

Recommended Reading



A guide for coalitions to identify alcohol-related environmental issues on campus and implement strategies for correction.

College Alcohol Risk Assessment Guide: Environmental Approaches to Prevention

Missouri Partners in Prevention is proud to be Missouri's higher education substance abuse prevention and mental health consortium. In order to see measurable change in the health, safety, and well-being on campus, campus prevention practitioners must employ evidence-based strategies and models. This series provides a brief synopsis of the publications, articles, and resource documents available to campuses to assist in their substance abuse prevention and mental health intervention efforts. These documents provide a great deal of technical assistance and support. Browse our recommended reading synopsis to learn more about these publications.

The College Alcohol Risk Assessment Guide: Environmental Approaches to Prevention is a 2009 publication from the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention designed to help prevention practitioners 'identify and modify risks that contribute to alcohol-related problems' on campuses.¹ The guide is comprised of 6 main sections (introduction, problem-oriented prevention, scanning, response, analysis, and response) along with appendices of exercises and resources.

Introduction

The introduction lays the foundation for implementing effective environmental prevention approaches. It focuses on the definition of prevention, alcohol prevention using a public health approach, and the research basis for this work. This section also discusses the 'prevention paradox' of

using environmental management strategies to mediate alcohol related harms among the majority of students (even though the majority use moderately) which results in overall benefits for the campus and community, but in fewer benefits for individuals. Other key takeaways are to identify the problems on campus using a needs assessment and highlighting that prevention is a shared responsibility between all members of the campus community.

Problem-Oriented Prevention

The next section focuses on targeting prevention activities to the specific negative consequences of alcohol use. This is done using SARA: scanning, analysis, response and assessment. Below is a brief summary of each.

Scanning (pages 10-13)

- Develop a campus profile

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- Gain preliminary information (through conversations, observations)
- Recruit allies

Analysis (pages 14-17)

- Identify information needs
- Collect information
- Define problems

Response (pages 18-31)

- Strategic planning and implementation

Assessment (pages 32-37)

- Collect information on changes in problem indicators
- Measure impact of responses
- Reassess priorities

Scanning

Scanning is the first step in the process to help fully understand the problems on campus and identify potential options for interventions. This involves gaining preliminary information by looking around campus at the impacts of alcohol, talking with students, faculty, and staff about what they see and experience, and simply counting the number of incidents involving alcohol. Scanning allows for identification of campus specific problems and high-risk drinking environments, relationship building through conversations, and an informed approach to prevention. Appendix A (pages 38-44) has resources to assist with scanning.

Analysis

Analysis is in-depth collection of data that allows for a more thorough understanding of the environmental impacts of the campus community on alcohol use and negative consequences. Tools for analysis can include campus surveys, quantifying alcohol related incidents, and more. It

is important when doing analysis to disaggregate problems by parsing out where, why, how, when, and to whom problems occur so that prevention efforts can be specifically targeted. Valid analysis can solidify the information gained from scanning, or provide new information that will redirect focus. Appendix B (pages 45-71) has helpful resources related to analysis.

Response

Once there is a fuller understanding of the risk factors and issues facing campus, an appropriate response plan can be developed. Before specific strategies are selected, it is crucial to gain campus involvement. A list of potential partners and ways to engage stakeholders are highlighted on pages 19-21, with focus on creating a task force or coalition to champion the work. In selecting which problems to focus on, the guide recommends first targeting those which can be immediately addressed and are doable and achievable. Some issues may be too large to tackle immediately, and this work takes time. Pages 23-31 provide a listing of common strategies to address the alcohol issues on campuses, including:

- Limiting access to alcohol
- Raising the price of alcohol
- Implement responsible beverage service training
- Provide sober leisure activities
- Use media and communication strategies (to educate, limit alcohol advertisement, clarify social norms, etc.)

It is key to recognize that no single strategy in isolation will prevent the problem, and that a variety of strategies are necessary to enact change. The guide does address that this work can be controversial and seen as ‘stirring the pot’, especially when strategies like raising the price of alcohol may be in conflict with the bar and restaurant community’s desire to keep prices

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low and attract more students. It is important to redirect focus from the controversy to the logic of prevention to communicate what the issues are and how the proposed strategy can help create a solution. A logic model is a good way to visually demonstrate this:



The Response Tool (R-1) on pages 72-73 assists in creating a logic model.

Assessment

Assessment is the final step in the process to determine if the strategies implemented had the desired outcomes. This may include revisiting the tools used during analysis or conducting process measures such as what was implemented and how. Assessment is an on-going process and should happen throughout implementation, as well as once strategies are complete. This section also

highlights including academics in the assessment process as well as students themselves in a variety of ways, outlined on pages 35-37.

Appendices

Finally, appendices are listed to provide additional activities and resources:

- A: Scanning Exercises, pages 38-44
- B: Analysis Exercises, pages 45-71
- C: Response Tool—R1, pages 72-73
- D: Selected Publications and Resources, pages 74-75

Read ‘College Alcohol Risk Assessment Guide: Environmental Approaches to Prevention’ here: files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED514315.pdf

Citations

1. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention, College Alcohol Assessment Guide: Environmental Approaches to Prevention, Washington, D.C., 2009.

Written by Margo Leitschuh, Communications Coordinator.
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