

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **Name of Program/Strategy: Positive Action**

### **Report Contents**

1. Overview and description
  2. Implementation considerations (if available)
  3. Descriptive information
  4. Outcomes
  5. Cost effectiveness report (Washington State Institute of Public Policy – if available)
  6. Washington State results (from Performance Based Prevention System (PBPS) – if available)
  7. Who is using this program/strategy
  8. Study populations
  9. Quality of studies
  10. Readiness for Dissemination
  11. Costs (if available)
  12. Contacts for more information
- 

### **1. Overview and description**

Positive Action is an integrated and comprehensive program that is designed to improve academic achievement; school attendance; and problem behaviors such as substance use, violence, suspensions, disruptive behaviors, dropping out, and sexual behavior. It is also designed to improve parent-child bonding, family cohesion, and family conflict. Positive Action has materials for schools, homes, and community agencies. All materials are based on the same unifying broad concept (one feels good about oneself when taking positive actions) with six explanatory sub-concepts (positive actions for the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional areas) that elaborate on the overall theme. The program components include grade-specific curriculum kits for kindergarten through 12th grade, drug education kits, a conflict resolution kit, site-wide climate development kits for elementary and secondary school levels, a counselor's kit, a family kit, and a community kit. All the components and their parts can be used separately or in any combination and are designed to reinforce and support one another.

### **2. Implementation considerations (if available)**

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **3. Descriptive Information**

<b>Areas of Interest</b>	Mental health promotion Substance abuse prevention
<b>Outcomes</b>	1: Academic achievement 2: Problem behaviors (violence, substance use, disciplinary referrals, and suspensions) 3: School absenteeism 4: Family functioning
<b>Outcome Categories</b>	Alcohol Crime/delinquency Drugs Education Family/relationships Social functioning Tobacco Violence
<b>Ages</b>	6-12 (Childhood) 13-17 (Adolescent) 18-25 (Young adult) 26-55 (Adult)
<b>Genders</b>	Male Female
<b>Races/Ethnicities</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander White Race/ethnicity unspecified
<b>Settings</b>	School
<b>Geographic Locations</b>	Urban Suburban

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

	Rural and/or frontier Tribal
<b>Implementation History</b>	Positive Action, Inc., was founded by Dr. Carol Gerber Allred in Twin Falls, Idaho, in 1982. Since then, the company's program has served approximately 5 million individuals in more than 15,000 settings. Positive Action has been implemented in urban, suburban, and rural areas with a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups. Since 1983, Positive Action has been used in all 50 States; internationally; and in various contexts, including 15,000 schools/districts and school-related sites (such as alternative schools, detention centers, and before- and after-school programs), mental health centers, adult and juvenile courts, welfare and other social services, probation and corrections, businesses, family services, law enforcement, affordable housing, and others. The duration of implementation has varied, with some customers having used the program for as long as 17 years.
<b>NIH Funding/CER Studies</b>	Partially/fully funded by National Institutes of Health: Yes Evaluated in comparative effectiveness research studies: No
<b>Adaptations</b>	Positive Action currently offers a Spanish-language version of most of the grade-level drug education kits (including kindergarten through 4th grade, 7th and 8th grade, and middle school kits), the Family Kit, and the Conflict Resolution Kit.
<b>Adverse Effects</b>	No adverse effects, concerns, or unintended consequences were identified by the applicant.
<b>IOM Prevention Categories</b>	Universal Selective Indicated

### **4. Outcomes**

#### **Outcome 1: Academic achievement**

<b>Description of Measures</b>	Academic achievement was measured using several standardized instruments: the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards (HCPS) test, Florida Reading Test (FRT), Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT; 4th grade), Norm Referenced Tests (NRT) of reading and math (8th grade), Florida Writes Test, High School Competency Test (HSCT) of communication and
--------------------------------	--

