

Executive Summary

Substance Abuse Policy Research Program

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

SAPRP sought proposals from experts in diverse disciplines such as medicine, health economics, political science, public health, sociology, criminal justice, and law, who sought to use evidence gained in policy-focused research to inform substance abuse policies. The January 2006, 48-month authorization was the final one.

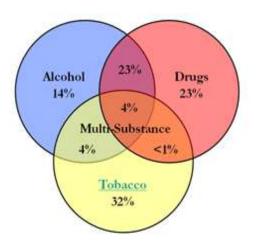
Read the full report. Learn more about the program here.

Key Results

RWJF funded a total of 363 projects under SAPRP.

On the program's website, the list of completed projects in a topic area links to a brief description of each project. Topics areas 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 drugs) are listed in both topic areas. This diagram shows the breakdown of SAPRP grants by substance area.

SAPRP Grants Funded by 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 grant start date.

Starting in 2005, SAPRP developed Knowledge Assets to provide an online,

interactive way to synthesize and make accessible key findings, publications, and resources (investigators) to policy-makers. The Knowledge Asset methodology provided accurate, current, and peer-reviewed insights on policy research related to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. There are 25 Knowledge Assets on the website. Topics covered range from clean indoor air to alcohol retail policy to syringe access interventions to substance abuse and health care costs.

Policy Change

Examples of policy changes informed directly by SAPRP research include:

Answering questions policy-makers are asking:

- Has implementation of the Synar Amendment restricted youth access to tobacco?
- What's the effect of broadening requirements for alcohol ignition interlocking devices by individuals whose licenses had been suspended?
- How have New York City's clean indoor air laws been enacted?
- What are the effects of substance abuse provisions in the welfare reform reauthorization process?

Raising new questions and providing answers:

- Can primary care practices provide methadone treatment?
- What laws work best against drugged driving?

Softening ideological rhetoric:

- Providing housing for homeless alcoholics who do not stop drinking
- The damage crack cocaine has caused babies in utero and what treatment they need

Game changer:

The effect of increased tobacco taxes on youth smoking

Publications

As of the end of the program in December 209, completed research projects had produced 20 books, articles in more than 200 peer-reviewed journals across many disciplines—and a total of more than 1,000 reported publications. Each funded grant produced an average of 2.7 publications.

Leverage Through Additional Grants

For each \$1 RWJF invested in SAPRP projects, investigators reported an additional \$2 of research support from other sources—thus leveraging about \$140 million in additional support through more than 200 spin-off grants.

Since tracking of publications and additional grants stopped when funding ended for the national program office to provide grantees with technical assistance and direction, there is no record of the additional publications and funded grants undoubtedly obtained by grantees funded during the latter years of SAPRP.

Building the Field

- About 20 percent of the investigators who received SAPRP funding reported being in the early stages of their careers.
- More than 66 percent of the investigators had not received previous funding related to substance abuse policy research.
- Forty-four percent of investigators were new to the field when they received funding from SAPRP.
- Forty percent of investigators indicated that substance abuse policy was not their primary area of research focus when they received their grants.

Management

The national program office was located at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) in Greensboro, N.C. The program director was David G. Altman, PhD. Co-director was

Marjorie Gutman, PhD, working from the Treatment Research Institute in Philadelphia. The deputy director was Andrea E. Williams, MAEd, also located at CCL. The communications director was Prabhu Ponkshe, MA, LLB, of Health Matrix in McLean, Va.

Funding

RWJF's Board of Trustees initially authorized the program in July 1994. In total, RWJF invested \$71.9 million in the program. The final technical assistance and direction grant to the national program office ended December 31, 2009, although staff continued to do some work on a social network analysis.

SAPRP Legacies

In October 2009, at a Congressional briefing, the national program office released four research agendas, which are available online. Each agenda identifies proven policies and highlights the major outstanding questions that need to be explored within the next five years.

The research agendas and their highlights (PDF documents) are available on the RWJF website:

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

National Program Office: Center for Creative Leadership

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