

CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL PREVENTION IN ACTION

The environmental strategies approach recognizes that risks associated with substance use are, in part, a function of the interplay between the environments where an individual uses and the substances he/she uses (agent). In the environmental approach, place matters. We recognize that managing the availability of alcohol and other drugs in specific environments impacts the substances individuals choose and the amount they use. These decisions determine the level of risk individuals and communities experience. The ability to shape an individual's behavior by structuring what is expected or permitted in specific environments can reduce alcohol- and other drug-related problems.

The Seven Strategies for Community Change: A Brief Explanation

Seven methods that can bring about community change have been adopted as a useful framework by CADCA's Institute. Each of these strategies represents a key element to build and maintain a healthy community. In the planning process, utilize all seven strategies to be as comprehensive as possible to achieve population-level change. When focusing on implementation of environmental strategies, consider the types of information, skill-building and support activities necessary to move your interventions forward. You will see that the strategies overlap and reinforce each other.

Seven Strategies to Affect Community Change

1. **Provide information**—Educational presentations, workshops or seminars, and data or media presentations (e.g., public service announcements, brochures, billboard campaigns, community meetings, town halls, forums, Web-based communication).
2. **Enhance skills**—Workshops, seminars or activities designed to increase the skills of participants, members and staff (e.g., training, technical assistance, distance learning, strategic planning retreats, parenting classes, model programs in schools).
3. **Provide support**—Creating opportunities to support people to participate in activities that reduce risk or enhance protection (e.g., providing alternative activities, mentoring, referrals for services, support groups, youth clubs, parenting groups, Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous).
4. **Enhance access/reduce barriers****—Improving systems and processes to increase the ease, ability and opportunity to utilize systems and services (e.g., access to treatment, childcare, transportation, housing, education, special needs, cultural and language sensitivity).
5. **Change consequences (incentives/disincentives)**—Increasing or decreasing the probability of a specific behavior that reduces risk or enhances protection by altering the consequences for performing that behavior (e.g., increasing public recognition for deserved behavior, individual and business rewards, taxes, citations, fines, revocations/loss of privileges).
6. **Change physical design**—Changing the physical design or structure of the environment to reduce risk or enhance protection (e.g., parks, landscapes, signage, lighting, outlet density).
7. **Modify/change policies**—Formal change in written procedures, by-laws, proclamations, rules or laws with written documentation and/or voting procedures (e.g., workplace initiatives, law enforcement procedures and practices, public policy actions, systems change within government, communities and organizations).

** **Note:** This strategy also can be utilized when it is turned around to **reducing access/enhancing barriers**. When community coalitions establish barriers to underage drinking or other illegal drug use, they decrease its accessibility. Prevention science tells us that when more resources (money, time, etc.) are required to obtain illegal substances, use declines. When many states began to mandate the placement of pseudoephedrine-based products behind the pharmacy counter, communities experienced a significant decrease in local clandestine methamphetamine labs. Barriers were put into place that led to a decrease in the accessibility of the precursor materials for meth production.

The list of strategies were distilled by the University of Kansas Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development—a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. Research cited in selection of the strategies is documented on the Environmental Strategies page of the Institute's Web site, www.coalitioninstitute.org. The Institute uses this list by permission of the University.