identification and treatment interventions. See [Program Results](#).
- *Research Network on the Etiology of Tobacco Dependence*. A program to bring together leading researchers from a variety of perspectives and disciplines to work collaboratively in the study of the etiology of tobacco dependence in an effort to increase understanding of the development of tobacco dependence. See [Program Results](#).
- *Partners with Tobacco Use Research Centers: Advancing Transdisciplinary Science and Policy Studies*. A program launched by NCI and NIDA to apply and integrate advances in molecular biology, neuroscience, genetics and behavioral science to the challenge of tobacco control. RWJF funds dissemination and policy research and

analysis, and supports efforts to communicate scientific breakthroughs in language that policy-makers, the public and media can easily understand. See [Program Results](#).

RWJF also has provided major long-term support for innovative institutions to bring the best resources to bear on the substance abuse problem. These include:

- The [National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids](#).
- National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (see [Program Results](#) on ID# 032175).
- Brown University Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies.
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (see [Program Results](#) on ID# 036494).
- Join Together (see [Program Results](#) on ID# 027954).

All of these programs and organizations help shape the policy environment and create constituencies of advocates and organizations that need credible research to inform their work.

Overall, RWJF annually awards approximately one-quarter of its funding for projects with the goal of reducing the harm caused by substance abuse. From 1988 through 2000, the Foundation authorized nearly \$780 million to support projects designed to address this goal.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN**

SAPRP was created to:

- Support policy-relevant, peer-reviewed research that increases understanding of the impact of public and private policies for reducing the harm caused by substance abuse.
- Stimulate, help define and inform the policy process with sound scientific information.
- Grow the field of substance abuse policy research.

SAPRP is a program designed to fill a niche. This niche is to:

- Promote collaboration between policy-makers and researchers to define issues and funding opportunities.
- Fund policy studies that complement the scope and interest of government.
- Fund both investigator-initiated and program-identified studies.
- Strategically communicate policy research results to appropriate audiences.

The audiences for SAPRP's research are policy-makers and administrators in government at the local, state and federal levels and in private and nonprofit institutions; those who influence the policy process: media, providers of substance abuse services, activists and advocacy organizations; the public; researchers; and funders.

To achieve the program's objectives, the national program office solicits proposals from experts in diverse disciplines such as medicine, health economics, political science, public health, sociology, criminal justice and law, who seek to use evidence gained in policy-focused research to inform substance abuse policy.

Proposals address public policies at the national, state or local levels, or private-sector policies within companies, associations, unions or trade groups. The program focuses on topics with little research history, and it supports projects that are unlikely to receive funding from the federal government or other private foundations.

The guiding premise of SAPRP is that policy-makers will use research findings if they are timely, speak to relevant topics and are presented in language that is easy to understand. If the results of SAPRP-funded research are disseminated rigorously, the national program office and RWJF staffs believe that this evidence-based information can play an important role in the development of more effective policies to improve the way society addresses substance abuse problems.

RWJF's Board of Trustees has authorized the program four times:

- 1995–1997—up to \$11 million
- 1997–2000—up to \$18 million
- 2000–2007—up to \$24.6 million
- 2006–2010—up to \$12 million

## **THE PROGRAM**

### **National Program Office and Leadership**

The national program office is located at the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, N.C. The program director is David G. Altman, Ph.D. (who previously served as the deputy director of the *Tobacco Policy Research and Evaluation Program*).

Co-director is Marjorie Gutman, Ph.D. (who from 1994 to 1997 was the RWJF program officer responsible for SAPRP), working from the Treatment Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania. The deputy director is Andrea E. Williams.

The national program office manages the grantmaking process, supervises project selection, provides technical assistance to investigators and prospective grantees, and

convenes the annual meeting for staff of projects in the program. It is also charged with integrating the efforts of SAPRP's off-site communications office and technical advisors with national program office activities to achieve the program's objectives.

### **Senior Program Consultants**

Additional direction is provided by senior program consultant experts who are integrally involved in determining SAPRP's research agenda, selecting proposals for funding and providing technical assistance to investigators. SAPRP initially had three senior program consultants.

As the areas of inquiry expanded among potential grantees and funded investigators, SAPRP added senior program consultants to cover the field more effectively and now has seven senior program consultants. See the [Appendix](#) for a list of SAPRP senior program consultants.

### **Communications Office**

In April 1998, a communications professional, Prabhu Ponkshe, joined the national program office to develop and implement a strategic communications plan. He established a communications office as part of the national program office but based outside Washington.

As director of communications, he provides communications planning, media relations, training and technical assistance to both the national program office and the investigators to maximize dissemination of research findings so that the findings play an important role in the policy development process. SAPRP's strategic communications plan has the following objectives:

- Position investigators as a source of information and commentary on emerging substance abuse policy issues to local, state and national media.
- Promote major findings from SAPRP-supported studies to media and scientific outlets in an accurate and balanced manner.
- Provide communications support to SAPRP events to broaden the scope and impact of the program.
- Present SAPRP as a source of policy-related research findings and communications products and services.

Some investigators require basic communications assistance such as announcing grant awards or preparing press releases; others require more sophisticated assistance such as media training, message framing, how to speak at news conferences and how to present legislative testimony.

The director of communications, Prabhu Ponshe, works directly with Burness Communications (based in Bethesda, Md.) through a subcontract with the national program office; Burness provides support for large-scale SAPRP dissemination activities such as major news conferences and policy briefings.

## **Project Selection**

Each year, RWJF issues a call for proposals to encourage experts in a variety of disciplines to submit proposals to the national program office in response to guidelines established by the national program office. See the program's [website](#) for more information. The call for proposals asks prospective investigators to submit four-page letters of intent. All letters of intent are treated as preliminary proposals, and a limited number of applicants are asked to submit more detailed proposals. Overall, approximately 9 percent of letters of intent received result in grant awards.

Letters of intent are evaluated by national program office staff, outside reviewers, senior program consultants and RWJF staff to determine which applicants will be asked to submit full proposals. Proposals are then evaluated by national program office staff, senior program consultants and two outside reviewers using a standardized review protocol.

Over time, 525 individuals have served as outside reviewers; as of winter 2007, some 175 individuals were serving in this capacity. Reviewers represent diverse disciplines and perspectives, including economics, epidemiology, law, medicine and public health. Some 70 percent are from universities and 30 percent from nonprofit organizations; 41 percent of those who have served as reviewers have received an SAPRP grant.

Based on the outside reviews and their own evaluations, the senior program consultants prepare a half-page summary review of each proposal. The proposals and summary reviews are discussed, and recommendations for funding are made at a decision meeting attended by senior program consultants, RWJF staff and national program office staff.

## ***Tracks for Applicants***

SAPRP provides two "tracks" for applicants:

- Investigators may apply for grants between \$100,000 and \$400,000 (raised in Round IV from \$350,000) that RWJF awards in specified funding cycles for research in targeted areas; these applications are reviewed and awarded in one annual batch.
- Investigators may apply for grants of less than \$100,000 during two batches of annual funding.

