



## Bridging the Gap

### NATIONAL PREVENTION NETWORK

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The single state/jurisdiction agencies responsible for administering substance abuse programs in our nation are in a unique policy and program position to help "bridge the gap" between research and practice.

The private and public research in the alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention field has grown tremendously in the past two decades. The investment in prevention research has allowed our systems to better identify which individuals and communities are at greatest risk for substance abuse problems, which strategies are likely to produce the best outcomes and which tools can be used to measure the impact of the prevention strategy.

This research has been of great value to National Prevention Network (NPN)/ National Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) members who develop the policy and program guidelines for publicly funded prevention services. Through the support of our federal and private research partners, states and jurisdictions have made great strides in our efforts to "bridge the gap" by negotiating new program and policy guidelines with our local provider networks. We are beginning to see more states and jurisdictions require research-based services be delivered as part of their provider plans. A good amount of effort is also being placed on balancing environmental strategies with strategies that target individuals or small groups.

#### NEXT STEPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The efforts to permanently "bridge the gap" between research and practice faces many challenges. Two of those challenges are of primary concern to states and jurisdictions.

- **Resources:** It is imperative that public and private research investments continue in the substance abuse prevention field. We need to continue to investigate what is placing our children at risk and what protects them. Although we have evidence that specific strategies work, we need to know a lot more about which strategies work best for specific populations and under what conditions. It is also important that we develop the resources to ensure service capacity in all communities.



- **Replication, Adaptation, and Innovation:** Program fidelity has become a growing concern of researchers, administrators and providers. As the field begins to identify research-based strategies that are effective, specific research-based programs emerge as effective models. These programs, in many situations, are not being replicated due to the fact they are too expensive, too training intensive, or too time consuming at the local level. The challenge for our field is to identify when replication is essential, when adaptation is acceptable to ensure local utilization, and when innovation is reasonable using science-based prevention principles.
- **Institute of Medicine – Universal, Selected, and Indicated:** States and jurisdictions are responsible for the continuum of substance abuse and addiction services. We need to understand and develop the appropriate policies and programs that support children who are not using, intervene early with those that are using, provide treatment to those who are dependent and support their recovery. Although the strategies for prevention, intervention, treatment and aftercare support are different, it is important that researchers, administrators and providers understand each strategy and how they can work together at the community level.

## EVENTS

The NPN/NASADAD sponsors an Annual Prevention Research Conference. The 2001 Conference will be hosted by North Carolina and the Southeast Regional States and Jurisdictions. This will be the 14th annual conference and is designed to bring together the prevention researchers, administrators and providers to help "bridge the gap" between research and practice.