

Substance Use Disorder Prevention

Environmental Prevention Strategies

Environmental strategies seek to make change on the large scale of the community, impacting community norms, regulations, and access/availability of substances. These universal strategies can be implemented at the school, community or county level. While some prevention programs are directed towards specific individuals and are only able to reach a limited number of participants, environmental strategies work to improve the health and wellness of everyone in the environment or community.

The Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) is dedicated to supporting efforts that are grounded in science. To ensure publicly-funded services are effective, DBHR collaborates with researchers and prevention scientists at the University of Washington, Washington State University, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' Research and Data Analysis Division, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

DBHR maintains a searchable online database of effective programs and strategies, with the Oregon Health Authority, for general substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion programs, and environmental strategies. Examples of environmental strategies found in this database, the Excellence in Prevention Strategy List (http://www.TheAthenaForum.org/learning_library/ebp), include:

1. **Advertising restrictions:** Implementing policies that limit alcohol and other drug advertising.
2. **Changing hours and days of sale:** Changes in licensing that modify hours of service can have a significant effect on drinking and drinking-related problems.
3. **Changing conditions of availability:**
 - a. **Densities or concentrations of retail outlets:** The number of outlets may be restricted directly or indirectly through policies that make licenses more difficult to obtain (such as increasing the cost of a license).
 - b. **Drinking locations and alcohol possession:** Specifying locations where drinking cannot occur is a policy that has been implemented with laws against public drinking and/or public intoxication. This can include prohibiting drinking in parks, other recreational locations, or at the workplace.
 - c. **Restricting access to alcohol at social events:** This strategy involves restricting the flow of alcohol at parties and other events to reduce overall social availability of alcohol.
 - d. **Restrictions on price, promotions and alcohol discounts:** Regulation or restriction of "happy hours" and other price promotions of alcohol.
4. **Compliance checks:** Law enforcement checks whether a licensed establishment sells alcohol to those who are, or appear to be, underage.



5. **Economic interventions (increasing taxes):** Increasing excise taxes on alcohol to decrease consumption.
6. **License suspension/revocation:** Sanction of suspending or revoking a license for underage individuals who violate drinking or marijuana use laws.
7. **Social host ordinance:** A local ordinance that establishes either a civil or criminal offense for a person who provides alcohol to those under 21 years of age. This allows law enforcement to cite the individual who hosted the party or who owns or controls the property where parties occur.
8. **Social norms marketing:** Youth tend to overestimate their peers' use behaviors and attitudes toward substance use. Social Norms Marketing uses conventional marketing techniques to correct misperceptions of peer use and decrease negative behaviors.
9. **Zero-tolerance laws:** Imposes strict punishment for lower blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) limits for underage drinkers.



Promising Programs to Prevent Youth Marijuana Use

Promising programs are those based on statistical analyses or a well-established theory of change, and those that have shown potential for meeting “evidence-based” or “research-based” criteria. As part of DBHR’s implementation of Initiative 502, the following environmental strategies are identified as promising programs or practices to prevent youth marijuana use:

- Policy review and development
- Purchase surveys coupled with reward and reminder
- Restrictions at community events
- Social norms marketing



Social norms marketing messages from Okanogan County Community Coalition

More information about environmental strategies is available at www.TheAthenaForum.org/Best_Practices_Toolkit, including:

- Strategies for effective marketing campaigns, messaging and working with news media
- Environmental Strategy Implementation Fidelity Assessment Guide
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America’s (CADCA) The Coalition Impact: Environmental Prevention Strategies publication
- Guides for states and communities supporting environmental prevention
- CollegeAIM Alcohol Intervention Matrix

“Evidence exists that well-conceived and implemented policies at the local, state and national levels can reduce community level alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems.”

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program, Office of National Drug Control Policy, RFA 2015