Throughout the program's life, letters of intent have been balanced across several research topics, but after increasing for the first two years of the program from 368 to

400, the number of letters of intent for both over-\$100,000 and under-\$100,000 grants decreased precipitously in 1999 and 2000 to 155. At the same time, some topics deemed extremely important and timely from a policy viewpoint were underrepresented in the pool of SAPRP applications.

### ***Special Solicitations***

To address the decrease in applications and the need to fund research in selected important and timely topics, starting in 2001, SAPRP has been issuing special solicitations seeking proposals in specific policy areas. In 2001, the areas were:

- Medicinal uses of marijuana
- Legalization/decriminalization of marijuana and other drugs
- Illicit drug use; harm-reduction policies
- Office-based opiate agonist therapy
- Alternative nicotine delivery systems
- Alcohol compared to tobacco.

The number of letters of intent received in response to the special solicitation was 50 percent higher than received for the previous general call for proposals, and there was no decrease in the quality of the applications as judged by the national program office, senior program consultants and reviewers.

The national program office sent out special solicitations for four years (2002–2005) and then switched to one solicitation that focused on "funding priorities" for the last two solicitations of the program. During this time SAPRP also solicited proposals through its regular call for proposals for grants both over and under \$100,000.

- In the first three years of the special solicitation (2002–2004), the national program office received 630 letters of intent; 170 applications were invited to submit proposals and 34 grants were awarded.
- In 2005, it received 114 letters of intent in response to the fourth special solicitation; 26 applicants were invited to submit proposals; 6 grants were awarded.
- In 2006, in both the large and small grant categories it received 168 letters of intent in response to the call for proposals; 40 applicants were invited to submit proposals; 10 grants were awarded.

The 2007 Call for Proposals was centered around funding priorities:

- **Alcohol and Other Drugs (Small and Large Grants).** Projects addressing improving the quality of addiction treatment will represent at least two-thirds of

SAPRP's future funding in alcohol and drugs. Priority areas within this objective include:

- Analyzing systems that provide treatment to the public.
- Defining and measuring/tracking treatment quality.
- Determining how the purchasing, regulatory and financing systems support quality treatment.
- Determining how systems and the practices of providers support treatment quality.
- Determining which factors and processes will increase the adoption of evidence-based treatment.
- Understanding the role of the consumer and how consumers can improve treatment quality.

The remaining one-third supports policy research on how models of chronic disease prevention relate to drug and alcohol treatment, and how policies and systems support integration of evidence-based prevention into primary care services.

- **Funding Specifics—Tobacco Use and Exposure (Small Grants Only).** Projects address policy research that informs efforts on clean indoor air laws, tobacco cessation treatment use, and sustainability of policy gains represent the majority of SAPRP's funding in tobacco. Priority areas within this objective include:
  - Health and economic impacts of clean indoor air laws, including the reduction of tobacco use and exposure among low-income and minority populations.
  - Increasing consumer demand for and use of evidence-based tobacco cessation treatments, and reducing disparities in treatment among low-income and minority populations.
  - Changes in financing and policy factors that may threaten or sustain policy gains in tobacco control—including changes in tobacco industry marketing, products or programs; and the most policy-relevant targets for funding tobacco control (e.g., Master Settlement Agreement [MSA] funds, Department of Justice Settlement funds).

SAPRP received 347 letters of intent in response to this call for proposals and requested 77 proposals; funding decisions will be made in May 2008.

## Technical Assistance

The primary responsibility of the national program office staff is to develop and coordinate the application review process and to provide technical assistance once grants

are awarded. The staff also provides pre-award technical assistance. This involves extensive consultation with potential applicants at every stage of the grant process.

In concert with the accepted protocol for peer-reviewed grantmaking, applicants who request it will receive verbal feedback about their applications from the national program office. Each investigator who submits a letter of intent is asked to complete a survey that provides the national program office with demographic information (including gender, race/ethnicity and institutional affiliation) and that tracks how applicants find out about SAPRP. Specific types of technical assistance are described below.

### ***SAPRP Annual Meeting***

An objective of SAPRP's technical assistance effort is to promote sharing of research methods and findings. The national program office brings together all currently funded investigators at an annual conference, which has become a focal point to showcase and build on the program's accomplishments.

Since the first conference in San Francisco in 1996 during which investigators described their projects in 30-minute presentations, this event has evolved into a comprehensive policy research conference and training session that not only features presentations by project investigators but also includes interactive poster sessions, networking opportunities, speakers who address national policy topics and enhanced technical assistance opportunities. The three-day conference is held in a different location each year. Attendance has averaged 110 people.

### **Communications**

More than 150 communications events/activities have been orchestrated in support of SAPRP-funded researchers to advance research-based policy debate on substance abuse issues. Training and technical assistance in communications were provided to the entire pool of SAPRP grantees from 1998 to 2007.

SAPRP uses a proactive, multi-faceted communications effort to help investigators bridge the gap between their research and the policy environment. It seeks to increase the use of research findings by decision-makers and enable timely, credible research to inform any important substance abuse policy debate. SAPRP conducts its communications effort on several levels at once and uses many platforms to pursue its strategic communications objectives.

### ***Media Strategy***

SAPRP holds two media briefings a year, with an average attendance of 40 to 50 reporters and 15 to 20 representatives from federal and state agencies. It also holds two policy briefings a year with an average attendance of 25 to 100 people, including:

- Legislative staff from the U.S. Senate, House and congressional committees.
- Government agencies such as NIDA, SAMHSA, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the U.S. Department of Justice, the FDA, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Policy advocacy groups.

Publishing the results of SAPRP-supported research in peer-reviewed journals remains a core communications objective and a critical component in confirming the program's credibility. Most SAPRP investigators publish their results in one or more peer-reviewed journals, including the *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *Journal of Public Economics*, *Preventive Medicine* and *Tobacco Control*.

SAPRP project findings that have provided a springboard for targeted media efforts, coordinated by the SAPRP communications director in collaboration with Burness Communications, include:

- A media briefing regarding substance abuse among pregnant women presented by five SAPRP researchers, televised on C-SPAN, with coverage in the *Washington Post* and on CNN.
- A news conference on the impact of clean indoor air laws on New York City's hospitality industry, presented by three SAPRP researchers whose projects were featured in a theme issue of the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, covered by the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, AP, several hotel/hospitality trade magazines and many New York radio and television stations.
- A news conference on the implementation of the Synar Amendment, presenting the findings of an SAPRP researcher in conjunction with the publication of his results in the *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, a journal published by the American Medical Association (AMA). "ABC World News Tonight" interviewed the investigator and aired a story on the night of the news conference. The *Washington Post*, *USA Today* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* also ran stories as a result of the news conference.
- A public forum in California at which an SAPRP-funded researcher presented the policy implications of his findings to county administrators. His research examined how federal laws that changed the definition of disability to exclude most substance abusers affected California residents with substance abuse problems.

