

# Supporting Substance Misuse Prevention in Schools

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SEAN AUSTIN

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION AND RECOVERY  
SYMPOSIUM

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

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# About Me

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**SEAN AUSTIN, PHD, NCSP**

**RESOURCE DIRECTOR FOR SUBSTANCE  
MISUSE -> CENTER ON PBIS**

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE -> CHD / ECS**

**CONSISTENTLY UNDERSLEPT FATHER OF 3**

# Learning Objectives

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1. Review what schools are currently dealing with
2. Share how substance misuse is handled in schools
3. Explore how behavioral health providers can support schools

How many of you are currently work  
in/with schools?

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# Substances in Schools

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# Impact of the Opioid Crisis on Schools

## Students require substance misuse supports

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For students who report high risk opioid use:

- Many report their initial exposure to non-medical prescription opioid use early in the middle school years (ages 10-12)
- Demonstrate greatest risk for heroin use late in high school
- Peer use can influence individual risks



# Impact of the Opioid Crisis on Schools

## Students need help coping with traumatic home experiences

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Children of family members who use opioids and other substances are at higher risk for a range of problematic outcomes:

- Higher risk for developing opioid use disorder themselves
- Higher likelihood of encountering traumatic experiences
- Exposure to the child welfare system



# Impact of the Opioid Crisis on Schools

## Families need help coping as well

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These problems can be wide-ranging, but they include situations like sudden loss of a family unique family structures:

- Shifting roles within the family can cause additional distress in addition to the loss
- New guardians, such as grandparents, may be renewed novices in parenting children of a different generation than their own





# Youth Substance Use Trends

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Illicit drugs?

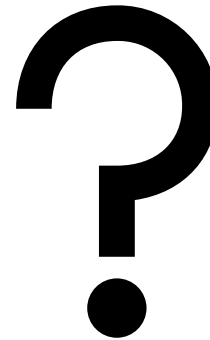
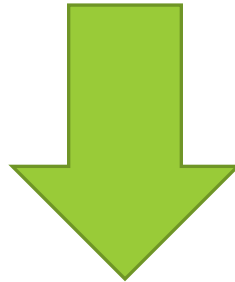
Alcohol?

Tobacco?

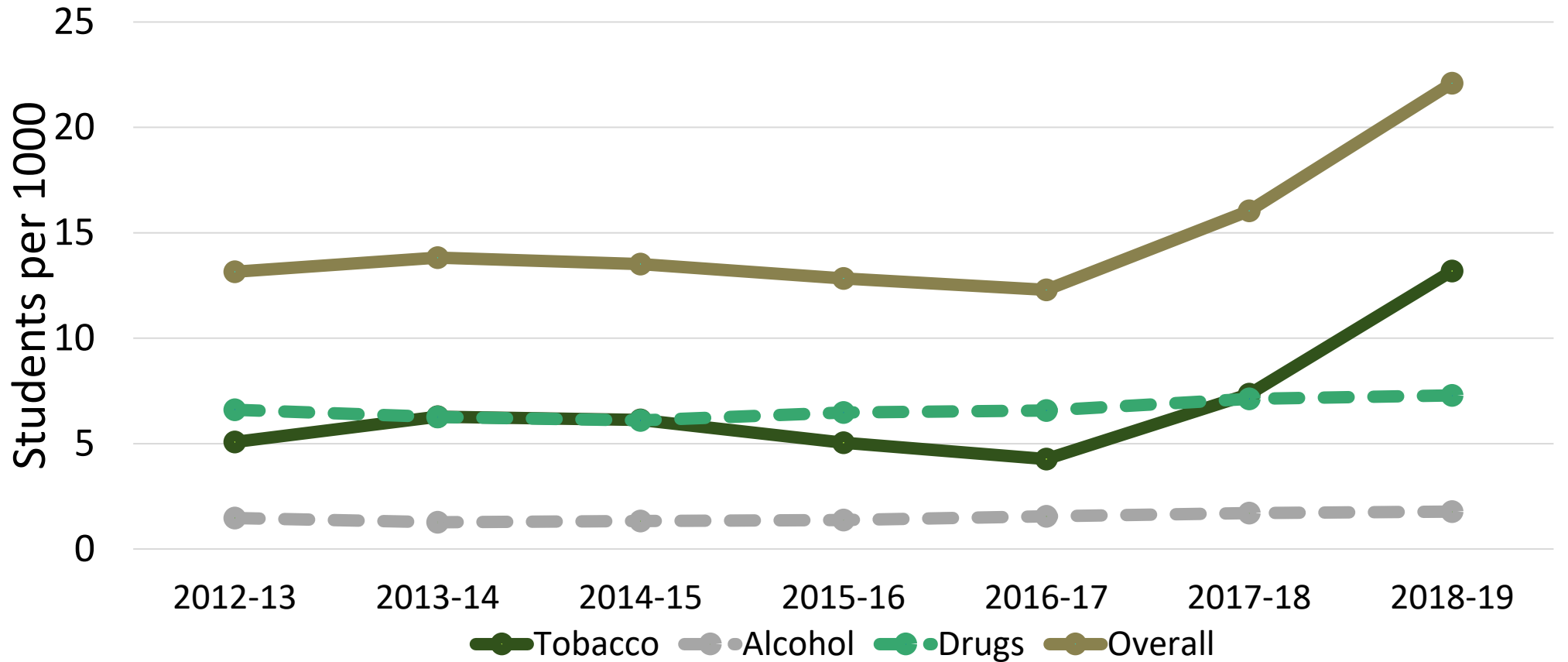
Vaping?