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

	mathematics, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Testing (ACT) test, and TerraNova Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.
<b>Key Findings</b>	<p>Over 4 academic years, intervention schools had higher rates of math proficiency (26%) than did control schools (21%), a difference that represents a small effect size (Cohen's <math>d = 0.34</math>).</p> <p>Over 4 academic years, intervention schools had higher rates of reading proficiency (52%) than did control schools (44%), a difference that represents a medium effect size (Cohen's <math>d = 0.73</math>).</p> <p>Another evaluation reported that elementary schools that implemented Positive Action produced average FRT scores that were 40% higher than all other schools and 45% higher than comparable schools with students of similar socioeconomic status.</p> <p>Middle schools with relatively high enrollment from elementary schools that received Positive Action ("PA primary schools") produced higher average standardized test scores in math and reading than comparable schools with relatively low enrollment from PA primary schools. Improvement in average test scores ranged from 10.8% to 20.6%, depending on the subject matter and the percentage of enrollees from PA primary schools.</p> <p>High schools with relatively high enrollment from PA primary schools reported 11% higher average scores on the Florida Writes Test and 10% higher average SAT scores than high schools with relatively low enrollment from PA primary schools. Similar results were observed for the percentages of students who passed the communication section of the HSCT.</p> <p>Two additional evaluations reported improvements in elementary schools participating in Positive Action as measured by State achievement tests in Hawaii and Nevada, respectively. Hawaii scores in math and reading improved an average of 52%, while Nevada scores on math, reading, and language improved by an average of 16%.</p>
<b>Studies Measuring Outcome</b>	Study 1, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5
<b>Study Designs</b>	Experimental, Quasi-experimental
<b>Quality of Research Rating</b>	2.8 (0.0-4.0 scale)

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **Outcome 2: Problem behaviors (violence, substance use, disciplinary referrals, and suspensions)**

<p><b>Description of Measures</b></p>	<p>Problem behavior was measured by self-reported substance use, violence, and sexual behavior (for grades 5 and above); school records of disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and incidents related to violence, disobedience, sexual behavior, crime, and use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs; and school records of incident reports of student-to-student and student-to-staff violence and weapons possession. In one study, measures also included school records of felonies, misdemeanors, school suspensions, and violations of department and school rules.</p>
<p><b>Key Findings</b></p>	<p>In one study, students from intervention schools were 30% less likely to have used alcohol, 78% less likely to have been drunk, and 100% less likely to have tried an illegal drug than students enrolled in primary schools without the intervention.</p> <p>One study found a 61% reduction in the occurrence of any violent behavior among boys in intervention schools compared with those in primary schools without the intervention (<math>p = .001</math>). No statistically significant reduction of violent behavior was observed among girls, but the rate of any reported violence by girls in grade 5 was very low.</p> <p>In intervention schools, 0.74% of boys reported voluntary sexual behavior, compared with 4.55% of boys at primary schools without Positive Action.</p> <p>Over one school year, schools participating in Positive Action reported a suspension rate of 1.63 per 1,000 compared with 6.2 per 1,000 for control schools. Three years earlier, the two groups of schools respectively reported suspension rates of 1.36 and 1.46 per 1,000. The effect size was medium for this measure (Cohen's <math>d = 0.63</math>).</p> <p>Middle schools with relatively high enrollment from PA primary schools had 52%-71% lower rates of problem behaviors such as drug use, violence, "disrespectful, disobedient, and, disorderly behaviors," and property crime, compared with middle schools with relatively low enrollment from PA primary schools.</p> <p>High schools with medium enrollment from PA primary schools had 17%-50% fewer problem behaviors, including substance use, violence, sexual behavior, falsifying records, and suspensions, than did high schools with relatively low enrollment from PA</p>

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

	<p>primary schools. High schools with high enrollment from PA primary schools had 25%-63% fewer of these problem behaviors than did schools with low enrollment from these primary schools.</p> <p>Rates of violence, including felonies, misdemeanors, and rule violations, among PA primary schools in Hawaii were 51%-79% lower than rates in comparable schools. Rates of student-to-student and student-to-staff violence in Nevada's Positive Action schools were respectively 87%-100% lower than the rates among comparable schools in Nevada.</p>
<b>Studies Measuring Outcome</b>	Study 1, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5
<b>Study Designs</b>	Experimental, Quasi-experimental
<b>Quality of Research Rating</b>	2.4 (0.0-4.0 scale)

