



Dear Southwick Regional School Parent or Guardian:

In recent years, substance use at school has increased due to the widespread availability of devices that make it easy to conceal substances from peers, parents, and school staff. Students who use substances at school or school sanctioned events are both violating school substance use policies and at a heightened risk for negative health effects. Southwick Regional School, alongside nearly 100 schools across Massachusetts has committed to launching an exciting new program called [**iDECIDE \(Drug Education Curriculum: Intervention, Diversion, and Empowerment\)**](#) that was developed in collaboration between Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Institute for Health and Recovery. **iDECIDE** aims to provide students experimenting with substances and/or who got caught using substances at school the knowledge, skills, and motivation necessary to make healthier decisions.

Our team of clinicians and scientists from MGH and Harvard Medical School are partnering with schools across the state to conduct a variety of different research initiatives to evaluate **iDECIDE** as well as to more generally improve adolescent mental health and reduce substance use. We can't accomplish this mission without the help of you and your student!

Why is the evaluation of iDECIDE so important? When a new program like **iDECIDE** is launched in schools, it is important to monitor effectiveness and compare outcomes during times when schools do not have the program to times when the program is fully launched. This information is critical in making improvements to the program to best support students and the overarching school community. Before and after staff at Southwick Regional School implement the program, our team at MGH will be working to evaluate changes in school and student outcomes as well as the effectiveness of **iDECIDE** itself. We are interested in how **iDECIDE** impacts attitudes of school staff, prevalence of substance use across the school, as well as the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of individual students. The information your student provides will be invaluable in helping our team develop a more effective response to substance use infractions to help students and families. Previous program participants have found these types of studies to be an informative, interesting, and rewarding experience that provides unique insight on real applications of science and their own behaviors.

What does our evaluation program involve? Our research program occurs in two phases: 1) the school-wide assessment, and 2) individual referral to the MGH evaluation team. We will explain each of these phases below:

School-Wide Assessment (First Phase):

- ✓ All 7th-12th grade students will complete a very brief and confidential survey about substance use and mental health.
- ✓ This will take place during the week of November 7, 2022.
- ✓ The survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. Surveys will not collect any names or contact information.
- ✓ During the survey, your student will be asked about a variety of different things. For example:
 - ✓ Basic demographics (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity)
 - ✓ Mental health (e.g., symptoms of depression, anxiety, emotion dysregulation)
 - ✓ Substance use (e.g., lifetime and current use of alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine)
 - ✓ Other descriptives used to create a unique code (i.e., it cannot be used to identify a student) for all completed surveys (e.g., eye color, hair color, first three letters of their street name in 5th grade, middle initial). These questions may be used to connect records over time, but this information will not be used to find out your students' names.
- ✓ An example of the types of questions that may appear in the survey can be found here: <https://redcap.link/idecidetest>.
- ✓ If you do NOT want your student to participate in this survey, you must complete this opt-out form <https://redcap.link/iDECIDEoptout> by October 14, 2022. There will be no penalty or consequence to you or your student for opting out of the survey. If the study staff does not hear from you by October 14, 2022, it will be assumed that you consent to your student completing this brief and confidential questionnaire. Even if you do not object to your student completing this survey, your student is in no way required to do it if they do not want to.

Individual Referral to MGH Research Team (Second Phase):

- ✓ Students will be referred to the MGH study staff by a school staff member if they received a substance use-related infraction at school or a school-sanctioned event.
- ✓ All information that the MGH evaluation team receives will be kept **secure and confidential**.
- ✓ If MGH receives a referral for your student, we will call you and tell you about a voluntary, confidential 3-session research study that your student may be interested in. You or your student are not required to participate in this research study, even if we receive a referral from your school. To enroll, the MGH team will reach out to explain the study, answer any questions, and obtain **written parental consent** (if under 18) **and written student assent/consent** (if age 18 or older). Regardless of whether you or your student provides consent for the MGH study, Southwick School is free to use iDECIDE or any other disciplinary response they have available and deem best.
- ✓ If you do NOT want your student to be referred to the MGH research team in the unlikely event that they have a substance use infraction at school, you must fill out this opt-out form <https://redcap.link/iDECIDEoptout> by October 14, 2022. There will be no penalty or consequence to you or your student for opting out of the referral process. If the study staff does not hear from you by October 14, 2022, it will be assumed that you consent to your student being referred to the MGH study staff if determined appropriate by school staff.

You have the option to opt out of either or both of the two phases outlined above. Please indicate to us which phase(s) you would like your student opted out of by completing this opt-out form <https://redcap.link/iDECIDEoptout> by October 14, 2022.

What about privacy and confidentiality? We ensure that all information provided to us remains confidential. All questionnaires, interviews, and other information provided to us will only have an identification number on them; none will have names or other identifying information. None of the information your student provides will be available to anyone, including school officials or personnel.

How do I find out more information? If you would like to learn more about iDECIDE or our research program, please reach out to Dr. Randi Schuster at (617) 643-6673 or Rschuster@mgh.harvard.edu.

We look forward to partnering with you!

Sincerely,

Randi M. Schuster, Ph.D. and the iDECIDE Evaluation Team
Center for Addiction Medicine
Psychiatry Department
Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School