

Drug Dealing

Offense: Sale of controlled substance

Underground business - a few do well, most make less than minimum wage

Drug distribution is an illegal business that operates mostly underground. Like many other businesses, it's one in which a very few people at the top do well, a few more "middle managers" make somewhere between the minimum wage and about \$30 an hour (depending on the "market"); and the people at the bottom are poorly paid, often exploited, exposed to serious risks, and in many cases, involved in a glorified form of child labor. Except in very affluent neighborhoods, the legion of street level sellers usually makes less than minimum wage.

Side effect can be drug dependency

Unfortunately, a "side effect" of being involved in drug dealing is often drug dependency. Some youth who are drug dependent sell to support their habit. Some who start out as look outs or runners, sample the product and become dependent or addicted.

Often motivated to succeed, many also have other jobs

Like entry level workers in other enterprises (including those whose legitimate work is "illegal" because of the workers' undocumented status), young street sellers' desire to move up the chain to the top motivates them to take the financial and legal risk of starting off at the bottom. But their lack of education, lack of business savvy, lack of good judgment, lack of documentation (in many cases), vulnerability to arrest, and personal drug use severely limit their options in a highly competitive, literally cutthroat industry.

Contrary to popular belief, among those who are *not* addicted, many of these young dealers also have low paying jobs in the above-ground economy. They are patching together a livelihood, showing some ambition and willingness to take risks to succeed.

Effective intervention for low level drug dealers

However, it can build some protective factors to reduce involvement of low level workers in the drug distribution network. The approach is four fold: leverage and expand existing strengths, provide motivation and support to get help with personal substance abuse issues, encourage and assist school success and build skills for good decision-making. *Ripple Effects software does not offer a program for high level drug dealers.*

Goals of intervention

Youth will:

- Understand their learning style and how it affects life choices
- Identify strengths that can help support an above ground career
- Set personal goals for success
- Identify a passion they can commit to
- Understand the role of effort and perseverance in life success
- Develop good decision-making skills
- Realistically predict possible consequences for themselves and others from drug dealing
- Resist peer or gang pressure to start dealing in drugs
- Address their own substance abuse issues

A suggested scope and sequence

SKILL TOPICS

Understanding yourself

Learning style
Temperament
What you love
Goals
Effort
Perseverance
Beliefs
Norms

Decision making

Predicting consequences
Money

Assertiveness

Resisting peer pressure

Social Values

Honesty
Responsibility

CHALLENGE TOPICS

Drug dealing

Addiction
Drugs
Envy
Gangs
Mistakes
Poor
Recklessness
Weapons