### **Outcome 3: School absenteeism**

<b>Description of Measures</b>	School-wide attendance was assessed using multiple measures: average daily absences, number of students absent during the school year, number of days absent (> 21 days) during the school year, average number of days absent, and absenteeism rate.
<b>Key Findings</b>	<p>Four studies examined change in attendance in schools that used Positive Action. In one study, average per student daily absences in Positive Action schools decreased over 4 years while other schools maintained stable rates of daily absence, with students averaging 9.8 days absent in intervention schools versus 11 days absent in control schools during the 4th year of the study. This result represents a medium effect size (Cohen's <math>d = 0.55</math>). Three other studies did not find statistically significant differences in absenteeism between students in PA primary schools and other elementary schools.</p> <p>In other analyses, middle schools with relatively high enrollment from PA primary schools had 75% less absenteeism than middle schools with relatively low enrollment from PA primary schools.</p> <p>Similarly, high schools with relatively high enrollment from PA primary schools had 8% less absenteeism than high schools with relatively low enrollment from PA primary schools.</p>
<b>Studies Measuring Outcome</b>	Study 1, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5
<b>Study Designs</b>	Experimental, Quasi-experimental
<b>Quality of Research Rating</b>	2.5 (0.0-4.0 scale)

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **Outcome 4: Family relationships**

<b>Description of Measures</b>	Family functioning was measured using 16 self-report items that assessed family conflict, family cohesion, and quality of parent-child bonding. The items were administered at pretest and posttest.
<b>Key Findings</b>	When compared with control families, families that received the Positive Action curriculum had more improved family functioning in all three areas. Effect sizes were small for family conflict (Cohen's $d = 0.36$ ), small for family cohesion (Cohen's $d = 0.34$ ), and medium for parent-child bonding (Cohen's $d = 0.59$ ).
<b>Studies Measuring Outcome</b>	Study 2
<b>Study Designs</b>	Experimental
<b>Quality of Research Rating</b>	2.2 (0.0-4.0 scale)

5. **Cost effectiveness report** (Washington State Institute of Public Policy – if available)
6. **Washington State results** (from Performance Based Prevention System (PBPS) – if available)
7. **Where is this program/strategy being used (if available)?**

<b>Washington Counties</b>	<b>Oregon Counties</b>
Spokane	

## **8. Study Populations**

The studies reviewed for this intervention included the following populations, as reported by the study authors.

<b>Study</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>
<b>Study 1</b>	6-12 (Childhood)	50% Female 50% Male	55.8% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 16.1% Race/ethnicity unspecified 13.4% White 10.7% Asian

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

			2.2% Hispanic or Latino 1.3% Black or African American 0.5% American Indian or Alaska Native
<b>Study 2</b>	6-12 (Childhood) 13-17 (Adolescent) 18-25 (Young adult) 26-55 (Adult)	50% Female 50% Male	Data not reported/available
<b>Study 3</b>	6-12 (Childhood)	50% Female 50% Male	55.3% White 22.3% Black or African American 18.3% Hispanic or Latino 4.1% Race/ethnicity unspecified
<b>Study 4</b>	6-12 (Childhood)	50% Female 50% Male	54.9% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 32.3% Race/ethnicity unspecified 12.8% White
<b>Study 5</b>	6-12 (Childhood)	50% Female 50% Male	53.6% White 22.9% Hispanic or Latino 18% Black or African American 5.5% Race/ethnicity unspecified

### **9. Quality of Research**

The documents below were reviewed for Quality of Research. Other materials may be available. For more information, contact the developer(s).

#### **Study 1**

Flay, B., Acock, A., Vuchinich, S., & Beets, M. (2005). Progress report of the randomized trial of Positive Action in Hawai'i: End of third year of intervention (spring 2005). Unpublished manuscript, Oregon State University, Corvallis.



# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **Study 2**

Flay, B., & Slagel, M. (2006). The Positive Action family program: A pilot randomized trial. Unpublished manuscript.

## **Study 3**

Flay, B. R., & Allred, C. G. (2003). Long-term effects of the Positive Action program. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 27(Suppl. 1), S6-S21.