# Students with Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for Substance Possession

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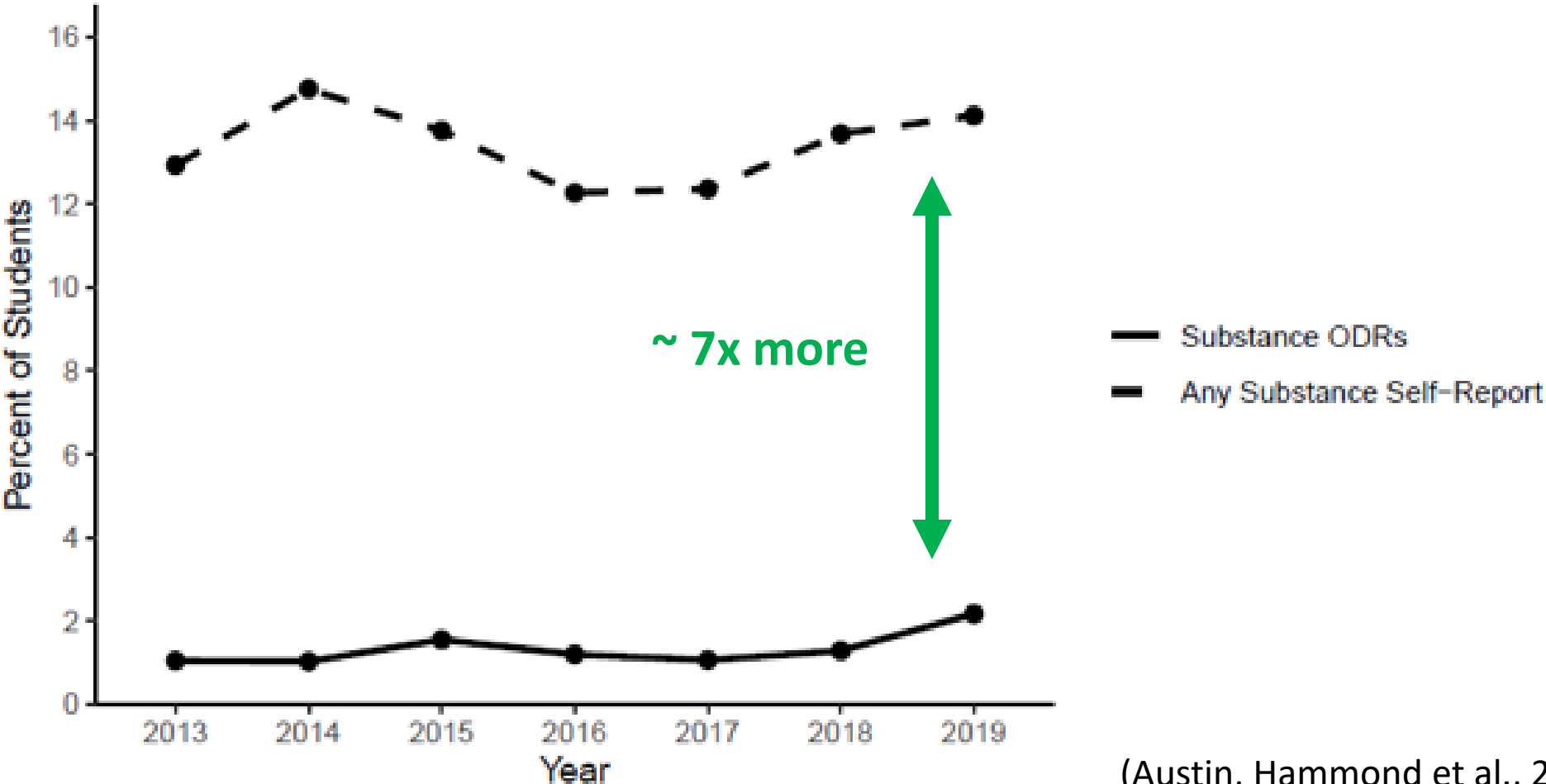
# Students with Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) for Substance Possession



