

**SUBJECT:** Uniform evaluation criteria for drug-abuse prevention programs

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 9 ayes — Gray, Coleman, Capelo, Delisi, Glaze, Hilderbran, Maxey, McClendon, Uresti

0 nays

**WITNESSES:** None

**DIGEST:** HB 3126 would require the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA), the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC), the Texas Youth Commission (TYC), and the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, in cooperation with other state agencies that provide grants to drug-abuse prevention programs, to establish uniform criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a drug-abuse prevention program that receives grant funding from the agencies.

The criteria would have to evaluate whether a program was targeting problems specific to a community or school, providing social services to children with drug-addicted family members, using age-appropriate strategies with children, and providing continuity in services and intervention strategies for all grade levels.

Agencies that provide grants to drug-abuse prevention programs would have to adopt rules for evaluating the effectiveness of the programs, including requiring the program to submit an annual report.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** The state has no criteria for measuring the effectiveness of anti-drug programs, and the rate of drug use by children is increasing even though state expenditures on substance-abuse services also are increasing. HB 3126 would give the Legislature and state program planners a uniform set of criteria by which to judge the state's and providers' success in preventing, treating, and intervening in substance-abuse activities by children.

Drug prevention programs should be evaluated particularly for their success in reaching children, because children are most vulnerable to peer pressure for drug use and to the emotional and physical problems caused by drug-addicted family members. Programs that address the problem of how students view drug use by their peers have the greatest potential for making a difference in student behavior.

In fiscal 1997, TCADA spent \$37 million on prevention programs, TJPC spent \$1.3 million, and TYC spent \$150,000. Other state agencies that provide funding for drug-abuse prevention include the Texas Education Agency and the governor's criminal justice division, which receive funds under the federal Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act. Requiring all agencies to act together, instead of TCADA acting alone, would ensure that all special circumstances and other relevant considerations were involved in developing the evaluation criteria.

Most program performance measures now are based on output, not outcome, mostly because it is hard to determine whether an adult's or a child's freedom from substance abuse can be attributed to a prevention program versus other influences in their lives. However, something must be done to begin to gauge effectiveness. Agencies can take advantage of federal guidelines and research on evaluating program effectiveness when establishing the criteria that this bill would require.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

HB 3126 would enact a worthy though tremendous undertaking that would involve many state agencies, some of which expend relatively few funds in drug prevention efforts. The initiative required by this bill more appropriately should begin with TCADA and be expanded later to include other agencies. TCADA already has the staff and expertise in the field of substance-abuse prevention and is the agency through which some other agencies receive their substance-abuse prevention funds.

NOTES:

HB 3126 originally was referred to the Local and Consent Calendars Committee, then was transferred to the Calendars Committee.