



## iDECIDE at a glance

**iDECIDE** (Drug Education Curriculum: Intervention, Diversion, and Empowerment), developed by the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Institute for Health and Recovery in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, is a novel education-, motivation- and skills-based diversion program to be used as an alternative to exclusionary discipline for students caught violating school substance use policies.

Through use of guided discussions, videos, and structured activities, iDECIDE addresses the neurobiology of addiction and adolescent brain development, industry tactics targeting adolescents, negative effects of various commonly used substances, risk and protective factors, motivations and triggers for alcohol and other drug use, healthy alternatives to using alcohol and other drugs, as well as identification of core values and long-term wellness goals. iDECIDE will be available in both English and Spanish and can be administered one-on-one or in a group format.

***iDECIDE will be disseminated across Massachusetts in stages. The first stage starts NOW! Don't miss the opportunity to gain early access to this novel program.***

## Why is this important?

Outdated punitive practices not only do not work, they may also harm the student by increasing risk for later academic difficulties, behavioral problems, and substance use. Punitive practices also disproportionately impact racial and ethnic minority students and may therefore widen equity gaps in education and mental health care. ***Students deserve better. iDECIDE was designed to retain students in school and empower them to make healthy decisions in line with their core values and future goals, while improving health equity among students.***

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a negative impact on student substance use, particularly among students of color and students struggling with addiction and other co-occurring mental health concerns. iDECIDE will provide schools with an opportunity to help, rather than punish, these students.

## Benefits of early access to iDECIDE

- **Early access** to our novel diversion program designed to support, educate, and empower students to make healthy decisions about substance use and mental health;
- **Free facilitator training** for school-based staff;
- **Ongoing support** around implementation;
- **Data** on the effectiveness of iDECIDE in your school.

## Requirements of becoming an early access site for iDECIDE

- Willingness for a minimum of 2 school faculty members (including an assistant principal or dean of students) to enroll in a one-day, free, virtual iDECIDE training;
  - There is no maximum to the number of faculty who can be trained

- Training slots will occur every two months and will be randomly assigned to schools over 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years
- Willingness to refer students within 1-2 days of a substance use infraction to the iDECIDE evaluation team;
  - Students will be given the opportunity to participate in an MGH-directed research opportunity (with parental consent).
- Willingness to provide **de-identified** administrative records to the iDECIDE evaluation team, including information such as number of substance use infractions and rates of suspensions;
- Willingness to allow the iDECIDE evaluation team to briefly interview up to 5 school faculty members on school culture as well as barriers and facilitators to new program implementation.

### **How to become an early access site**

The implementation of our early access program is rapidly approaching **this fall**, and the iDECIDE team must determine which schools will be participating. To secure your school's spot on our list of early access sites, our team needs the following from your school:

- A letter of commitment signed by your school's principal or superintendent on school letterhead indicating your commitment to serve as an early access site for the iDECIDE program and two-year program evaluation (See template letter attached);
- The contact information of the principal or key liaison who will serve as a point of reference for the distribution of training and other health-related resources.

**Signed commitment letters should be sent to the iDECIDE team no later than June 30, 2021. Letters should be sent via email to [idecide@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:idecide@mgh.harvard.edu). \*\*Note: Even if your school has previously submitted a letter of interest, we are requiring updated letters of commitment. A template letter was included as an email attachment.**

### **How to address unanswered questions**

To learn more about the iDECIDE program and what it means to become an early access school, join an informational session conducted by the iDECIDE team or reach out directly to Dr. Randi Schuster, a clinical psychologist and principal investigator for this program.

- Information sessions:
  - 6/14/21 @ 09:00 AM <https://partners.zoom.us/j/81870549286>
  - 6/22/21 @ 01:00 PM <https://partners.zoom.us/j/81631084101>
  - 6/23/21 @ 08:30 AM <https://partners.zoom.us/j/89021098732>
- iDECIDE Team
  - [idecide@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:idecide@mgh.harvard.edu)
- Dr. Randi Schuster at Massachusetts General Hospital
  - [rschuster@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:rschuster@mgh.harvard.edu)