LHPS Frequently Asked Questions Drug Testing Program

Updated July 2017

1. Why has LHPS decided to test its students for drug use?

Our decision to implement the testing of students for illegal drug use stems from a deep concern for the health and welfare of our students and a strong desire to protect them from harmful and potentially self-destructive behavior. The drug tests will also arm drug-free students who want to remain drug-free with a powerful tool to resist peer pressure to use drugs: “I can’t take drugs; my school tests for drug use and my parents will find out.” While we would all like our children to be strong enough to say no, we know that during the teen years they need help with decision making. Research data reveal that the longer a young person avoids even casual alcohol and drug use the less likely that young person will face substance abuse problems later in life.

2. Does LHP have a serious drug problem; why else would this program be initiated?

Student surveys in the past three years have consistently indicated that the majority of LHP students do not have problems with drugs or alcohol; nevertheless, surveys do indicate that a minority of Upper School students -- one is too many -- is experimenting with drugs or alcohol, sometimes in dangerous combinations. National data indicate that first usage is often beginning in the middle school grades. Knowing the immediate and long-term effects of substance abuse on learning, on adolescent brain development, and on health and safety overall, as well as the detrimental effects on general morale of the student body, Lake Highland is committed to doing all we can to support students in living drug free. We are not willing to write off even a small percentage of students and leave them to the temptations and dangers of substance abuse.

3. What does the testing program entail?

We began our program in the fall of the 2013-14 school year and that fall we tested every student in grades 7-12 followed by random samples throughout the year. In the years since then we administered random test throughout the year. For each student tested, a small hair sample is taken and sent to Psychomedics lab for testing. The test will identify if any of 18 different drugs have been taken during the previous three months. All results are sent to one confidential administrator at Lake Highland. They are not shared with any other LHP employee. The LHP administrator confidentially contacts the family whose child has tested positive for drug use and meets with them to help determine how best to help the child avoid future drug use. This will not be recorded in the student’s
cumulative file. After 100 days, the student is retested. The school reserves the right to exercise appropriate discretion and test in fewer than 100 days. If there is a second positive result, it is clear the student has a serious problem which Lake Highland is not able to address. The student will be required to withdraw from Lake Highland, but may reapply at a later date when proof of successful treatment and a negative drug test can be provided.

The school’s ongoing program is to administer random sampling throughout the school year. As testing will be random, it is possible some students may be tested more than once during the year. All new students entering LHPS after the beginning of the school year will be tested in the next round of random sampling.

4. How are students’ names chosen for random sampling?

We use random sampling software. LHPS administrators will play no role in choosing specific students to be tested unless there is reasonable suspicion as stated in our school policy.

5. How are hair samples taken?

Hair samples are collected in very controlled circumstances to assure an absolutely positive chain of custody. The amount of hair (taken near the base) needed for testing is equal to the diameter of lead inside a pencil. Hair samples will be taken by collectors trained by Psychemedics specifically for this program. Hair will be taken from an area of the head where it is least likely to be noticed. If a student has too little hair to be taken from the head, hair will be taken from the armpits, legs or arms. If a student purposely attempts to circumvent the testing in any way, the student will be subject to disciplinary action which may include withdrawal from school.

6. Will chemically treated hair or typical hair products affect the results?

No. Standard hair products will not significantly affect the results.

7. How reputable is the company that performs the lab tests?

Psychemedics has been considered the leading company in hair drug testing for over 25 years. Fortune 500 companies, schools, courts and major police forces use Psychemedics for their testing analysis. Over 200 secondary schools, as well as colleges, fraternities and sororities currently use Psychemedics services due to their unparalleled record of accuracy. Psychemedics' hair test has been upheld in more state and federal courts than those of any other testing lab.
8. **What drugs will be detected?**

Psychemedics will test for 18 different types of drugs under the following classifications: cocaine, opiates, phencyclidine, amphetamines, and marijuana. Click here for a more thorough listing and explanations: [http://www.psychemedics.com/](http://www.psychemedics.com/). Please be aware that tests for synthetic drugs and for alcohol are being developed. As soon as those are successfully beta-tested and become available, our testing may include them.

9. **What if my child is taking a physician prescribed drug?**

Some prescribed medications, especially various forms of painkillers, will cause positive results. If the parent thinks that the result is caused by a doctor prescribed medication, the parent must provide a copy of the prescription or of the medication bottle along with the prescribing doctor’s contact information within 48 hours so the administrator can confirm the legitimacy of the prescription. Once that has been done, the test will be considered negative, the student will be considered in good standing, and no other action will be necessary.

10. **What if my child is near someone else who smokes marijuana? Will he or she register positive for drug use?**

No, Psychemedics testing is carefully calibrated and will not produce a positive test result for exposure to air contamination. Students are best advised, though, to avoid situations where others are abusing drugs.

