



## Opioid Affected Youth Initiative

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To Whom It May Concern:

As the project lead for the OJJDP Opioid Affected Youth Initiative over the past 3 years, I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the value and impact of the Future Leaders Program during the planning and implementation of the grant award period. From all indications, the program made a remarkable and positive impact on students and families at John F. Kennedy High School, San Fernando High School, Patrick Henry Middle School, and Olive Vista Middle School, as well as on students associated with other community-based organizations.

The program was seamlessly integrated into support services for students dealing with substance use and behavioral challenges. Through weekly sessions, students participating in the 10-week program developed critical skills to reduce their substance use. As well, workshop participants consistently expressed a sense of feeling heard, understood, and supported. The program effectively connected with students and guided them toward healthier decision-making.

Furthermore, the Future Leaders Program facilitated significant progress for many students, helping them address substance use and at-risk behaviors with positive outcomes. For students and families requiring additional support, the program successfully connected them to outpatient treatment services. Future Leaders has proven to be an invaluable partner to the school communities, particularly during the teen vaping epidemic.

I highly recommend Mark Winkler and the Future Leaders Program to any school community as an approach that works. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [cgordon@iir.com](mailto:cgordon@iir.com).

Respectfully,

Carol P. Gordon, Project Lead  
Opioid Affected Youth Initiative