

# Evidence-Based Principles for Substance Abuse Prevention

OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

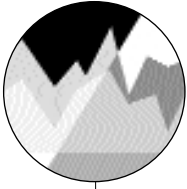
## PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The National Drug Control Strategy's Performance Measures of Effectiveness require the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to "develop and implement a set of research-based principles upon which prevention programming can be based." The following principles and guidelines were drawn from literature reviews and guidance supported by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. Some prevention interventions covered by these reviews have been tested in laboratory, clinical and community settings using the most rigorous research methods. Additional interventions have been studied with techniques that meet other recognized standards. The principles and guidelines presented here are broadly supported by a growing body of research.

## ONDCP EVIDENCE-BASED PRINCIPLES FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

### Address Appropriate Risk and Protective Factors for Substance Abuse in a Defined Population

- **Define a population.** A population can be defined by age, sex, race, geography (neighborhood, town, or region) and institution (school or workplace).
- **Assess levels of risk, protection, and substance abuse for that population.** Risk factors increase the risk of substance abuse and protective factors inhibit substance abuse in the presence of risk. Risk and protective factors can be grouped in domains for research purposes (genetic, biological, social, psychological, contextual, economic and cultural) and characterized as to their relevance to individuals, the family, peer, school, workplace and community. Substance abuse can involve marijuana, cocaine, heroin, inhalants, methamphetamine, alcohol and tobacco (especially among youth) as well as sequences, substitutions and combinations of those and other psycho-active substances.
- **Focus on all levels of risk, with special attention to those exposed to high risk and low protection.** Prevention programs and policies should focus on all levels of risk, but special attention must be given to the most important risk



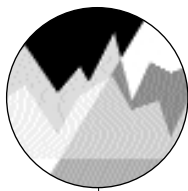
factors, protective factors, psychoactive substances, individuals and groups exposed to high risk and low protection in a defined population. Population assessment can help sharpen the focus of prevention.

### Use Approaches That Have Been Shown to Be Effective

- **Reduce the availability of illicit drugs and of alcohol and tobacco for the under-aged.** Community-wide laws, policies and programs can reduce the availability and marketing of illicit drugs. They can also reduce the availability and appeal of alcohol and tobacco to the under-aged.
- **Strengthen anti-drug-use attitudes and norms.** Strengthen environmental support for anti-drug-use attitudes by sharing accurate information about substance-abuse, encouraging drug-free activities and enforcing laws, and policies related to illicit substances.
- **Strengthen life skills and drug refusal techniques.** Teach life skills and drug refusal skills, using interactive techniques that focus on critical thinking, communication and social competency.
- **Reduce risk and enhance protection in families.** Strengthen family skills by setting rules, clarifying expectations, monitoring behavior, communicating regularly, providing social support and modeling positive behaviors.
- **Strengthen social bonding.** Strengthen social bonding and caring relationships with people holding strong standards against substance abuse in families, schools, peer groups, mentoring programs, religious and spiritual contexts and structured recreational activities.
- **Ensure that interventions are appropriate for the populations being addressed.** Make sure that prevention interventions, including programs and policies, are acceptable to and appropriate for the needs and motivations of the populations and cultures being addressed.

### Intervene Early at Important Stages and Transitions

- **Intervene early and at developmental stages and life transitions that predict later substance abuse.** Such developmental stages and life transitions can involve biological, psychological, or social circumstances that can increase the risk of substance abuse. Whether the stages or transitions are expected (such as puberty, adolescence, or graduation from school) or unexpected (for example the sudden death of a loved one), they should be addressed by



preventive interventions as soon as possible—even before each stage or transition, whenever feasible.

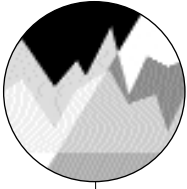
- **Reinforce interventions over time.** Repeated exposure to scientifically accurate and age-appropriate anti-drug-use messages and other interventions—especially in later developmental stages and life transitions that may increase the risk of substance abuse—can ensure that skills, norms, expectations and behaviors learned earlier are reinforced over time.

### **Intervene in Appropriate Settings and Domains**

- **Intervene in appropriate settings and domains.** Intervene in settings and domains that most affect risk and protection for substance abuse, including homes, social services, schools, peer groups, workplaces, recreational settings, religious and spiritual settings, and communities.

### **Manage Programs Effectively**

- **Ensure consistency and coverage of programs and policies.** Implementation of prevention programs, policies, and messages for different parts of the community should be consistent, compatible and appropriate.
- **Train staff and volunteers.** To ensure that prevention programs and messages are continually delivered as intended, training should be provided regularly to staff and volunteers.
- **Monitor and evaluate programs.** To verify that goals and objectives are being achieved, program monitoring and evaluation should be a regular part of program implementation. When goals are not reached, adjustments should be made to increase effectiveness.



## REFERENCE GUIDE TO PRINCIPLES OF PREVENTION

### **National Drug Control Strategy and Performance Measures**

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/policy/ndcs.html>

ONDCP

National Drug Clearinghouse

1-800-666-3332

Goal 1, Objectives 8 and 9

### **Principles of U.S. Demand Reduction Effort**

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugabuse/2d.html>

ONDCP

National Drug Clearinghouse:

1-800-666-3332

### **Prevention Principles for Adolescents and Children**

<http://www.health.org/pubs/prev/PREVOPEN.html>

NIDA

NCADI

1-800-729-6686

### **Principles of Effectiveness for Safe and Drug Free Schools**

Final SDFSCA Principles of Effectiveness

<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/announcements/1998-2/060198c.pdf>

Non-Regulatory Guidance on SDFSCA Principles

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/nrgfin.pdf>

Dept of Education

1-877-4-ED-PUBS

### **Science-Based Substance Abuse Prevention**

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/prevent/progeval.html>

HHS

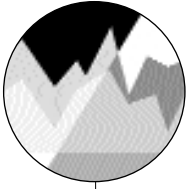
Posted on ONDCP website: prevention

### **Science-Based Practices in Substance Abuse Prevention**

<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/prevent/progeval.html>

CSAP

Posted on ONDCP website: prevention



**Prevention Enhancement Protocols (PEPS)**

<http://www.health.org:80/pepspractitioners/>  
<http://www.health.org:80/pepscommunity/>  
<http://www.health.org:80/pubs/pepsfamily/index.htm>

CSAP

NCADI

1-800-729-6686

Practitioners, Community, and Family

**Blueprints for Violence Prevention**

<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/index.html>

OJJDP

Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse

1-800-638-8736

**Meta-Analysis of Drug Abuse Prevention**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/pdf/monographs/monograph170/download170.html>

NIDA

NCADI

1-800-729-6686

**Cost-Benefit/Cost-Effectiveness Research**

<http://www.nida.nih.gov/pdf/monographs/monograph176/download176.html>

NIDA

NCADI

1-800-729-6686

**Principles of Prevention as Applied to Alcohol-Related Problems**

Request from author

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