How many more students are reporting use than getting caught at school?

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# Comparing ODRs and Self-Reported Substance Misuse (last 30 days)



(Austin, Hammond et al., 2023)

# This tells us two things...

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We have many students who need help who aren't getting noticed at school.

We need more to help them.

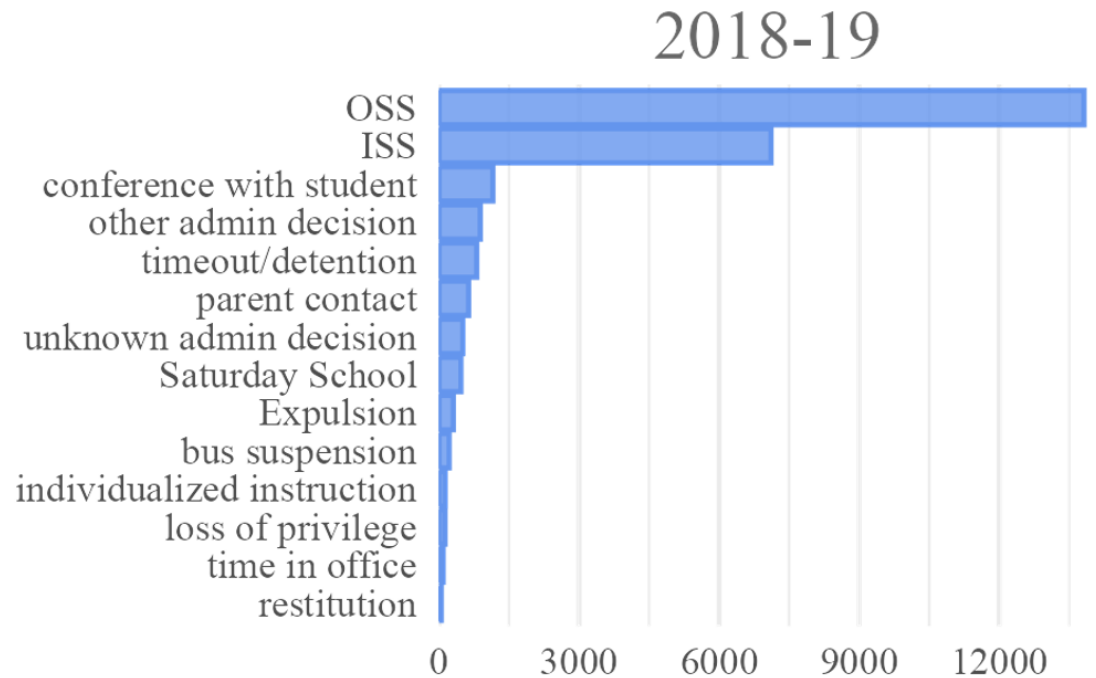
# How do Staff Respond?

