

## Environmental Strategies

### To Combat Underage Drinking on College Campuses and in Surrounding Communities

1

#### Background and Overview

Every campus, community, neighborhood and family should be concerned about alcohol use by young adults under 21 because it is associated with the three most common causes of deaths in young adults: accidental deaths, homicides and suicides. In addition, the U.S. Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that higher levels of alcohol use are associated with unplanned or unprotected sexual activity among young adults, posing increased risk for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. Alcohol use and higher levels of use among college students is associated with poor grades, absenteeism and higher dropout rates.

**Everyone can play a role in reducing the use of alcohol by individuals under 21 by using the following environmental strategies:**

- Limit the access of alcohol to youth.
- Create clear, consistent no-use messages on campus and in the surrounding community.
- Implement evidence-based programs and practices on your campus and in the surrounding community.
- Partner with state and local key stakeholders to address the issues related to underage drinking.

2

#### Environmental Strategies

Environmental Strategies are techniques that focus on changing campus and community conditions that condone alcohol and substance use among students. When environmental strategies are correctly applied they help to change the environment, which in turn, changes attitudes, social norms, and alcohol use behavior.

3

#### Policies & Enforcement

- Create clear rules regarding the sale, possession and use of alcohol on campus.
- Consistently enforce penalties for violating alcohol policies (often schools have good policies but they are not enforced).
- Create and enforce a restriction on industry marketing on campus (including campus media outlets like campus newspapers and radio stations).
- Limit the type and amount of pro-drinking messages that students see on campus and in association with campus events (e.g. advertisements for happy hours or drink specials at local bars).
- Restrict alcohol use at campus-sponsored events, including events that include faculty and staff.
- Include in your campus policy handbook the New York State law(s) addressing underage drinking and include a list of legal, social and academic consequences for violating those laws.
- Consider creating a campus policy that restricts or bans all alcohol in the residence halls and provide proper training to Resident Assistants, Campus Security, etc. to enforce the policy.

## Campus Community Coalition

4

**Create a campus-community coalition to target underage drinking. This coalition should include the following individuals or groups:**

- Business owners and members of the chamber of commerce
- Law enforcement
- Town supervisors
- Community treatment and prevention providers
- Local political officials
- Magistrates or judges
- Teachers and superintendents of school district
- Parents
- Community members at large
- College presidents and vice presidents
- College and high school students

**Create a cooperative agreement between your campus security and the local law enforcement agencies. This agreement might include the following activities:**

- Send a notification to the school when students are issued citations/arrests for underage drinking off campus.
- Create additional penalties carried out by the school (i.e. judicial meetings) if a student is cited off campus for underage drinking.
- Create educational materials for students over 21 on the legal consequences of providing alcohol to someone under the age of 21. Create a campus policy to that effect as well.
- Create a landlord/tenant coalition that addresses issues between students and potential landlords, including nuisance abatement statutes and the issues of underage drinking.
- Work together on “party patrols” to contain large parties and cite underage students for alcohol use.
- Work together on “sting operations” at the local bars, taverns and convenience stores that target underage students.

### Information compiled from the following resources:

Policies to Reduce Youth Access to Alcohol. Alcohol Epidemiology Program, University of Minnesota, Wagenaar

Principles of Substance Abuse Prevention: A Guide to Science Based Practices in Substance Abuse Prevention: Department of Health and Human Services

Strategies to Reduce Underage Alcohol Use: Typology and Brief Overview. OJJDP. Holder  
Regulatory Strategies for Preventing Youth Access to Alcohol: Best Practices. OJJDP. Holder

Enforcement: A Strategy of Prevention Practitioners. Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies

Improving the Larger Environment: Northeast Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies

Environmental Strategies to Prevent Alcohol Problems on College Campuses. OJJDP. Fischer

## Media

5

- Educate the campus and the community through mass media campaigns. Successful campaigns explicitly state the objectives, use appealing models and frequently present the message through a variety of media outlets over a long period of time. These media outlets may include television, radio, newspapers, posters, screensavers and podcasts.
- Use countermarketing/counteradvertising to disseminate information about the hazards of underage drinking or the industry that promotes it.
- Use marketing techniques developed through commercial advertising to promote a social marketing approach.
- Create social norm campaigns. These campaigns utilize the data collected from students on campus to establish positive attitudes, behaviors and expectations about alcohol use including strong no-use messages and strong intolerance of use by those under the age of 21.
- Build the skills of parents, community members and youth to analyze and evaluate messages presented in the media.

## Programming

6

- Utilize proven evidence-based prevention programs on campus. Evidence-based programs are supported by scientific research that proves their effectiveness.
- Collaborate with your local prevention provider on events occurring in the surrounding community.
- Require anyone who serves alcohol on campus (i.e. catering services) to participate in responsible beverage service trainings.
- Provide alcohol-free activities, especially during late night hours when drinking is most prevalent.
- Provide substance-free residences on your campus.
- Provide prevention and intervention programming that specifically targets high-risk groups: Greek organizations, student athletes, and first-year students.