SAPRP's communications office issues 15-20 news releases a year to trade and population media with an average pick-up by 30 media outlets, including radio, television, newspapers, newsletters and websites. SAPRP research is often featured in leading national dailies and radio/television newscasts including the *Washington Post*,

*New York Times, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, "ABC World News Tonight," "NPR Marketplace" and CNN.* These releases have resulted in requests for additional information from members of Congress, state legislators, local policy-makers and advocacy groups.

Most SAPRP investigators present their work at professional conferences, and many have given testimony to federal, state and local government representatives about their research (or it has been cited in legal documents).

Since the communications director started in 1998, the demand for communications assistance by investigators and the potential opportunities for communications initiatives have increased significantly.

The communications director continues to receive calls from the media, government agencies, corporations and advocacy groups not only for studies that were released recently, but several months or even a year or two ago.

To help bring SAPRP and its funded investigators closer to the policy-making and advocacy processes at the local, state and national levels, national program office and RWJF staff, and senior program consultants are reaching out to major public policy groups, such as:

- National Association of State Alcohol Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)
- National Governors' Association (NGA)
- U.S. Conference of Mayors
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- [National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids](#) (founded by RWJF, the center supports a national campaign to reduce youth tobacco use, serves as a media center, provides technical assistance to organizations working in the field and broadens organizational support to reduce youth tobacco use).

The national program office also coordinates SAPRP research with the work of other RWJF national programs, such as *SmokeLess States*, *Reducing Underage Drinking Through Coalitions*, and *Bridging the Gap: Research Informing Practice for Healthy Youth Behavior*, encouraging them to use SAPRP research in their work.

## **Website**

The SAPRP [website](#), provides comprehensive information on the program, including the text of current calls for proposals and special solicitations, program statistics, summaries of funded projects and reports on the key findings and policy implications of completed

projects. The site includes resources for applicants, funded investigators, policy-makers and the media.

By clicking on the "View Grants by Type" drop-down box at the top of the page. Viewers can also search grants by principal investigator, subtopic and date. The website also includes publications and abstracts for all projects for which findings have been published.

### **Knowledge Assets**

In July 2007, SAPRP launched a new website, [Knowledge Assets](#). This site was developed to give policy makers, journalists and researchers accurate, current, and peer-reviewed insights on policy research related to alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

The term "Knowledge Asset" refers to a comprehensive body of information focused on a particular substance abuse issue. Each Knowledge Asset is written by a leading researcher and reviewed by a team of independent researchers or experts.

Each Asset includes an overview of the topic; implications for policy; research results from SAPRP-funded and other landmark studies; and charts and graphs to clearly convey the scope of the issue. Each asset also includes links to other resources and key researchers in the field.

The Knowledge Assets offer perspective and context for a wide variety of contemporary challenges surrounding alcohol, tobacco and drug use in modern society. They help answer practical questions that are often asked in the public and policy debates surrounding substance abuse issues. Knowledge Assets also highlight the available scientific evidence to help resolve conflicting viewpoints.

Ultimately, the Knowledge Assets provide the many people involved in issues related to substance abuse with a template for engaging in meaningful discussions and making informed decisions.

Each Knowledge Asset is summarized in a Policy Brief.

- Key Results summarize the findings from leading research studies funded by SAPRP and other institutions.
- Key Resources provide the sources for the key results as well as additional information, such as interviews with leading experts in a field.
- Key Researchers provide names, institutional affiliation and e-mail addresses of researchers whose work is featured in each Knowledge Asset.

As of January 2008, topics are:

- [Cigarette Taxes and Pricing](#)

- Clean Indoor Air
- Increasing the Use of Smoking Cessation Treatments
- Internet Cigarette Sales
- Substance Abuse & Welfare Reform
- Substance Abuse Treatment Benefits and Costs
- Treating Opioid Addiction in an Office-Based Practice

## EVALUATIONS

Two external evaluations of SAPRP have been conducted by the Lewin Group, one in 1997 and one in 1999. Together, they establish a baseline of information and several perspectives from which the program's accomplishments and impact on the field of substance abuse may be examined over time. Changes in SAPRP in response to the evaluations are described in [Program Evolution](#).

The first evaluation was part of a comprehensive assessment of the *Tobacco Policy Research and Evaluation Program* and SAPRP conducted in preparation for SAPRP's reauthorization request to the RWJF Board of Trustees in 1997. The evaluation ran from December 1996 through May 1997 and assessed the impact of the tobacco policy program, the transition to SAPRP and the early work of SAPRP.

Evaluators sought to understand how RWJF support differed from other potential funding sources and how SAPRP could be designed and operated to better contribute to the future need for policy research. The evaluators:

- Reviewed the literature to examine trends in policy issues and policy research needs.
- Analyzed letters of intent from the first two years of SAPRP to assess the kinds of policy research investigators had proposed.
- Interviewed national program office staff, senior program consultants and RWJF staff.
- Conducted focus groups of investigators who received funding from the first two rounds of SAPRP.

In May 1999, RWJF asked the Lewin Group to conduct a reassessment of SAPRP that would build on the earlier evaluation. The objectives of this evaluation were to examine the closeness of fit between SAPRP's accomplishments and RWJF's goals over the prior two years; and to better understand the impact of modifications in program design and operations on the program's outcomes.

## Findings from the First Evaluation

- **The expansion from TPREP to SAPRP to include research on alcohol and illicit drugs provided an opportunity to create a synergy for researchers to explore policy options that are applicable both to particular and to multiple substances.** While government agencies have adopted primarily a categorical approach in which various agencies deal with specific substances, SAPRP strives to "cut across substances."
- **SAPRP studies are clearly relevant to policy formulation.** Evaluators reviewed about 700 letters of intent and found that the letters parallel the issues featured most prominently in public policy literature: prevention, treatment and limits on the legal availability of alcohol and tobacco. Of 53 SAPRP-funded grants reviewed by evaluators, 21 focused on treatment, 13 on availability of alcohol and tobacco and 11 on prevention.
- **The policy focus and mission of SAPRP make it a unique resource.** While some projects focusing on a single substance might receive funding from traditional federal sources, projects that focus on policy analysis and policy implications are less likely to receive that support. In addition, federal grants generally take a long time to secure, which limits their impact on topical policy debates.
- **Limited numbers of minority investigators applied for and secured funding from SAPRP.** There has been an attempt to increase the number of minority applicants; some evidence indicates that this effort has been effective.
- **The consensus among RWJF staff, the national program office, senior program consultants and investigators is that SAPRP operates efficiently and effectively.** In particular:
  - All of the partners share a common vision of the initiative and a common understanding of the manner in which the program operates.
  - The breadth of the topics considered for funding enables investigators to transcend traditional boundaries, explore politically sensitive or controversial topics and stimulate thinking about research that has policy implications.
  - The letter of intent approach reduces the initial investment of large amounts of time and resources, investments that are generally required when seeking funding from federal agencies.
  - The feedback provided to investigators regarding their letters of intent improved the strength of their proposals.
  - Having the national program office manage and administer the program provided the necessary structure and support to allow RWJF staff and senior program consultants to concentrate on the substance of letters of intent and proposals.