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# Common Practices in Handling Student Substance Possession

Most common responses:

- Out of School Suspension
- In-School Suspension



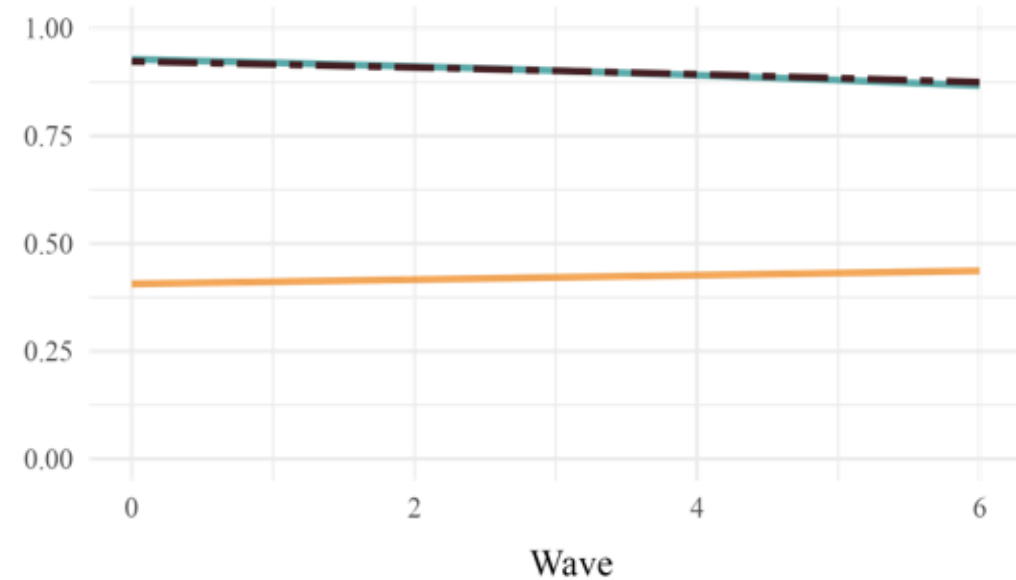
(Austin, Anderson et al., 2023)



# Changing... but depends on substance type

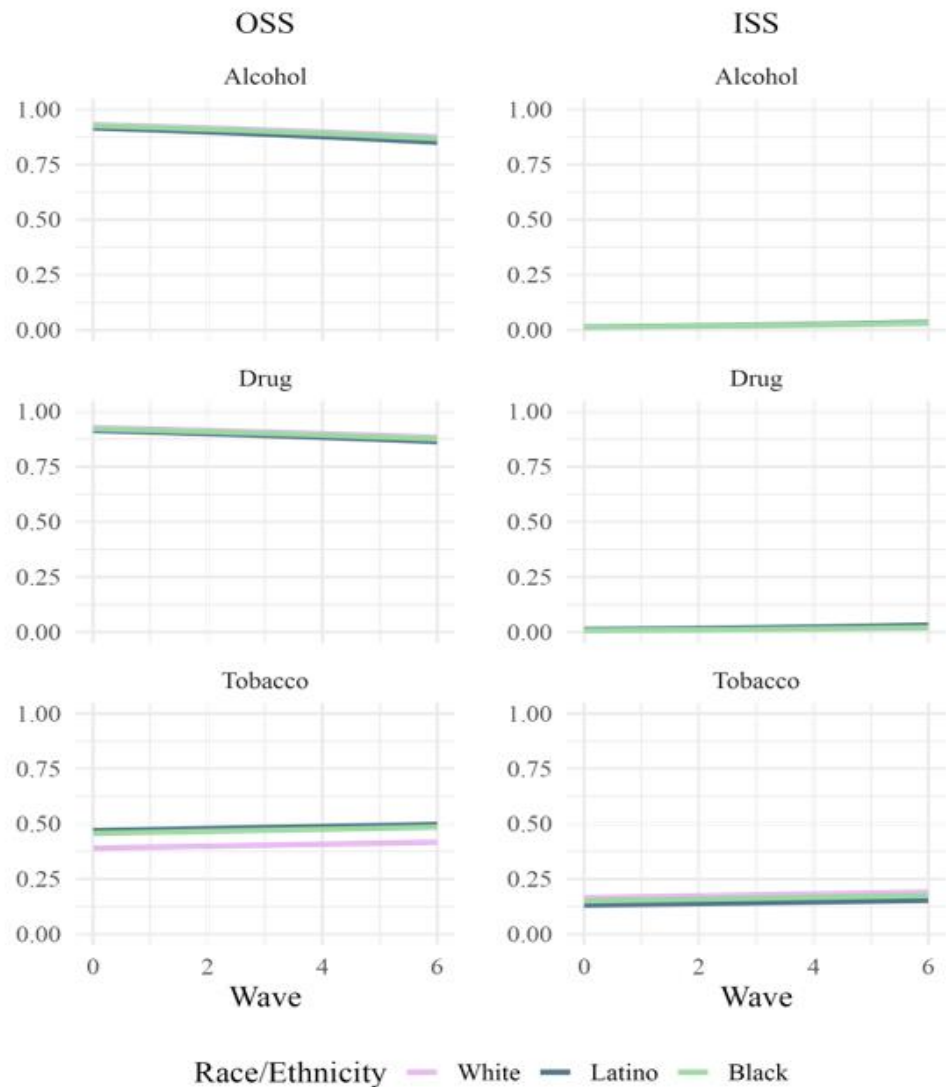
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OSS



