

Summary

Living Skills in the Schools (LSIS) will present the importance of primary prevention in school-based settings and its critical role in addressing substance use early. We will highlight how mental health professionals are uniquely qualified to deliver these programs, using research-informed strategies to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors. We will also discuss why starting prevention efforts as early as kindergarten helps lay a foundation that strengthens resilience, helps students navigate adolescence's challenges, and reduces teen substance use. A key component of our approach is Social Norms Theory, which focuses on shifting students' perceptions of substance use behaviors. Our comprehensive universal approach also involves engaging families, students, and school professionals in a unified effort to support prevention and create a cohesive, supportive network. LSIS has been serving schools since 1999, and continues to demonstrate impact across the school's micro, meso, and macro-level systems, fostering resilience, improving school culture and climate, and helps to strengthen the overall community.

Living Skills in the Schools would like consideration of the upcoming allocation of opioid settlement funds (OSF), to prioritize primary prevention as part of a Delray Beach City- wide initiative (Schools and Community) and proactive, cost-effective strategy that can reduce future demand for treatment while safeguarding the well-being of our youth.