# Prevention Overview

## Prevention

1

New York State's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) defines prevention as a proactive, evidence-based process that focuses on increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors that are associated with alcohol and drug abuse in individuals, families, and communities.

**The overarching goals of all OASAS supported prevention programs are to:**

- Prevent any alcohol and other drug use by youth under the age of 21.
- Prevent the use of any illegal drugs by all individuals.
- Delay the age of first use as long as possible, with particular emphasis on gateway drugs.

OASAS's approach to alcohol and substance abuse prevention and the conceptual framework that supports it has continuously evolved over time, and it is based on emerging national research findings and the state's experience in program development, implementation and evaluation.

Current research of prevention efforts is proving that effective substance abuse prevention includes evidence-based strategies for addressing risk and protective factors across multiple domains -- individual, family, community, and environment. In addition, these strategies must be implemented at appropriate levels of intensity and in appropriate settings such as schools, workplaces, homes and community venues.

**The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has developed the following effective strategies that contribute to comprehensive prevention programming:**

- **Information dissemination**  
Provide accurate, age appropriate alcohol and other drug information in a culturally sensitive manner.
- **Education**  
Promote social competencies and life skills, such as decision making, problem solving, communication, and resistance skills and stress management techniques.
- **Positive alternatives**  
Support activities that focus on fun rather than alcohol and other drug use.
- **Community and professional mobilization**  
Training in prevention techniques for those individuals and systems who have an impact on the behavior of others (parents, educators, employers, health care professionals, peers, public policy makers and religious leaders).
- **Early intervention**  
Identify individuals at highest risk as early as possible, with the provision of intervention services and linkages in an appropriate environment.
- **Social policy and environmental change**  
Influence the social policies and norms regarding alcohol and other drug use and abuse.

The Risk and Protection-Focused Prevention Framework that OASAS endorses, based on the work of J. David Hawkins et al, recognizes 20 specific research-based risks and 10 specific research-based protective factors that are present in four domains or broad areas of life -- Individual/Peer, Family, School, and Community. The most effective prevention programs incorporate strategies that address risk factors across more than one of these domains.

OASAS defines prevention as a process that not only addresses the reduction of risk factors, but also seeks to enhance or increase protective factors. Risk factors tell us what to focus on to reduce unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse. Protective factors are those characteristics and processes that have been shown by research to mediate the negative effects of exposure to risk factors by young people.

An important aspect of this framework is that risk factors do not all have to be addressed directly. In the case of an individual growing up with an alcoholic parent, it may be impossible to change the family domain risk factors. However, it may be possible to lessen the risk to the individual by helping him/her lead a healthy lifestyle even while living with a high-risk family through enhancing school bonding, creating opportunities for community involvement and offering recognition of accomplishments.

**Important things to remember when using this framework:**

- Young people face alcohol and substance abuse risk factors in several domains.
- Different risk factors are related to different periods of development.
- The more risk factors present, the greater the risk for alcohol and substance abuse. When many risk factors are present, multiple protective factors have a “buffering” effect on risk, reducing the likelihood of substance abuse.
- Risk and protective factors show consistency over time and across different races, cultures and classes.
- While focusing on the multiple risks that young people face, it is equally important to increase protective factors.
- Prevention programs that strengthen the individual’s protective factors by providing opportunities, skills and rewards and by developing consistent norms and standards for behavior across families, school, communities and peer groups are more likely to be effective.
- This framework represents a foundation that, if integrated into the structure and function of the community system, can potentially impact and prevent not only alcohol and substance abuse, but assist in preventing violence, teenage pregnancy, crime, absenteeism, school dropout, delinquency and other social problems.

## Risk Factors

2

### Community

- Availability of drugs
- Availability of firearms
- Community laws and norms favorable toward drug use, firearms and crime
- Media portrayals of violence
- Transitions and mobility

### Family

- Family history of the problem behavior
- Family management problems
- Family conflict
- Favorable parental attitudes and involvement in the problem behavior

### School

- Academic failure beginning in late elementary school
- Lack of commitment to school

### Peer and Individual

- Early and persistent anti-social behavior
- Rebelliousness
- Friends who engage in the problem behavior
- Gang involvement
- Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior
- Early initiation of the problem
- Constitutional factors

## Protective Factors

3

- Healthy beliefs and clear standards in families, schools, communities and peer groups
- Bonding, attachment and commitment to families, schools, communities and peer groups
- Providing opportunities, skills and recognition in families, schools, communities, and peer groups
- Nurturing individual characteristics

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES**

1450 Western Avenue • Albany, NY 12203-3526

[www.oasas.state.ny.us](http://www.oasas.state.ny.us) • [prevention@oasas.state.ny.us](mailto:prevention@oasas.state.ny.us)

If you or someone you know needs help call 1-800-522-5353