

St. Xavier High School Drug Testing Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Why drug testing?

The mission of St. Xavier High School is to assist young men in their formation, and few things pose a greater threat to the development of teenage boys than drugs. Drug use is not only life-threatening but also poses subtle dangers that can become significant over time, including decreased motivation, increased risk-taking behavior, long term addiction, and increased likelihood of developing anxiety disorders. Because of these dangers, St. Xavier will institute a mandatory drug-testing program for all students beginning in the 2019-2020 school year.

As we strive to help form the whole person and respond to the realities of our culture, there are three primary purposes of our drug-testing program.

1. Promote an environment where students are empowered to say no to drugs.
2. Partner with families to provide students with substance abuse problems the help they need.
3. Educate our students about the dangers of substance abuse

Who will do the testing?

St. Xavier has contracted with Psychomedics, the world's largest provider of hair analysis drug testing. Psychomedics has been conducting drug testing since 1987 and has conducted testing for hundreds of schools and colleges. In addition to educational institutions, its patented process is used by Fortune 500 companies, major police departments and other public entities. More information is available at www.psychomedics.com.

Why hair testing?

Testing a hair sample for drugs offers significantly greater detection ability than other methods of analyzing body fluids such as urine or saliva. Many drugs are undetectable in urine as soon as 72 hours after use, whereas they can be detected in hair samples for 90 days after ingestion. In addition, it is much more difficult to adulterate or substitute hair samples and collection is much less intrusive, as well as more cost effective.

Can hair drug tests be collected from people with little or no hair?

Yes. Hair can be collected from several locations on the head and combined to obtain the required amount of hair. If head hair is not available, certain body hair can be used as an alternative.

What will we test for?

Psychomedics will test hair samples for cocaine, opiates (including heroin, oxycodone, oxymorphone, hydrocodone, hydromorphone), PCP, amphetamines (including ecstasy), marijuana, and Adderall. The Psychomedics hair test is able to detect use of the above substances over the previous 90 days.

Will students be tested for alcohol?

We explored this possibility, but decided it was not the right decision for our students at this time. The threshold for the alcohol test is too high, and it is too expensive. Alcohol abuse is a significant issue, so we will continue to educate students on the issue as well as breathalyze at school-sponsored events like dances. We will continue to monitor the developments of alcohol testing for future consideration.

Will every student be tested?

Yes. Every student will be tested in the fall of each school year. After the initial test, students will be randomly selected (by a computer program) for retesting throughout the rest of the school year. If the school becomes aware of a student's involvement in a drug-related incident (i.e. signs of intoxication at a school function, possession of vaping device on campus), the school may require the student to complete a drug test at the family's expense.

Will we also test faculty and staff?

The focus on this initiative is the health and wellness of the students. We will continue to use other systems we have in place to ensure the health and wellness of our faculty and staff.

What can students expect in the testing process?

Students will be notified that they are to report to the testing room during their free period. A small snip of hair will be collected and sent to Psychemedics. The school nurse and Assistant Principal for Student Services will receive the results within two weeks of the test and correlate the test results with student names. If a test result is negative, no specific communication will be sent to students or parents.

What happens if a student tests positive for drug use?

The first time a student tests positive the school will take the following approach, designed to help the student rather than impose punitive consequences. The Assistant Principal for Student Services and the student's school counselor will meet with the student and his parents, collaborating with the family to develop action steps to address the student's drug use. The student will be required to attend professional counseling, and the family will need to sign a release granting permission for the school counselor and professional counselor to share information with the school counselor. The student will be required to complete a follow-up drug test every 90 days at the family's expense until two consecutive tests yield negative results. The family will acknowledge in writing that any further positive test during his St. X career will result in disciplinary action. A second semester senior who tests positive will not be permitted to participate in his graduation ceremony.

Is there a possibility of false positives?

Hair testing provides the most accurate and reliable results of any analysis commonly used, including urinalysis and saliva tests. Psychemedics Corporation uses several independent approaches that, in various combinations, rule out the possibility of a positive result from external contamination.

- The hair specimen undergoes extensive chemical washing prior to screening, followed by analysis of the content of the wash. This wash analysis is a critical step to ensure that any contamination is effectively accounted for.
- Psychemedics measures the presence of metabolites to establish whether the drugs were in the air or on a person's hands rather than ingested.
- The testing employs mass spectrometry to identify drugs by their unique molecular fingerprints, so substances (such as poppy seeds) cannot be "mistaken" for drugs.
- In addition, any positive internal contamination (e.g., from passive inhalation) is distinguished from deliberate drug use by using appropriate cut-off levels.