## **Study 4**

Flay, B. R., Allred, C. G., & Ordway, N. (2001). Effects of the Positive Action program on achievement and discipline: Two matched-control comparisons. *Prevention Science*, 2(2), 71-89.

## **Study 5**

Flay, B. R., Allred, C. G., & Ordway, N. (2001). Effects of the Positive Action program on achievement and discipline: Two matched-control comparisons. *Prevention Science*, 2(2), 71-89.

## **Supplementary Materials**

Description of Positive Action evaluation instruments

Positive Action, Inc. Levels of implementation plans. (2004). Twin Falls, ID: Author.

## **Quality of Research Ratings by Criteria (0.0-4.0 scale)**

External reviewers independently evaluate the Quality of Research for an intervention's reported results using six criteria:

1. Reliability of measures
2. Validity of measures
3. Intervention fidelity
4. Missing data and attrition
5. Potential confounding variables
6. Appropriateness of analysis

For more information about these criteria and the meaning of the ratings, see [Quality of Research](#).

Outcome	Reliability of Measures	Validity of Measures	Fidelity	Missing Data/Attrition	Confounding Variables	Data Analysis	Overall Rating
<b>1: Academic achievement</b>	3.3	3.3	1.5	2.5	2.7	3.4	<b>2.8</b>
<b>2: Problem behaviors (violence, substance use, disciplinary referrals, and suspensions)</b>	2.1	2.2	1.5	2.5	2.7	3.5	<b>2.4</b>

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

<b>3: School absenteeism</b>	2.5	2.5	1.3	2.5	2.7	3.5	<b>2.5</b>
<b>4: Family functioning</b>	2.5	2.0	0.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	<b>2.2</b>

## **Study Strengths**

The researchers used appropriate matching variables when making comparisons between schools, and they demonstrated the equivalence of intervention and control schools. The authors also did an exemplary job of matching schools and attending to differences in feeder school rates in the analysis of middle and high school data in one study. The authors used strong analytic techniques.

## **Study Weaknesses**

Schools were not randomly assigned to the intervention in some of the studies. In one study, the data from one sample were retrospective, and extraneous variables may have affected the outcomes. Some of the data presented (e.g., disciplinary referrals, incidents of violence) were based on administrative records, which are often unreliable and inconsistent from school to school.

## **10. Readiness for Dissemination**

The documents below were reviewed for Readiness for Dissemination. Other materials may be available. For more information, contact the developer(s).

### **Dissemination Materials**

Kits:

- Positive Action counselor's kit [includes manual, posters, manipulatives, and materials for six individuals]. (1998). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action elementary climate development kit [includes leader's manual, music, posters, support staff and parent's manuals, calendars, tokens, stickers, balloons, ICU Box, words-of-the-week cards, "positive notes" note cards, and notepads]. (1989). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action elementary orientation training workshop kit [includes manual and materials for 25 individuals]. (2004). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action family classes instructor's kit [includes manuals and posters]. (2006). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action family kit [includes manual, posters, music, manipulatives, and materials for six individuals]. (1995). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 7 instructor's kit [includes teacher manual, posters, music, manipulatives, and materials for 30 students]. (2007). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 2 instructor's kit [includes teacher manual, posters, music, manipulatives, and materials for 30 students]. (2007). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

- Positive Action high school kit II: "Lives on the line" play instructor's kit [includes teacher manual, posters, music, manipulatives, and materials for 30 students]. (2007). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.

### Manuals:

- Positive Action community manual. (2004). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action conflict resolution manual. (2000). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 8 teacher's manual. (1990). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 5 drug education supplement teacher's manual. (1990). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 5 teacher's manual. (1982). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 4 teacher's manual. (2006). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 1 teacher's manual. (1982). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 6 teacher's manual. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 3 teacher's manual. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action high school orientation training workshop manual. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action kindergarten teacher's manual. (1986). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action media training workshop manual. (2001). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action middle school drug education supplement teacher's manual. (1990). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action middle school orientation training workshop manual. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action ongoing training workshop manual. (2004). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action secondary climate development manual. (2000). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc. Other materials:
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, California, grade 5. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, California, grade 4. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, grades 7 and 8 [CD-ROM]. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