## Recommendations from the First Evaluation

- **Publicize the program and its funded projects.** This includes augmenting the mailing list for the call for proposals with special attention to minority researchers, and providing potential applicants and others with information about previously funded projects.
- **Add more and broader expertise to the national program office staff.** Additional staff could respond to inquiries from applicants, help funded investigators disseminate findings and develop stronger relationships with federal funding agencies and staff.

## Findings from the Second Evaluation

- **SAPRP continues to fund relevant research on topical policy issues.** The breadth and focus of projects coincide with policy areas that public and private sector experts consider timely and important: demand reduction (e.g., access to and effectiveness of substance abuse treatment; prevention programs in schools; forecasting substance abuse patterns or trends); criminal justice (e.g., enforcement regarding underage use of tobacco, drug courts, penalty structures); and civil policy (e.g., excise taxes, impact of welfare reform, smoke-free environments, drug-free workplaces).
- **SAPRP fills a unique niche and makes important contributions to the substance abuse policy development process.** For example, evaluators found that:
  - The program supports work that, in general, is otherwise unlikely to receive funding from other sources.
  - Only a limited number of organizations funded substance abuse research during the period from 1996 through 1999, and the majority of those projects focused on services research rather than policy research.
  - The majority of grants funded under SAPRP between 1997 and 1999 focused on specific topics that few researchers had previously studied.
  - 72 percent of investigators funded since 1997 reported that their SAPRP research stimulated subsequent work. Funding for subsequent work came from sources such as the NCI, NIDA, CSAT and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
  - SAPRP's practice of continuously reviewing letters of intent and proposals for under \$100,000 enables researchers to respond quickly to hot issues and to research their topics in a timely fashion.
  - The program is making contributions not only at the federal level but also at state and local levels.
- **SAPRP is demonstrating progress in building the field of policy research in four ways:** bringing new researchers into policy research; increasing the number of

experienced researchers; expanding funded research projects to areas not previously studied; and leveraging existing research findings to stimulate subsequent work.

- **The national program office's ability to coordinate the efforts of program advisers and staff has been material to the effectiveness of SAPRP.** In response to recommendations from the first evaluation, the national program office reorganized, expanded and took on additional roles to carry out program objectives more effectively. The teamwork and cohesion shown by the national program office staff, communications director, senior consultants and RWJF staff is critical to the program's accomplishments. For example, investigators receive faster responses from the national program office regarding the status of proposals; more investigators receive useful and unsolicited feedback regarding letters of intent and proposals; and investigators receive training in presentation skills and editorial assistance in preparing documents. In addition, the national program office developed a heightened focus on disseminating findings to policy-makers and organizations, improved communications with current investigators and expanded outreach to new investigators.
- **SAPRP has had a high level of success in disseminating findings to key stakeholders (e.g., federal, state and local policy-makers; public and private sector health care organizations; the media; and community groups).** The national program office and the funded investigators have employed numerous avenues to disseminate their findings, including: news conferences and press releases; newspaper stories; journal articles; testimony before federal, state and local governments; and presentations at conferences.
- **In the period from 1998 to 1999 (the first year after the communications director joined the program), SAPRP coordinated two major press conferences that gave several SAPRP-funded investigators an opportunity to discuss their findings and the policy implications of their research.**

In August 1998, SAPRP held a media briefing "Substance Abuse and Pregnant Women," highlighting the research of five SAPRP-funded investigators. One study suggesting that a South Carolina policy emphasizing criminalizing pregnant substance abusers "is counter to the best interests of unborn children and pregnant women" was featured prominently in both popular and academic print media, including the *South Carolina Post and Courier*, *Providence Journal* and *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

In January 1999, the communications director coordinated a press conference on the "New York Smoke-Free Ordinance." This event presented findings from research on the impact of smoke-free policies on local industries and featured the work of two SAPRP-funded investigators. These findings generated attention from major media outlets including ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates, National Public Radio, Reuters and the *New York Times*.

- **As of 1999, 21 investigators reported they had given testimony to state and local governments regarding the findings of their SAPRP-supported research.** One investigator examined the cost impact of establishing parity for substance abuse treatment services under managed care and concluded that parity for substance abuse benefits in "employer-sponsored health plans is affordable under comprehensively managed care." As a result, the investigator or his colleagues received invitations to testify before the Nevada State Legislature, the Washington State Legislature and the U.S. Congress.
- **Between 1998 and 1999, nearly 35 percent of investigators had collaborated with the director of communications to disseminate their findings.** Technical assistance included development of press packets, briefings and conferences; development of the dissemination strategy; advice on how to present findings, including a training session on "How to present oneself to the media;" and editorial assistance in preparing documents for distribution to the media.
- **In 2002, SAPRP coordinated a briefing for congressional staff on the topic of welfare reauthorization.** Investigators involved in this briefing were subsequently approached by congressional staff for additional information and for policy options for Congress to include in its debate on welfare reform.

### Recommendations from Second Evaluation

- **Set aside funding for program announcements targeted to hot topic issues in the substance abuse policy research field.**
- **Maximize dissemination potential by synthesizing findings from similar topics into white papers and expand opportunities for researchers to disseminate findings to local decision-makers.**
- **Expand the distribution of the minority mailing list for program announcements.**
- **Establish a system to track technical assistance provided by national program office staff.**

### PROGRAM EVOLUTION

SAPRP has evolved in response to the evaluations' recommendations and as part of the national program office's own efforts to manage the program's growth and improve its effectiveness. Additional staff has been added to the national program office and two special components introduced.

#### Diversity Effort

Initially, few minority investigators applied for or received SAPRP grants, so the national program office took steps to increase minority representation in the program based on the

belief that policy informed by diverse perspectives will more effectively address the persistent gap in health status and access to care among the nation's minority populations. Staff developed a directory of minority investigators and associations and sent them targeted mailings of program announcements. The national program office also substantially expanded distribution of the annual call for proposals and the special solicitations.

Beginning in 1998, SAPRP offered diversity supplement awards as a means of enlisting more minority investigators to join teams already working on SAPRP-funded projects. The goals of these supplements are to attract and encourage more minority investigators to enter and pursue substance abuse policy research careers, and to strengthen research projects by promoting the inclusion of diverse perspectives on policy topics.

Supplemental grants can be up to \$40,000 per person per year for the duration of the parent grant (increased from \$25,000 in 2003). Separate informal meetings of the diversity supplement researchers and the principal investigators of the parent grants, who serve as mentors, are held at the annual conference, and one formal training and networking meeting with the diversity supplement researchers is held independently of the conference each year.

These and other ongoing efforts to increase diversity in the program have doubled the proportion of funded minority investigators from 10 percent to 19 percent as of January 2008. The 27 supplemental grants ranged from \$25,000 to \$75,000, for a total of \$1,196,847.

National program office staff is conducting an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the supplement grants by holding focus groups; conducting phone interviews at the middle, end and one year after their studies end; conducting phone interviews with mentors at the end of the studies; doing an archival document review; and tracking the accomplishments of these investigators while they are funded by SAPRP and for several years subsequently.

