

Evidence-Based

As the science of substance abuse prevention evolves, so does our understanding of effective approaches to this work. State and Federal agencies involved in the development, study and/or funding of substance abuse prevention initiatives have, in recent years, been increasingly encouraging, and oftentimes requiring, the use of approaches that are “evidence-based”; that is to say, approaches that have been proven to be effective through scientific studies.

A number of these evidence-based approaches are referred to as “**Environmental Strategies.**” Throughout the country, these strategies are being implemented to effectively stop the access to, and consequently curtail the consumption of, alcohol or tobacco products by minors.

Environmental strategies are broken into four major categories:

1. Policy
2. Enforcement
3. Communication
4. Education



Additional Resources



Environmental Prevention Strategies: Putting Theory Into Practice: Training and Resource Guide, VHS122, June 1999, SAMHSA/CSAP

Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies
<http://captus.samhsa.gov/>

Higher Education Center for Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Prevention <http://www.edc.org/hec/>

Institute of Medicine of the National Academies
<http://www.iom.edu>

Nebraska Prevention
<http://www.nebraskaprevention.gov/index.htm>

Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation
<http://www.pire.org/>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association
<http://www.samhsa.gov/index.aspx>

Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center
<http://www.udetc.org>

University of Virginia Center for Alcohol & Substance Education
<http://www.virginia.edu/case/>

Central Massachusetts Center for Healthy Communities
<http://www.cmchc.org>

Environmental Strategies

for Substance Abuse Prevention



Brought to you by:



central massachusetts center for
healthycommunities

44 Front St., Suite 280
Worcester, MA 01608
508-438-0515 ? 800-820-0036
Fax 508-438-0516
www.cmchc.org
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Environmental Strategies



Environmental Strategies are the activities of a group or groups of individuals working together to change undesired behaviors in a community by changing specific physical, social, legal, and/or economic situations or “environments” that support them.

Environmental Strategies have the ability to reach entire populations, bringing about behavior changes among large numbers of people.

Changes in the legal, economic and social structures that affect substance use foster important shifts in both individual attitudes and community norms. These changes can have immediate effects on the availability of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Over time, this change in the system leads to fewer opportunities and inducements to use substances. And, unlike programs directed at individuals, policy changes don't depend on a high start-up budget or constant influx of dollars to keep them going.

In short, Environmental Strategies:

- Produce fast results in wide areas;
- Are cost-effective; and
- Are inherently sustainable.

Environmental Strategies to Prevent Substance Abuse

Effective **Policy** interventions change the availability of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs by controlling the marketing and supply of these substances.

Some examples of Policy Strategies include:

- Bans on cigarette vending machines
- Increased price and/or excise taxes
- Laws restricting advertising
- Minimum purchase ages
- Restricting the use of alcohol or tobacco products on school grounds and at school-sponsored events
- Zoning regulations to control the location, number and density of liquor establishments



Law **Enforcement** strategies create restrictions and penalties on the sale and use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Some examples of Enforcement Strategies:

- Compliance checks; “Sting” operations
- Strict regulations against selling alcohol or tobacco to minors
- Keg and/or party registration
- License revocation for driving under the influence
- Seizing the assets of individuals convicted of selling illicit drugs
- Sobriety checkpoints
- Social host liability law

Communication strategies must counter marketing and promotion messages that support or encourage the use of alcohol and tobacco.

Communication Strategies include:

- Media advocacy uses the mass media to advance a public policy message or initiative
- Social marketing uses the principles of commercial advertising in public service campaigns to make the message more effective
- Media literacy gives individuals the skills and knowledge to analyze and evaluate media messages critically and to become smart consumers

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Education to prevent substance abuse is also key. In order for policy and enforcement to be effective, the public must be informed of the policies they are expected to follow and the health and social implications of substance abuse.

Examples of Education Strategies include:

- Education, engagement of and support for community champions of underage AOD use
- Implementation of prevention curricula by schools and youth groups
- Merchant/Server education programs
- Server training programs
- Surgeon General's warning on cigarette and alcohol packaging