- Positive Action academic standards alignment, Hawaii, grade 5. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, Hawaii, grade 4. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, Illinois, grade 5. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action academic standards alignment, Illinois, grade 4. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action evaluation services. (2007). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action grade 4 instructor's kit training CD [CD-ROM]. (2005). Twin Falls, ID: Positive Action, Inc.
- Positive Action Materials Catalog

## **Readiness for Dissemination Ratings by Criteria (0.0-4.0 scale)**

External reviewers independently evaluate the intervention's Readiness for Dissemination using three criteria:

1. Availability of implementation materials
2. Availability of training and support resources
3. Availability of quality assurance procedures

For more information about these criteria and the meaning of the ratings, see Readiness for Dissemination.

<b>Implementation Materials</b>	<b>Training and Support Resources</b>	<b>Quality Assurance Procedures</b>	<b>Overall Rating</b>
4.0	4.0	4.0	<b>4.0</b>

## **Dissemination Strengths**

Implementation materials are very detailed and include everything a potential user would need to implement the program. The program implementation plan includes sample 3-year plans along with key questions to guide the implementation planning process. The Family Kit is a very valuable component, with structured materials and activities that support and extend the school-based program. A wide variety of both initial and ongoing training and support is available to users. All the material focuses substantially on implementation fidelity, and a comprehensive evaluation guidebook is provided to directly support quality assurance.

## **Dissemination Weaknesses**

No weaknesses were identified by reviewers.

# ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

## **11. Costs**

The information below was provided by the developer and may have changed since the time of review. For detailed information on implementation costs (e.g., staffing, space, equipment, materials shipping and handling), contact the developer.

<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Required by Program Developer</b>
Instructor kits: Pre-K through grade 12 kits, Grade 5 Drug Education Supplement Kit, Middle School Drug Education Supplement Kit, Bullying Supplement Kit (elementary or secondary)	\$250-\$460 each	Yes
Additional component kits: Climate Development Kit (elementary or secondary), Conflict Resolution Kit, Counselor's Kit, Family Kit, Family Classes Instructor's Kit, Parenting Classes Instructor's Kit, Community Kit	\$85-\$1,450 each	No
1- to 5-day, on-site orientation, ongoing/refresher training, training of trainers, or professional development training	\$2,000 per site per day plus \$1,000 per travel day and travel expenses	No
Off-site training (at another site's training)	\$250 per participant per day	No
Webinar training	\$250 per hour per site	No
Self-training kit	\$250 each	No
Implementation design and monitoring consultation	\$300 per hour	No
Evaluation services consultation	\$400 per hour	No
Readiness consultation	\$300 per hour	No
Professional development consultation	\$300 per hour	No
Other consultation	\$300 per hour	No
Implementation monitoring surveys (teachers complete 10-minute reports at end of each	Free to download/print from Website, then administer and analyze the data, OR,	No

## ***Excellence in Prevention*** – descriptions of the prevention programs and strategies with the greatest evidence of success

---

unit)	\$250 per teacher for online administration, with data analysis completed by Positive Action evaluator	
Progress monitoring surveys (students report on use of Positive Action skills or teachers rate students)	Free to download/print from Website, then administer and analyze the data, OR, \$2.50 per student for online administration, with data analysis completed by Positive Action evaluator	No
Outcome monitoring surveys (pre- and posttest surveys of students on effects of Positive Action on student behaviors)	Free to download/print from Website, then administer and analyze the data, OR, \$5 per student for online administration, with data analysis completed by Positive Action evaluator	No
Process surveys (end-of-year teacher survey)	Free to download/print from Website, then administer and analyze the data, OR, \$250 per teacher for online administration, with data analysis completed by Positive Action evaluator	No
Professional development kit	\$350 each	No

### **12. Contacts**

#### **For information on implementation:**

Keri Metzger  
 (800) 345-2974 ext 100  
 keri@positiveaction.net

#### **For information on research:**

Carol Gerber Allred, Ph.D.  
 (208) 733-1328  
 carol@positiveaction.net

**Learn More by Visiting:** <http://www.positiveaction.net>