The study has found that diversity supplement grant recipients have achieved a variety of career accomplishments since receiving an SAPRP grant. These include:

- Receiving tenure track faculty appointments.
- Entering a doctoral or medical school program and completing the course work.
- Receiving a postdoctoral fellowship.
- Completing a master's degree in a new field of study.

- Becoming the principal investigator on substance abuse grants from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Peter McManus Foundation and the Claude Pepper Institute at the University of Michigan.
- Being promoted to vice president in an independent research organization.

The diversity supplement researchers reported a number of benefits of SAPRP grants, including being a principal investigator for the first time, enhancing research skills, learning valuable lessons about managing a project, enjoying the support of mentors and taking advantage of the training and networking opportunities provided by the national program office.

### Commissioned Reviews

In 2001, RWJF made a \$92,700 grant to the national program office (Wake Forest University ID# 043570) to fund six SAPRP-commissioned reviews, each of which synthesized a body of literature in a selected area of substance abuse policy research. The reviews were designed to:

- Inform and advance the field of substance abuse policy research by summarizing findings and identifying future research needs in selected areas.
- Inform future priorities and grantmaking by SAPRP.
- Identify the implications for policy-making.

The first three commissioned reviews covered: perinatal substance abuse, needle access and welfare reform as it relates to substance abuse. Although commissioned reviews included both SAPRP research and non-SAPRP research, review topics were selected only if SAPRP projects address aspects of the policy.

Three commissioned reviews were completed; since then the national program office has stopped commissioning them.

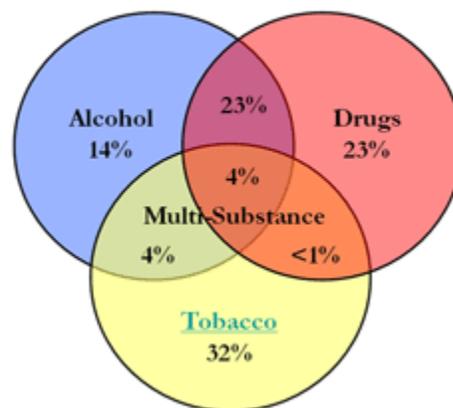
- A policy briefing on needle access laws was held in Washington to inform advocacy groups about the current state of science and policies related to providing sterile needles to injection drug users in order to prevent the spread of AIDS and other communicable diseases.
- The commissioned review on perinatal substance abuse was the subject of a SAPRP teleconference with more than 110 professionals, representing state legislators, state-based grassroots and advocacy groups, treatment professionals and state government officials.
- The commissioned review of welfare reform was published in *The Milbank Quarterly* in 2005. Metsch, LR, HA Pollack. "Welfare Reform and Substance Abuse." *The Milbank Quarterly*, 83(1): 63–97, 2005.

## Funding Profile

Through 11 funding rounds up to January 2008, RWJF has funded a total of 338 research projects under SAPRP. The majority of these projects focus on specific topics that few researchers had previously studied. On the program's [website](#), each project has a brief description linked to the title in the list of completed projects in that topic area.

Topics can be accessed from the home page, via the 'View Topic Area' drop-down box. Projects covering more than one topic (e.g., alcohol and tobacco) are listed in both topic areas. This diagram shows the break down of SAPRP grants by substance area.

### SAPRP Grants Funded by Area



Grants can also be searched by principal investigator, a list of specific subtopics, and date. Subtopics are:

- Cessation
- Clean Indoor Air
- Counter-Advertising
- Enforcement/Sanctions
- Harm Reduction
- Impact of Tobacco on Vulnerable Populations
- Industry Strategies
- Litigation
- Marketing
- MSA (Master Settlement Agreement)
- New Products and Technology

- Prevention/Education
- Smoking and Weight
- Social Norms
- Taxes and Pricing
- Access and Availability
- Youth Smoking
- Internet Sales
- Treatment Effectiveness
- Organizational Context of Treatment
- Health Care Services and Financing
- Child Welfare System and Substance Abuse Treatment
- Dual Diagnosis
- Impact of Managed Care on Treatment
- Abuse of Prescription Drugs
- Treatment within the Criminal Justice
- Perinatal Substance Abuse
- Employment and Workplace
- Other Alcohol Policy Areas
- Welfare Reform
- Outlet Density
- College Drinking
- Legislation/Depenalization
- Smokeless Tobacco/Cigars
- Medicinal Marijuana
- Drug Testing
- Office-based Treatment
- Treatment Access
- Smoking Risk Perception

- Treatment for Opioid Dependence
- Cost of Treatment
- Treatment Delivery
- Native Americans and Alcohol Policy
- Disparities in Treatment
- Harm Reduction Tobacco

Projects can address more than one topic. For example, more than 70 percent of projects have addressed some element of treatment, more than 50 percent have addressed prevention and more than 30 percent have addressed criminal justice.

Additional topics that have been addressed include availability, smoke-free policies, driving while intoxicated (DWI) and merchant training. The sectors of policy study that have most frequently been addressed are: government overall, state government, federal government, private overall, local government and private health care.

The table below summarizes the funding of grants awarded through December 2007.

	Round I– XII Over \$100,000	Targeted Solicitations I–IV	Under \$100,000 To Date	Diversity Partnership Grants	Cumulative
Total Letters Received	1,985	716	1,297	34	4,032
Total Proposals Solicited	513	168	425		1,138
Grants Awarded	109	33	169	27	338
Total Awarded	\$31,691,792	\$8,751,798	\$13,271,218	\$1,066,847	\$54,781,655
Average Award	\$296,185	\$265,206	\$90,280	\$46,385	

## RESULTS

In 2003, the national program office conducted a variety of surveys of principal investigators to look at the following questions:

- What is the evidence that SAPRP-funded research is policy relevant and has informed policy-making?
- What is the evidence that SAPRP has generated scientifically high-quality research?
- Is SAPRP still filling a needed niche given other funders and funding?
- How has SAPRP contributed to "growing the field?" Have investigators obtained subsequent grants for studies building on SAPRP ones?

- How has SAPRP interacted with RWJF staff and other RWJF-funded programs in their work? With non-RWJF funded programs and entities?
- How has the national program office structure that advises and manages the program worked?

