

Effects of PROSPER on the influence potential of prosocial versus antisocial youth in adolescent friendship networks.

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Effects of PROSPER on the influence potential of prosocial versus antisocial youth in adolescent friendship networks.

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Source

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:

We test the hypothesis that an evidence-based preventive intervention will change adolescent friendship networks to reduce the potential for peer influence toward antisocial behavior. Altering adolescents' friendship networks in this way is a promising avenue for achieving setting-level prevention benefits such as expanding the reach and durability of program effects.

METHODS:

Beginning in 2002, the Promoting School-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience (PROSPER) randomized control trial assigned two entire sixth-grade cohorts of 14 rural and small town school districts in Iowa and Pennsylvania to receive the intervention and of 14 to control. A family-based intervention was offered in sixth grade and a school-based intervention was provided in seventh grade. More than 11,000 respondents provided five waves of data on friendship networks, attitudes, and behavior in sixth through ninth grade. Antisocial influence potential was measured by the association between network centrality and problem behavior for each of 256 networks (time, grade cohort, and school specific).

RESULTS:

The intervention had a beneficial impact on antisocial influence potential of adolescents' friendship networks, with $p < .05$ for both of the primary composite measures.

CONCLUSIONS:

Current evidence-based preventive interventions can alter adolescents' friendship networks in ways that reduce the potential for peer influence toward antisocial behavior.

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KEYWORDS:

Prevention, Problem behavior, Social networks, Substance use

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