

Craig Walion, Proponent

Drug Abuse Resistance Education

The establishment of a D.A.R.E. coordinator for drug abuse resistance education would be the first step in the right direction for the future of Kansas youth. We are at a critical point due to the fentanyl and opioid crisis in our nation and we cannot risk losing this generation. Drugs are being brought into this country at unprecedented rates and they are more readily available than any other time in our history.

According to the DEA, fentanyl is the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45. In 2023, the DEA seized more than 77 million fentanyl pills and nearly 12,000 pounds of fentanyl powder. That is the most fentanyl seized in a calendar year, and it amounts to more than 386 million doses of fentanyl, enough to KILL EVERY AMERICAN. Keep in mind, this is only accounting for the DEA's seizures, thus does not include seizures by local, county and state law enforcement agencies; however it illustrates the scale of the problem.

According to stats provided by the Johnson County Drug Task Force, overdoses, fatalities and NARCAN usage continue to rise in Johnson County. We do our best to maintain stats, however, they are only as good as the numbers provided and not every agency does. In addition, the availability of over the counter NARCAN results in under reported overdoses.

This position and program will allow school resource officers to take part in classroom settings while providing real time drug use and trends that are currently affecting our communities. These usage and trends are also what concerns parents and teachers the most. Aside from skyrocketing fentanyl/opioid use, synthetic drugs, vaping and numerous THC products in easily concealable and digestible forms are prevalent and available for purchase in person or online.

D.A.R.E. provides law enforcement an opportunity to be at the front of the battle during these early and formative educational years. The sooner this is implemented the sooner we can begin to educate and protect the most vulnerable amongst us.

Currently we provide presentations regarding the dangers of drugs and tailor them to what is being seen in and around the area. We have the benefit of partnering with our Patrol Division, Drug Task Force, Investigations Division and Crime Lab as resources to provide the most up-to-date information on what is taking place in our communities. This is a battle we can fight in real time and it is a battle we must win given what is at stake.

I was a high school student in the early 1990's that participated in the D.A.R.E. program in Watervliet, NY. My D.A.R.E. instructor was Police Officer Jerry Beston – his impact in the classroom helped me make the appropriate choices in life and set me on a path that eventually brought me in front of you today.