The surveys and other research, including data collected by the national program office through 2005, have found:

## Policy Relevance

The substantive topics studied by SAPRP-funded researchers have mirrored the key policy issues on the national agenda. SAPRP-funded research has been utilized by public and private policy-makers at all levels (from city councils to the Supreme Court), by the media and by advocacy organizations (e.g., welfare reform, clean indoor air, perinatal substance abuse). Examples include:

- **N.Y. City Clean indoor air laws.** SAPRP-funded research on the effect of smoke-free laws on restaurants and bars in New York City provided justification for New York City to enact the laws. SAPRP investigators were invited to testify before the New York City Council. A city council member said, "We are glad we passed the current smoke-free legislation. These studies justify our actions."
- **Synar Amendment to restrict youth access to tobacco.** A SAPRP investigator's review of the effectiveness of the amendment drew considerable attention. Peter Jennings on "ABC World News Tonight," said "The government's efforts to keep cigarettes away from teenagers, which has been going on for seven years now, got a miserable assessment from the Substance Abuse Policy Research Program."
- **Effect of youth's exposure to antismoking messages.** A SAPRP-funded study found that teenagers regularly exposed to antismoking messages are half as likely to start smoking than those not exposed, and that teenagers who own tobacco promotional items are twice as likely to become established smokers than those who do not own such items. NPR's "Morning Edition" said that "Two new studies provide the first hard evidence that aggressive antismoking advertising can deter youth smoking, but that tobacco industry marketing works with teens." A Massachusetts official said that states no longer have to operate their campaigns in a vacuum, knowing from the first long-term study that antismoking messages work.
- **Impact of cigarette excise taxes on smoking rates among pregnant women.** The study, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, was covered by Reuters: "Higher cigarette prices may help pregnant women kick the habit, in turn helping them give birth to healthier babies, economists reported on Thursday."
- **Cigarette excise taxes and attitudes of African-American smokers/nonsmokers.** The National African American Tobacco Prevention Network and the SmokeLess States program participated in an SAPRP briefing on how results of the research

could be used to justify higher cigarette excise taxes, in the face of the tobacco industry's arguments of regressive taxes.

- **A link between state/local alcohol policies and fatality rates.** The SAPRP study ranked cities and states by the extent and effectiveness of alcohol-related policies. Associated Press quoted traffic safety expert Steven Flint: "Albuquerque ranks near the top of a list of cities with high numbers of alcohol-related traffic fatalities ... New Mexico has some excellent laws against drunk driving ... it's time for executive agencies and the courts to do their jobs." The study continues to be cited when major traffic fatalities are attributed to alcohol use.
- **Two studies of safe and drug-free schools.** Two states conducted a full review of effective programs used, based on SAPRP research results. "Public schools in 11 states use drug prevention programs not proven by scientific study and could run afoul of a federal law requiring program assessment. A 1998 federal policy requires that drug prevention programs be assessed for effectiveness," according to an Associated Press article.
- **Opiate treatment in clinical settings.** SAPRP research examines the obstacles in local, state and national drug laws in administering opiate treatment to stable patients in methadone clinics. An Associate Press article reported "The White House's drug policy chief unveiled a plan today to expand the use of methadone, proposing that heroin addicts be able to get treatment in the offices of specially certified doctors." A SAMHSA official sent the proposed regulations to SAPRP for review, prior to releasing them for public comments.
- **Substance abuse provisions in the welfare reform reauthorization process.** Four SAPRP investigators presented data on substance abuse and welfare reform during an SAPRP briefing held in the U.S. Senate. Citing research from the SAPRP briefing, David Butler of Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation told the U. S. Senate Finance Committee, "... research indicates that a three-month limitation on treatment participation will be too restrictive and for some hard-to-employ recipients is unlikely to yield positive results.... The odds of working were greatly increased for each month of treatment duration.... This suggests that more than three months of treatment is necessary." The full text is [online](#).
- **Drugged driving and state laws.** A SAPRP research report on the need for laws that cover drugged driving was used as one of the justifications by the White House for a new media campaign on the same topic. The White House asked to participate in the SAPRP briefing, but the offer was declined in order to keep SAPRP independent of government influence.

## High-quality Research

The quality of the research can be judged from publications. As of February 2006, SAPRP completed grants had produced a mean of 3.3 publications in scientific journals

and a total of 654 reported publications to date. Some 139 projects (out of 226) had 528 total publication citations in more than 200 different journals. Publications in journals represent 81 percent of all publications. There is little difference in total publications by the amount of the award; with those over \$100,000 averaging 2.2 and those under \$100,000 averaging 2.0.

Another way to judge the quality of the research is to look at whether researchers have received additional funding. As of October 2005, some 64 SAPRP projects leveraged 133 funded grants. From one to 13 proposals per SAPRP project have been submitted or funded. Most of the grants came from the NIH (52), other federal government (24) and foundations (19). For each RWJF dollar invested in SAPRP projects, investigators report an additional \$4 of research support from other sources—thus leveraging \$130.3 million in additional support—four times the original amount.

### **The SAPRP Niche**

There is little evidence of an overlap between NIH funding and SAPRP priorities. There is also little evidence that SAPRP has influenced the decision-makers that set the agenda of NIH substance abuse research. Anecdotally, there is no evidence that foundations other than RWJF have invested in substance abuse policy research in any systematic, sustained or financially substantive manner. SAPRP/RWJF have stepped into the funding breach.

### **Growing the Field**

Researchers who are young and/or new to policy are applying to SAPRP and competing successfully for funding. Some 22 percent of funded researchers are 24 to 35 years old. Ten percent have 0–1 year and 28 percent have 2–5 years of experience with policy research. SAPRP now has a respectable proportion of minority applicants and grantees: 17 percent of applicants and 20 percent of funded principal investigators are members of minorities.

SAPRP's efforts to grow the field also have included:

- 350 active external reviewers of proposals.
- 44 percent of investigators reporting that they are new to the field.
- 20 percent of principal investigators reporting ethnic minority ties.

### **SAPRP Connections with RWJF**

SAPRP staff have collaborated with many other RWJF programs, including:

- [Join Together](#) (a national resource for community substance abuse initiatives). Its information is utilized in monthly SAPRP mailings, and Join Together disseminates SAPRP-funded studies.
- [Active Living Research](#) (a program to support investigator-initiative research to identify and assess structural, environmental and policy changes with the potential to increase population levels of physical activity; for more information see [Program Results](#)). SAPRP provided extensive consulting on start-up issues, and Altman, SAPRP's national program director, serves on the scientific advisory committee.
- [Bridging the Gap: Research Informing Practice for Healthy Youth Behavior](#) (a program to improve the understanding of the role of policy and environmental factors in youth substance abuse). SAPRP-funded research seeded Bridging the Gap efforts; representatives from both programs have presented at each other's annual meetings; some Bridging the Gap researchers have been funded under SAPRP, with funding filling in gaps in science identified by Bridging the Gap researchers.
- [Partners with Tobacco Use Research Centers: Advancing Transdisciplinary Science and Research Studies](#). SAPRP provided training on policy research; SAPRP provided consulting to partners' staff at start up, reviewer lists and information on managing the review process. See [Program Results](#).
- [Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids](#). SAPRP provided the science base for the overall strategy of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, educated local advocacy groups on emerging science and provided emerging research in support of the campaign's specific legislative efforts.

## **SAPRP Connections with Other Agencies and Organizations**

SAPRP staff has communicated regularly with a variety of federal, state and local government agencies as well as with policy organizations. These include the CSAT, NASADAD, NCSL, ONDCP and NIDA.