11. **Will LHPS employees be drug tested?**

Lake Highland employees are already tested under a separate program. All employees are finger-printed, background-checked, and drug tested in order to be hired. All employees who drive any kind of school vehicle, including the school’s golf carts, are subject to random testing throughout the school year. An employee injured on the job is immediately drug tested. As part of Lake Highland’s “Drug Free” status for its Workers Comp insurance, any employee making a worker’s comp claim as result of an accident at work is required to be tested. Employees may also be tested upon suspicion of impaired behavior. Unlike the student testing program, there are no second chances for school employees in the event of lab results showing drug use.

12. **Does this non-punitive program change school policy of zero tolerance of drugs and alcohol on campus?**

No. Current zero tolerance policies concerning the sale or distribution of drugs or the use or possession of alcohol, drugs, or drug paraphernalia on or near campus or at school sponsored events will continue to be enforced. In those cases, the student will be asked to withdraw from Lake Highland.
Our emphasis with the drug testing initiative is to deter use and for the protection of our student’s health, in the short and long terms. Possession or abuse of substances at school or school events, however, is seen as an immediate threat to the health, welfare and morale of the student body in general and will result in withdrawal or expulsion.

13. Will the Dean or College Counselors or authorities be informed?

The confidential administrator is not in any way associated with the dean’s or counseling offices. This structure emphasizes to students that this is not a disciplinary program, but a preventative and rehabilitative program. This structure also provides assurance that any positive test results will not be reported to colleges or influence college counselors’ letters of recommendation. All drug test results are treated as confidential medical information and are not reported to the authorities. For a complete review of our policies pertaining to drug or alcohol use or possession, please see our Student Handbook located on our LS, MS and US web pages.

14. What will happen to any records?

The testing agency, Psychemedics, never receives student names, and it holds testing records for five years. No documentation pertaining to a student screening results are part of a student’s permanent records. Lake Highland will destroy student names, numbers and results related to the drug testing program during the summer after the students graduate. Records and results are kept only by the confidential administrator. Even within the administrator records, student names are directly listed with the test results: student hair samples and results associated with identifying numbers only and a separate list held by the confidential administrator consists of student names and identifying numbers.

15. Is hair sampling more accurate than urinalysis?

Absolutely! The primary difference is the wider window of detection with Psychemedics hair testing. Cocaine, methamphetamine, opiates and PCP are rapidly excreted from the body and usually undetectable in urine 48 – 72 hours after use. Chronic marijuana use may remain in the body longer. Rather than just hours or days detected by a body fluid test, a hair test detects drug use over a period of months, ensuring that a drug user cannot evade the test by simply abstaining for a few days. Hair sampling also eliminates possibilities for substitution or adulteration of samples.

16. Does universal and random drug testing violate the 4th Amendment or Florida State Statutes?

No. The 4th Amendment addresses unreasonable searches of citizens by a government or an agent of the government. Lake Highland is not acting as either and is, therefore, exempt from the 4th Amendment prohibitions. Similarly, there is no Florida Statute which prohibits drug testing by a private business entity. Legal counsel for Lake Highland and for
Psymedic have rendered concrete opinion that Lake Highland is not violating any legal rights or statutes.

17. If I believe my child’s test is inaccurate, may I request a retest?

All positive results are automatically subjected to intense retesting at Psychemedics before final confirmation and reporting of initial results to the school. If a family requests an additional retest of a new hair sample, it can be performed. Parents may request a second
hair sample test within three business days of being told of the initial results. If the requested second test by Psychemedics confirms the positive results again, it will be considered final, and the family will be billed for the retest.

18. What happens regarding tuition and deposit if my child tests positive a second time and is withdrawn?

The school would be very disappointed to lose a student due to a second positive drug test. The school would retain the original deposit and prorate the tuition based upon the number of days of the school year the student attended.

19. What is the school doing to educate students about the dangers of drugs?

We currently participate in Red Ribbon Week for Drug Awareness in Lower School. Our Middle School’s LMS class and Upper School’s Personal Fitness class cover units on substance abuse and address overall health and healthy decision making. Ninth graders take an online course about substance abuse at the beginning of the school year and participate in follow-up discussions in their Biology classes. We periodically host special speakers and programs addressing the topic of healthy decision making and the dangers of substance abuse. Along with our new drug testing program, we have reexamined our entire continuum of substance abuse education. A committee worked last summer to strengthen drug and alcohol awareness instruction beginning in 6th grade through MS and US.

20. I am concerned that my child may be experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol, and I would like to be proactive. Where might I turn for help?

Our counselors are experienced professionals at advising and directing parents about many issues affecting our teens and pre-teens. We encourage parents to seek help either on our campus or from an outside professional. Your request for advisement will be held in confidence. The following link is a tremendous place for parents to start www.drugfree.org
21. Where can I get more information?

If you are interested in learning more about teen drug abuse and its dangers, the following websites may be helpful:


http://www.psychemedics.com/

www.drugfree.org