Substance Type — Alcohol — Drug — Tobacco

(Austin, Anderson et al., 2023)



# Differences by Race/Ethnicity

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(Austin, Anderson et al., 2023)

# Effects of Exclusion

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## Short term

- Less supervision
- Less support (e.g., counseling, instruction)
- Lost instructional time, damaged relationships, disconnection from school

## Long term

- Drop out
- Lower academic performance
- Increased likelihood of substance use
- Justice system involvement
  - (American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health, 2013; Fabelo et al., 2011; Fletcher et al., 2008; Noltemeyer et al., 2015)

Some are pushing back

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...and YOU can help!

# Recommendations for Schools

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# Recommendations

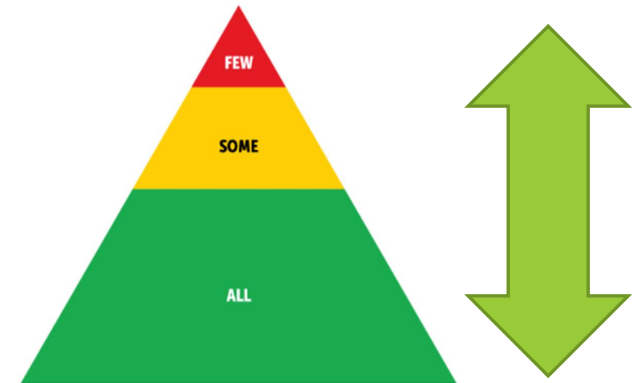
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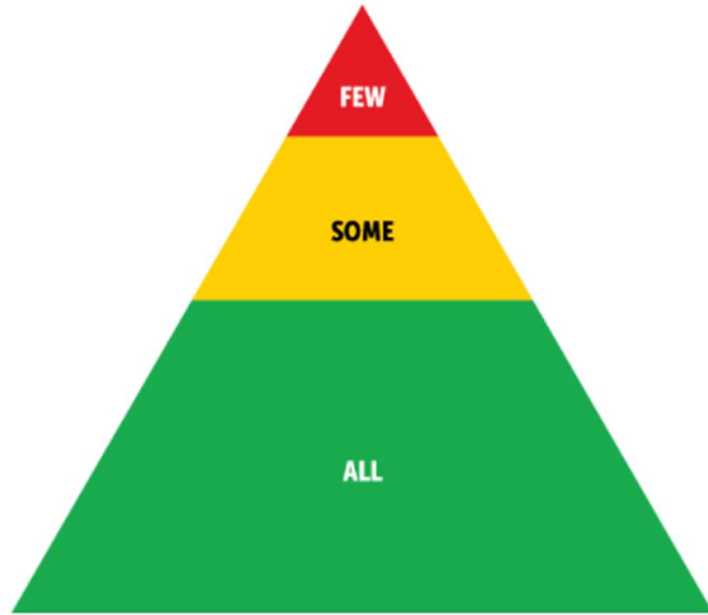
## Foundation

- Alignment of Policies
  - Time, funding, discipline
- Preventive Framework
  - Team
  - Systems
  - Data
  - Practices

## Points of Engagement:

- Students
- Families
- Staff





**PBIS is the most  
common MTSS  
for behavior**

# Using MTSS

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MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