## **National Program Office Structure**

The national program office has implemented strategic changes over time to meeting evolving needs at RWJF and in the field.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

Program lessons are drawn from interviews with: Senior Program Officer Victor Capoccia; Program Director Altman; Co-Director Gutman; Communications Director Ponshe; Deputy Director Williams; Deputy Director Patterson; former Senior Program Officer Seth Emont; and from the recommendations of two external evaluations by the Lewin Group, in 1997 by Henrick Harwood and in 1999 by Colleen Hirschhorn.

1. **A national program that is fully focused on research can have an impact on policy.** As compared to demonstration-based programs or support for initiatives that are community-based, SAPRP uses investigator-initiated research to inform policy-making. For example, SAPRP convened several researchers to present their findings demonstrating that the enactment of smoke-free policies in New York City did not adversely affect restaurant business. (Former RWJF Senior Program Officer/Emont)
2. **Because the substances included in SAPRP have different characteristics, there are different levels of interest in conducting policy research about them.** The program has been less successful in attracting alcohol-specific related proposals than proposals regarding tobacco or illicit drug use. This might be because alcohol has a safe level of consumption, unlike tobacco, which has no safe level, or illicit drug use, which is illegal.

In addition, the tobacco field is characterized by an active consumer community (such as the *SmokeLess States* and *Tobacco-Free Kids* initiatives), whereas there is not such a strong equivalent community for either alcohol or illicit drugs. There is not as clear a policy focus for alcohol research overall because there are fewer outlets for applying the results of the research. (Former RWJF Senior Program Officer/Capoccia; Communications Director)

3. **When researchers from different disciplines examine different aspects of an issue, they provide policy-makers with a less fragmented picture of the issue.** This comprehensive picture can lead to more thorough discussions of findings and to policy recommendations or options that are more responsive to the real-world environment. SAPRP's mini-meetings bring together several researchers who are examining the same policy area, allowing them an opportunity to share research methods and findings. For example, SAPRP funded several projects related to substance abuse among pregnant women.

Collectively, SAPRP researchers examined ways to identify the problem of substance abuse among pregnant women, the nature of existing policies in this area, the limitations of current policies and ethical and political challenges that arise in setting policies to reduce perinatal substance use. In this case, the collection of research laid out the entire picture of the problem and potential solutions. One of the researchers was asked to write a portion of the brief presented to the U.S. Supreme Court regarding the constitutionality of taking blood or urine samples from pregnant women in order to analyze them for drug use. (Program Co-Director/Gutman; Communications Director/Ponkshe)

4. **There is often a long lag time between scientific research and policy impact.** SAPRP has employed two strategies designed to reduce this problem. First, researchers requesting less than \$100,000 may apply at any time during the year, and their proposals are reviewed on an ongoing basis. This open schedule helps researchers address time-sensitive topics. Second, the program has identified topics that staff believes are of importance and has issued three special solicitations

(described earlier) that request proposals responding to those topics. (Program Co-Director/Gutman; Evaluator/Hirschhorn; Communications Director/Ponkshe)

5. **Because research findings do not tend to exert influence one study at a time, it is important to accumulate the evidence from several studies in the same policy area before releasing the findings.** SAPRP uses commissioned reviews and invitational mini-meetings to create the required critical mass of evidence. (Program Co-Director/Gutman; Communications Director/Ponkshe)
6. **A national program funding research projects should have a proactive communications effort to assure that scientific findings are covered in the media and communicated effectively to policy-makers and the public.** Investigators often do not know how to translate their scientific research findings for policy-makers. SAPRP has filled this gap by incorporating communications training into annual meetings and by planning with investigators from the beginning of the grant cycle what the potential communications opportunities for their research may be. (Former RWJF Senior Program Officer/Capoccia)
7. **Different types of research require different dissemination strategies.** The communications director works with individual researchers in designing appropriate dissemination strategies. Some types of research are particularly amenable and some are more difficult to communicate effectively to the media, the public and policy-makers. For example, it has been somewhat difficult to convince audiences that the results of studies built around economic modeling are relevant to policy development, even though these models are important to researchers. On the other hand, research that compares the performance of different jurisdictions on a certain policy issue, such as alcohol outlet density and traffic fatalities, is extremely useful and can be communicated widely through print, broadcast and Web-based media outlets. (Communications Director/Ponkshe)
8. **Outreach efforts are important to encourage minority investigators to conduct policy research.** SAPRP developed a directory of minority investigators and associations who received targeted mailings of program announcements, and offered diversity supplement awards to enlist more minority investigators to join the teams working on SAPRP-funded projects. (Program Co-Director/Gutman; Evaluators/Harwood, Hirschhorn)

## CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

Substance abuse policy is likely to remain at the forefront of the legislative, health, economic and social services agenda for the foreseeable future, but the salient research areas and specific issues to be addressed will continually evolve. Authorized through January 2010, SAPRP will seek to meet several ongoing challenges in the years ahead:

- Keep up with an often rapidly changing substance abuse policy environment in order to fund studies that are meaningful to current policy deliberations.

- Grow the field of substance abuse policy researchers to represent a diverse pool of scientists in the many disciplines that can play a role in reducing the harm caused by substance abuse.
- Build strong linkages between SAPRP and other research, policy and communications programs.
- Manage the size of the program (approximately 50 active investigators) and the significant administrative time it takes to manage both active investigators and prospective investigators.
- Satisfy the increasing demand among investigators for intensive and extensive communications support.
- Continue to bring SAPRP-funded research to key policy groups and the public in an effective and efficient manner.
- Clarify to the field that support of research with a focus on tobacco will end in 2010 since the 2006 reauthorization is the last under which SAPRP-funded research can have this focus.

In October 2009, the *Substance Abuse Policy Research Program* released Five-Year Research Roadmaps, which pose key questions for advancing tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse policy.

The roadmap poses questions for the research and policy community about preventing and treating substance abuse. The road maps for tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse and treatment identify proven policies and highlight the major outstanding questions that must be explored during the next five years.

Unanswered questions include:

- What is the impact of various levels of tax/price increases on tobacco and alcohol use?
- What effects do drug courts, which offer treatment instead of prison, have on substance use, psychological health and employment?
- What systems and policies contribute to health care disparities and what can help close the gap between the number of people who need treatment for substance abuse problems and those who actually receive it?

Program staff believe these research roadmaps will be important to policy-makers, advocacy groups and federal agencies like the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and the Department of Justice.

The roadmaps and their highlights are:

- Policies for the Treatment of Alcohol and Drug Use Disorders: A Research Agenda for 2010–2015
  - Highlights: Policies for the Treatment of Alcohol and Drug Use Disorders
- Policies to Achieve a Smoke-Free Society: A Research Agenda for 2010–2015
  - Highlights: Policies to Achieve a Smoke-Free Society
- Policies to Prevent Alcohol Problems: A Research Agenda for 2010–2015
  - Highlights: Policies to Prevent Alcohol Problems
- Policies to Prevent Drug Problems: A Research Agenda for 2010–2015
  - Highlights: Policies to Prevent Drug Problems

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Reviewed by: Mary Nakashian and Molly McKaughan

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## APPENDIX

*(Current as of the date of this report; provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF.)*

### Senior Program Consultants

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Current as of the date of this report; as provided by grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

### Book Chapters

Gutman MA, Altman DG and Rabin RL. "Tobacco Policy Research." In *To Improve Health and Health Care, 1998–1999: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Anthology*, Isaacs S and Knickman J (eds.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998. Also appears [online](#).

