

# C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Child Health Evaluation  
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## Parents of High School Athletes Speak Out on Performance-Enhancing Drugs: Broad Support for Testing, Less for Individual Penalties

Several reports indicate that use of performance-enhancing (P-E) drugs by athletes in high school is increasingly common. Less well understood is what parents think schools should do to address P-E drug use—particularly what the consequences should be.

In August 2008, the CS Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked parents of high school athletes about their awareness, attitudes and opinions related to P-E drug use.

### Awareness and Communication

Parent responses to this poll confirms that P-E drug use is an important issue in high school athletics:

- 9% of parents of high school athletes know someone under 18 who has tried P-E drugs.
- 57% of parents have talked with their children about P-E drugs.
- 97% of parents believe that high school coaches should be required to communicate the dangers of P-E drugs.

### School Policies

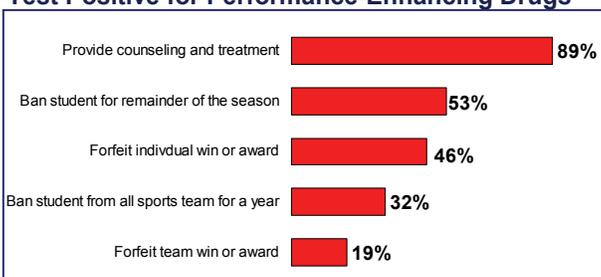
Overall, parents support testing for P-E drugs in high school athletes:

- 75% of parents favor random testing.
- 76% of parents think schools should be required to report to the number and percentage of positive tests to the state.
- However, only 43% of parents are in favor of reporting individual names of athletes who test positive.

### Individual Penalties for Positive Test Results

Despite broad parental support for testing, there is only limited support for individual penalties for athletes who test positive. For example, roughly one-half of parents think that a positive test should result in the athlete being banned for the rest of the season and/or forfeiting an individual win or award. Only one-third of parents favor banning the athlete from all sports for a year, and only 19% would support forfeiting team wins or awards (Figure).

Figure. Support for Action if High School Athletes Test Positive for Performance-Enhancing Drugs



Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2008

## Report Highlights

- Nearly 1 in 10 parents of a high school athlete knows someone under 18 who has tried performance-enhancing drugs.
- 3 out of 4 parents support random testing of high school athletes for performance-enhancing drugs.
- Less than one-half of parents believe there should be individual penalties for high school athletes who test positive for performance-enhancing drugs.

## Implications

Performance-enhancing drugs are no longer just a concern for college and professional sports. In this poll, 1 in 10 parents of high school athletes report firsthand knowledge of P-E drug use in young people, and virtually all parents want the topic addressed by coaches. Parental concern translates to broad support for random testing of high school athletes for P-E drugs and for reporting aggregate test results to the state government. In contrast, far fewer parents support individual penalties for athletes who test positive, with only minimal support for team penalties. Schools and states that are considering options for P-E testing should expect differential levels of parental support for testing versus penalizing high school athletes.

## Data Source

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Knowledge Networks, Inc, for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered in August, 2008 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults aged 18 and older (n=2,245) with and without children from the Knowledge Networks standing panel that closely resembles the U.S. population. For this analysis, a subset of parents with high school athletes was used (n=332). The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2 to 8 percentage points, depending on the question.

## C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

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