# Examples of PBIS Supports

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## Tier 3

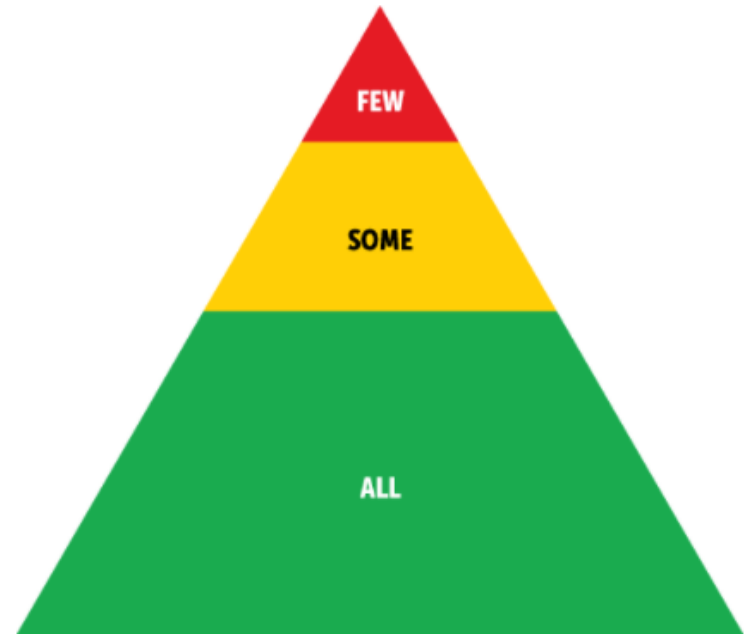
- Individualized,
- wrap-around supports

## Tier 2

- Small group,
- Check-In Check-Out
- more monitoring

## Tier 1

- All students,
- well-defined expectations,
- clear routines





# Substance Misuse and PBIS

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Tier 1 PBIS

Lower perceived misuse as reported by teachers

(Bastable et al., 2015)

Tier 1 reward  
systems,  
teaching

Lower drug-related ODRs

(Molloy et al., 2013)

Tier 2

Lower self-reported misuse & ODRs

(Austin, Seeley et al., 2023; Austin, Hammond et al., 2023)



# Employ Substance Misuse Expertise

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- Expanded role of behavioral health practitioners
  - Direct service
  - Consultation on practices
  - Full participants in MTSS meetings



TAKE  
A DEEP  
BREATH

# Social Emotional Learning

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- Social emotional learning improves student's ability to
  - Self-manage, use positive coping skills (Dowling et al., 2019)
- **Prevention**
  - Embed in school-wide expectations
  - Mental health promotion
- **Mitigation**
  - Counseling services
  - Targeted and intensive interventions



# Alternatives to Exclusion

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- **Prevention:**
  - Supervision
  - Relationships
- **Mitigation:** Dealing with mistakes
  - Restorative approaches
  - Counseling
  - Referral for support

# Family Engagement



## What the research says:

- Many adolescents who misuse opioids report getting substances from home
  - (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2016)
- Caregiver training on supervision and engagement prevent substance misuse
  - (Spoth et al., 2013)

# Family Engagement



## ■ Prevention

- Newsletters
- Drug disposal
- Caregiver training monitoring
- Encouraging extracurricular activities

## ■ Mitigation

- Coordinate/Communication around Tier 2/3 services
- Referral resources
- Liaison to community providers

# Emergency Protocol

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Plan for drug overdose on campus

- § Identify signs
- § First responder notification
- § Opioid antagonists

Resource:

SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/five-essential-steps-for-first-responders.pdf>



# Connecting with Schools

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# Pressing Concerns for School

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Responding effectively to  
substance possession on campus



Navigating shortage of providers  
for adolescent treatment



# Lending your Expertise

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## Service Provider

- Counseling/treatment
- Substance misuse psychoeducation
  - Preventive and targeted
- Screening/assessment



# Lending your Expertise

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## Team Member

- Student care team
- Systems team



# Lending your Expertise

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## Collaborator

- Family education nights
- Professional development for staff
- Sharing community-based data



# Getting in the Door

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## Reach out!

- Larger Districts
  - Check out the district website
    - “Student Support Services”
- Smaller Districts
  - Administrators, school counselors, school psychologists

# Thank you for your time today!

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Contact Info:

Sean C. Austin, PhD, NCSP

[seana@uoregon.edu](mailto:seana@uoregon.edu)