

## **Bream Bay Drugs Programme**

A student found to be using drugs is placed on a police alternate action contract and are also signed up for counselling by the Rubicon drugs counselling service.

Police Alternate Action contract. The police contract is a legally binding document produced on police letterhead. It is signed by the school, the parent, the child and the police. Features of the contract:

- This contract allows the school, the police or the parents to have the student randomly tested for drugs.
- The contract lasts for 2 years. At the end of the 2 year period, the police remove all records of the drug offence from their systems and the matter is closed.
- If the contract is broken, the police may take action using the results of the drug test or the initial offence.
- Conditions are imposed on where in the school a student is allowed to go.
- The student agrees to undertake regular counselling as provided by the Rubicon drug counselling service and sign a Rubicon Counselling agreement.
- Requirements re being prepared and doing school work are set out.

Rubicon Counselling agreement. This agreement gives the Rubicon Counsellor service the right to do the testing and to do the counselling. Counselling offered at school is covered by the school's authorities but the agreement gives authority for counselling that is sometimes provided off site in the school holidays.

The process

A Restorative Conference is held to deal with the issue of the drug use. The offender and the parents are told prior to the conference that the school will require the student to sign up on a drugs contract. If the parties do not agree to sign the contract, then the matter will be dealt with via the Board of Trustees and a Board suspension with the likely outcome exclusion from the school.

The advantage of the restorative conference is that all parties get to hear how the drugs have been affecting their lives and often other issues are addressed at the same time. All parties leave with a common understanding of what happened, what the legal ramifications are and what is going to happen. The police and Rubicon attend the conference.

After the conference, the student is tested, counselling takes place initially weekly and the test results are monitored to ensure that the student THC levels are reducing appropriately.

Outcomes:

- Students stop using marijuana. Often they take up alcohol for a while but the Rubicon Counsellors work them through this.
- For the first four weeks after signing the student can be more picky and agitated at school but from then on they return to nice young people and learning starts to take place.

- If a drugs contract student is offered drugs in the weekend, they say “I’m on Rubicon” and their peers respect that they can not use.
- After four to six weeks, the drugs contract student is like a reformed smoker and will often help peers self refer
- Students in the school will tell administrators about students with drug problems to get them help as they know they will not get kicked out.

The school functions better as there are few drug impaired students in it.

### Drugs Prevention in schools by W Buckland 2006

A large number of schools work on a hard line approach to prevent drug use by students when they are at school. I have found many problems with this method from experience.

#### Hard line approach

Most students caught are either first time users (no street smarts) or have been using so long that they have lost the ability to be street smart. First time users wind up excluded when their history at school is more often than not pretty good. Long term users have caused extensive damage to themselves and others for some time while they were at school. For country schools exclusion often results in the students being an ongoing problem to the school as they remain in the community without getting further education and spend their time causing problems to the community. The “catch them approach” does not stop students using drugs outside of school.

#### Bream Bay College Approach

##### A coercive approach based around education

Students found using or in possession of drugs are placed on a drugs contract. This placing on contract is achieved as a result of a restorative conference which will often put other initiatives into place to help the child. The drugs contract we use is a police alternate action contract. The parties to the contract are the police, the school, the parents and the student. Breaking this contract can result in suspension or police action. Random testing is a corner stone of this contract. A further requirement placed on the students is that they agree to sign a further contract to receive counselling from our youth drug education counsellors Rubicon.

With ongoing monitoring and counselling students make the transition to being drug free. We have found that while using this model students will come and tell us that we need to test one of their friends. Students do care for their friends and don’t like seeing them head down the drug track. Within six months most students on contract are feeling so good about themselves and the changes they have made that they put forward names of others who can benefit from being on contract. They also discuss openly any drug issues with our Rubicon counsellors. In this way we get a real idea of any drug issues that are out there and we are able to put solutions into place and if necessary contract more students. Currently half of our students on contract have volunteered to go on contract. Typically they have gone with a friend to see our drugs

counsellors and after 3 or 4 visits agree to sign up on contract. Some of these students have been high end users. If the student volunteers to go on contract, their road to recovery is quicker. The second group of volunteers are students who we have been told are using or whose behaviour suggests that they have been using. With a little “fast talking” and help they agree to sign up. This is because they do not want to be drug induced failures.

#### Outcome

Our approach results in a drug free student as they can no longer use at home without it being detected in their drugs test.

The school body of students is able to exert some positive control without the risk of having their peers removed.

We have many examples of students who have been on our contracts who are now fine young men and women.

Very few students fail when on contract

General behaviour in classes and around the school has improved by the removal of these students high end behaviours.