

# New Strategies Can Prevent Youth Drug Abuse

Secaucus and Rutherford are using federal grant money to support new programs that discourage substance abuse among young people

By Tania Guaman, Coalition Coordinator,  
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Funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, will allow Secaucus and Rutherford to expand drug-abuse prevention measures over the next five years.

Secaucus and Rutherford have each received \$125,000 per year for up to ten years of federal funding through the Drug Free Communities Program to be used to reduce substance abuse among young people. The money, provided by the Office of National Drug Control Policy through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, will allow for the expansion of drug-abuse prevention measures for the next five years.

The Drug-Free Communities Support Program provides funding to community-based coalitions that organize to prevent youth substance use. The DFC Program has funded more than 2,000 coalitions and currently mobilizes nearly 9,000 community volunteers nationwide. The goal of this program is to increase collaboration among community partners and prevent substance abuse.

As active communities, Secaucus and Rutherford requested support from the Hudson County Coalition for a Drug-Free Community and Partners in Prevention to battle underage drinking, prescription drug misuse, and drug abuse. After learning about the DFC grant, both communities worked with community leaders and support from Partners in Prevention to obtain the grants. Among hundreds of towns and organiza-

tions that had applied across the nation, Secaucus and Rutherford were two of the successful awardees of the Drug-Free Communities grant.

**Support of town leadership** The Secaucus Prevention Coalition and the Rutherford Community Prevention Coalition are newly formed local coalitions that will coordinate efforts in implementing effective prevention strategies. Secaucus Mayor Michael Gonnelli and Rutherford Mayor Joseph DeSalvo support our initiatives to address local substance abuse issues and to create a positive impact in society.

“We feel proud to have been awarded this new grant and we will work hard to create a positive impact in building a drug-free community for the children and families in the Town of Secaucus” said Mayor Gonnelli.

To strengthen community efforts, in the upcoming months, a few staff and some community members will attend trainings at the National Coalition Academy, where they will meet with other coalitions nationwide to discuss and review effective environmental strategies that can be applied at the local level.

**Changing the environment** Environmental strategies focus on changing the environment around substance abuse rather than an individual’s attitude towards drug use. For example, if it is easy to access illegal drugs in a community, more people will use those drugs, because they are readily available. By reducing access, through better support for law enforcement efforts, the environment of the community is changed. Thus, fewer people will have access to illegal drugs, ultimately reducing the problems they can cause.

**Volunteer initiative** Many members of both the Secaucus and Rutherford communities and the Municipal Alliances give their time and energy to support the coalition. These volunteers represent many sectors including law enforcement, media, youth, school system, business, religious and fraternal organizations, civic and volunteer groups, healthcare, government and other organizations working together toward a common goal of bringing tangible solutions to the community. Everyone is welcome to join the coalition’s efforts to build a build a safe, healthy and drug-free community. 🍌

@ If your municipality is interested in learning more about the Drug-Free Communities Support grants, please go to [whitehouse.gov/ondcp/drug-free-communities-support-program](http://whitehouse.gov/ondcp/drug-free-communities-support-program).

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Rutherford and Secaucus also enjoy the support of the Hudson County Coalition and local community leaders to implement prevention strategies to tackle challenges such as underage drinking and prescription drug misuse. Jaimie Serfield, director of the Lindsey Meyer Teen Institute acknowledges that her team is “thrilled to be working with the Rutherford community to reduce youth drug and alcohol use in town. Serfield also points out that the privilege of receiving the Drug-Free Communities Grant “shows that our citizens are committed community members who are dedicated to addressing challenges that do exist with proactive and proven prevention practices.”



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