Ladies and gentlemen, As the Chair of Mentor Foundation I like to thank you for the opportunity to speak at this very important conference. It is extremely valuable to learn about the work of the Society for Prevention Research and to hear of the important research work and findings. The research about substance abuse prevention is still a young science where we are learning more about effective practices each year. Many organizations represented here today do outstanding work in prevention. I am very pleased that SPR high-lights that, international cooperation and a multi disciplinary approach, is crucial to promote effective prevention practice and to protect our youth from falling into drug abuse.
Mentor’s Mission

To prevent drug abuse through the promotion of health and well-being of children and young people in the world

The Mentor Foundation was established in Geneva, Switzerland 17 years ago by Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden and by representatives of WHO. Our focus has always been and remains to prevent drug abuse among children in the world and to promote healthy opportunities.

The Mentor Foundation is a unique international NGO formed to address the global need to prevent youth in the world from drug abuse. Mentor serves as a bridge between countries and national field organizations to identify and share good practices.
Mentor seeks to deliver and support promising and successful practice in the field of drug prevention. We work to spread this information to practitioners and policy makers. We also run international and national programs in many parts of the world. Our work is international, regional and national. Mentor consists of our International offices in the UK and we have our Mentor National organizations spread out in different countries. We have National organizations in Colombia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, UK and now here in the USA. We also have a regional organization, Mentor Arabia, that serves 22 Arab countries.

Mentor Foundation has implemented over 95 projects in more than 80 countries and has reached over 6 million children. Our approach is to locally adapt our prevention work in regions and countries. Therefore our programs and work differ in most countries we work in. In our field work, we provide a wide range of programs- from school based program for young children to youth mentoring programs as well as community programs.
Mentor’s contribution to prevention and education

- Experience
- Expertise
- International
- Partners and Collaborators

- Project Management
- Project Implementation
- Project Evaluation
- Training
- Resource Development and Support

In those countries where we don't have our own representation, we partner with local field organisations and offer access to our Scientific Advisory Network which comprises over 25 international experts working in the drug prevention field. We also collaborate closely with many partner organizations around the world such as UNODC, the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States as well as many leading agencies here in USA.
This map describes our presence in different parts of the world. As you can see we are active in many countries. The green dots identifies the locations of Mentor’s own chapters in different countries. The orange represents programs and projects that we have implemented. The blue identifies the locations of our Global Scientific Advisory Network. This network ensures sharing of best practice in prevention on a worldwide basis.
Let me bring you into a some of the countries where we have worked for many years. Let’s start with Mentor Colombia - It is very inspiring to see the major impact that Mentor has made for children ages 5 – 17 in Colombia. Our programs are part of the school curriculum in close to 400 schools involving over 150 000 children. The program is about social competences and creativity – to prevent drug abuse, violence and related problems. The teachers praise the program as being very effective and praise the positive change it has made for the children, the schools and for the communities since it was implemented. Mentor trains the teachers and give continuous supports to the schools in collaboration with the local municipalities.
In **Sweden and the Baltic** countries, the main focus is to work with corporate partners to provide mentors to vulnerable young people. These programs are very much appreciated by the students and the corporations. It is a true win-win concept.

We are excited to also now offer those programs in the United States. Our first pilot programs will be implemented in DC during this fall. Mentor USA, which opened its offices in DC last year will be a very important National organization for our work.
Mentor UK works with special Forums and Youth involvement projects in collaboration with the UK government. Special programs are offered in regional areas as well as for niche groups such as helping grandparents in their role as carers for children of drug abusing parents.
Mentor Arabia serves as a regional bridge among all Arab League countries for cooperation in policy development and program planning. Mentor Arabia is in the process of establishing a regional resource and prevention research center. They also support local field organizations and work with public opinion programs. As you are aware, the drug use in the region is escalating quickly.
Mentor Foundation’s work is multidimensional. In our efforts to reach out to children and youth we work through direct contact with their parents, teachers, schools, policy makers and global agencies. A holistic international approach to prevention is necessary.

Mentor encourages field organizations in the world to share their successful practice of prevention programs by giving out the International Mentor Award for Best Practice. This event is takes place every other year. Last fall in October 2010, the Awards took place here in DC with winners from Oregon and Massachusetts as well as from Mexico, Panama and South Africa. The Awards will be held again in DC during the late Spring 2012 - we hope you will assist in spreading the word to help us identify and celebrate achievements in prevention.
The international collaboration is crucial. We need to identify, support and share what is effective in drug prevention. We must try to discover what works best for different groups, with different needs and in different settings. We must then share that learning to all involved in the drug prevention community. Let me quote HM Queen Silvia: **We may never succeed in eliminating the problem of drug abuse but we can prevent many young people from the misery it can cause.**

I am going to hand over to my colleague Dr Ken Winters who I am sure is known to many of you. Ken has worked with us since Mentor was established and now works as the Chairman of Mentor’s Scientific Advisory Network.

I thank all of you for your attention and I hope that we, through international cooperation, will limit this serious problem and build a better future for our young generation.

Thank you