Studies have shown that the combination of extensive washing, metabolite analysis, and proper cut-off levels are necessary to avoid false positives due to external contamination. Psychemedics has been tested by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the International Society of Hair Testing, and Walsh & Associates and has achieved 100% accuracy. More information is available on the Psychemedics website.

What happens if a test is positive due to a prescription?

A family can provide the school counselor with a copy of the prescription after being notified of a positive test. If the prescription accounts for the results of the test, no further action will be taken and it will not be considered a “positive” test in terms of the process identified above.

What happens if a student tests positive a second time?

If a student tests positive a second time at any point during his St. Xavier career the Assistant Principal of Student Services will inform the Dean of Students and the student will be placed on a disciplinary contract. The contract will establish that any further positive test will result in expulsion. The contract will also mandate action steps to address the substance abuse (i.e. seeing a drug counselor) and follow-up drug testing (paid for by the family) every 90 days for the rest of the student’s St. X career. The student will ordinarily be removed from leadership positions and prohibited from participating in co-curricular activities for six months. If a student already has other significant documented disciplinary issues, he may be expelled after the second positive test.

What happens if a student tests positive a third time?

If a student tests positive for drug use for a third time, he will be expelled. This policy is intended as a deterrent so that students have a significant reason to stop drug use. It is also a policy intended to protect other students at the school. Finally, if a student is not able to stop using after the help provided to him by this stage, it is the sign of a serious problem that needs to take precedence over any other schooling.

Who will know about a positive test and will it appear on a student’s permanent record?

If a student tests positive only the following school personnel will be notified: the nurse, the Assistant Principal for Student Services, and the student’s counselor. If there is a second positive test the Dean of Students will be notified. The school will not share the information with any other St. Xavier staff without the family’s consent. Outside of the above mentioned school personnel, we will only share the information with the student, the parents or guardian, and with medical or counseling professionals, as appropriate. No records or reports will be provided to colleges. However, circumstances may arise where it is necessary to communicate information about a drug test if it is to protect students or others from imminent harm; or if the information is requested by a valid subpoena or court order (such as from law enforcement).

Is this a violation of the student’s privacy?

No. Many of our students will encounter drug testing at some point in their lives – when they apply for a job or if they want to compete in athletics. Hair samples can be easily collected without the embarrassment of providing a urine sample. Most importantly, we are doing this for the benefit of our students, to keep them free of illegal substances. The certainty of detection will give them another reason to say “no” to the pressures of using illegal drugs.

Isn’t it the parents’ responsibility to make sure their kids are drug-free?

St. Xavier is focused on the education and welfare of the whole person. This program is intended to assist you as parents in your efforts to ensure the emotional and physical well-being of your sons. We certainly are not attempting to usurp a parent’s role on this issue; instead we hope this action helps support parents’ work at home on this very important issue. This initiative is just one more component of our partnership with families.

What else are you doing to support student wellness?

Over the past decade, we have offered our students new opportunities in the classroom and out. We have developed a health and wellness program that includes increased professional development for faculty and staff, educational opportunities for parents and students, and new support programming through our school counseling department. The drug testing program is one more way to help our students be healthy and safe.

What happens if a student voluntarily discloses a problem with drug use?

Any student who is involved with drug use, or his concerned parent, is encouraged to seek help by speaking confidentially with his school counselor or a school administrator. The school will offer its full support to help the student. This process will be similar to the response to a first positive test. If a student who self-discloses later tests positive after treatment and time to get clean, it will be treated as a second positive test.

Are you doing this because there is a drug problem in your school?

We are doing this because there is a drug problem among young people in our society. While we have no evidence that the use of illegal substances at our school is higher than at other schools, we want to do everything we can to keep our students safe.

Will there be additional costs?

The school's operating budget will cover the cost of the program. Only additional retests after a positive test will require an additional expense from the family.

How has testing gone at other schools?

Our committee spoke to leaders at many Catholic and Jesuit schools with drug testing programs both locally and around the country, and every single one enthusiastically shared that drug-testing programs are serving their communities well. Their success gives us confidence that a drug testing program will benefit the St. Xavier community.