### Reports

Brownsberger W. *Profile of Anti-Drug Law Enforcement in Urban Poverty Areas in Massachusetts*. Winston-Salem, NC: RWJF Substance Abuse Policy Research Program, 1997.

### Commissioned Reviews

Syringe Access Laws in the United States: A State of the Art Assessment of Law and Policy.

Substance Abuse During Pregnancy: Time for Policy to Catch up with Research.

### Grantee Websites

[www.saprp.org](http://www.saprp.org). It provides information about the *Substance Abuse Policy Research Program* to potential applicants, funded investigators, the media and policy-makers. It also lists all funded projects in each substance area (tobacco, alcohol, drugs and multi-substances). Grants in each substance area can be viewed by clicking on the "View Grants by Type" drop-down box at the top of the page. Grants can also be searched by principal investigator, subtopic and date.

## PROJECT LIST

Reports on a selection of projects managed under this National Program are listed below. Click on a project's title to see the complete report, which typically includes a summary, description of the project's objectives, its findings or results, post grant activities and a list of key products. New Reports are added on a regular basis.

## ***Alcohol***

- A Case for Regulation: Less Access to Alcohol, Fewer Traffic Deaths (December 2003)
- Binge Drinking on College Campuses Unaffected by School and Community Alcohol Policies (December 2003)
- Car Crashes, Fatalities Rise Sharply With New Mexico Sunday Package Liquor Sales (November 2007)
- Cost, Lack of Insurance Coverage, Anti-Medication Bias Limit Scripts of Naltrexone for Alcoholism (December 2005)
- Curbing Alcohol Abuse: Careful Research and Consensus, Not Quick Fixes, Should Sway Policy (December 2003)
- In Louisiana, the Number of Local Bars Predicts Degree of Violence; Neighborhood Controls Needed (December 2003)
- Mixed Results for Risk-Assessment Tool in Curbing Illegal Alcohol Sales (February 2007)
- New York Drug Users Go Untreated Due to Lack of Insurance, Resources (August 2006)
- Researchers Study Utilization and Costs for Medicaid and Non-Medicaid Patients Seeking Substance Abuse Treatment Through a California HMO (August 2006)
- Resource Center Addresses Legal Issues for People With Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (February 2007)
- States Crack Down on Drunk Driving: Immediate Driver License Suspension Found Most Effective in Saving Lives (May 2008)
- Study Finds All Massachusetts State Colleges Have Rules Restricting Alcohol Use But Enforcement Varies (November 2005)
- Study Finds That Rigorous Graduated Teen Driver Licensing Programs Reduce Traffic Fatalities (July 2006)

## ***Illicit Drugs***

- As Co-Payments Rise, Participation in Treatment Falls and More Substance Abusers Relapse (December 2005)
- Can Insurers Afford to Cover Substance Abuse Treatment the Same as Other Mental Health Services? (December 2003)
- Getting off Drugs and Alcohol, Getting Back to Work (December 2003)

- In Trial, Addicts Choose to Receive Their Methadone in Medical Setting (September 2006)
- It Is Legal to Prescribe, Dispense Needles to Injection Drug Users in 48 of 52 Jurisdictions Studied (December 2005)
- Mathematical Model Studies Cost-Effectiveness of School-Based Cocaine Prevention Compared to Treatment and Enforcement (December 2003)
- Miami Study Shows Youth Less Likely to Have Conduct Problems if They Lived in Mixed-Use Neighborhoods (July 2007)
- National Survey on Drug Policy Shows Education and Insurance-Paid Treatment Best Tools for Curbing Abuse (December 2007)
- National Survey Reveals Physicians Do Not Support Adolescent Drug Testing (December 2007)
- RAND Analysis of California's Proposition 36, Which Provides Drug Treatment Instead of Jail Time to Non-Violent Drug-Possession Offenders, Shows No Increase in Crime (July 2007)
- Rand Researchers Study Racial Disparities in Substance Abuse Treatment Programs (June 2007)
- Researchers Develop a Model for Measuring Heroin Use Based on Dosages of Methadone Given to Addicts (December 2003)
- Research Shows Consequences of Exposure to Cocaine in the Womb Not Severe (December 2003)
- Study Leads Pediatricians to Discourage Home Drug Testing by Parents (July 2008)

### ***Multi-Substances***

- Analysis Shows Substance Abuse Treatment Programs Are Cost Effective, Reducing Crime, Increasing Employment (August 2006)
- Companies Exploiting Unregulated Internet to Sell Alcohol, Tobacco Products, Study Finds (December 2003)
- Does Process Improvement in Substance Abuse Treatment Agencies Change Client Outcomes? (January 2012)
- Have Drug Treatment Services Suffered Under Managed Care? (December 2003)
- Illicit Drug Use and Mental Health Problems More Common in Women on Welfare Than Those Who Are Not (November 2005)
- Improving the Use of Research Results: The Case of D.A.R.E. (June 2010)

- Researchers Find Substance Abuse Treatment During and After Prison Term Reduces Recarceration Rates, Is Cost Effective (July 2006)
- School Districts Respond to New Regulations—Report Changes in Substance Abuse Prevention Programs for Students (February 2007)
- Substance Abuse Treatment for Connecticut Prisoners Reduces Rearrest Rates and Is Cost Effective (August 2006)

### **Tobacco**

- Carcinogens Found in Nonsmoking Workers Exposed to Secondhand Smoke in Oregon Bars and Restaurants Exempt from Clean Air Laws (February 2008)
- Enforcing no Tobacco Sales to Minors: Few States Do It Despite Federal Regulations (December 2003)
- Four-Year Survey Shows Cigarette Smokers Unaware of Health Risks of Low Tar and Nicotine Cigarettes (August 2006)
- Laws Regulating Tobacco Sales and Industry Marketing Affect Teen Smoking Rates Says Survey in Massachusetts (December 2005)
- Massachusetts Ex-Smokers Rated Negative Ads as Most Effective; Enforcement of Workplace Bans is Associated with Smoking Cessation (September 2006)
- N.Y.'s Smoke-Free Restaurant Law Doesn't Hurt Business, Wins Wide Support, Study Finds (December 2003)
- Restricted Access to Cigarettes and Fines for Possession Reduce Underage Smoking (May 2008)
- Smoke-Free Policies Do Not Harm Restaurants' Bottom Line, Study in Massachusetts Finds (December 2003)
- Smoke Screen: Research Finds Underage "Decoys" Don't Mimic Real Life (December 2003)
- Study: Nicotine Gums and Patches Go OTC and More Smokers Try to Quit (June 2006)
- Tobacco Harm-Reduction Products Get Mixed Reviews (November 2005)
- Unexpected Factors Strengthen Laws Banning Tobacco Sales to Kids (December 2003)