

Health Promotion and Prevention Theories and Models

Current Thinking on Alcohol Abuse Prevention

Reviewing the data on alcohol use and college students is a good reminder that most students are making healthy choices and choosing not to drink or to drink at lower-risk levels. Most students are not driving after drinking and are using proactive and protective strategies to decrease their risk of negative consequences while drinking. The data also reveal that a portion of the student body engages in high risk drinking and places themselves and others at risk for struggling academics, poor health, injury, and even death.

This section will build upon the data in the previous chapter to discuss the variety of strategies campuses should be undertaking to proactively and comprehensively address alcohol abuse within their student population and campus community. The strategies outlined will assist peer education groups to address the different populations on campus to reinforce lower-risk options (from abstaining to lower-risk drinking), to build upon prevention with intervention strategies such as screening and brief intervention, and to support a healthy campus community with policy and enforcement work. The more comprehensive a campus' approach to prevention, the greater likelihood the campus will see decreases in alcohol abuse and related behaviors.

NIAAA Call to Action

In 2002, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) released a report titled *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*. A task force comprised of college presidents, alcohol researchers, and students developed this report by seeking out the current trends in alcohol use in higher education and analyzing the resources currently combating alcohol abuse on college and university campuses. This report focused on three main issues:

1. Summarizing the scope of the problem
2. The effectiveness of programs used by schools and communities
3. A summary of recommendations designed to improve prevention efforts

One of the outcomes of the Call to Action was the creation of the website www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov. This website includes the entire report and is separated into action plans for the following constituents:

- College Presidents
- College Parents
- College Students
- High School Administrators
- High School Parents and Students

What follows are some of the highlights from the NIAAA report. As the "Home for Peer Education", The BACCHUS Network™ is quite proud of the fact that the NIAAA Task Force singles out peer educators as a proactive force in fighting alcohol abuse. In their publication titled "What Peer Educators and Resident Advisors (RAs) Need to Know About College Drinking", they list the following reasons why it is important to reach out to peer educators:

- Peer educators are trusted by classmates to provide reliable answers and accurate information, regardless of health topic.
- Peer educators have hands-on knowledge that enables them to interpret the NIAAA report from a different perspective.
- Peer educators are a very important link between the administration and student body.
- Peer educators can assist college presidents in reducing underage and excessive drinking.
- Peer educators' input can make college alcohol abuse prevention programs more successful.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

To change the culture of drinking on campus, the NIAAA Task Force recommends that all colleges and universities adopt the following 3-in-1 Overarching Framework approach for program development. In addition, program planners should select appropriate strategies from among those presented in the report to tailor events to the special needs of their campus.

The 3-in-1 Overarching Framework

The research strongly supports the use of comprehensive, integrated programs with multiple complementary components that target:

- Individuals, including at-risk or alcohol-dependent drinkers
- Student population as a whole
- College and surrounding community

The 3-in-1 Framework presented here focuses on each of the three primary audiences. The NIAAA Task Force members agree that the framework is a useful introduction to encourage presidents, administrators, college prevention specialists, students, and community members to think in a broad and comprehensive fashion about college drinking. It is designed to encourage consideration of multiple audiences on and off campus. The Task Force offers the 3-in-1 Framework as a starting point to develop effective and science-based prevention efforts.

The brief descriptions that follow provide the rationale for emphasizing these three targets in prevention programs and identify prevention strategies that address each group.

Individuals, Including At-Risk or Alcohol-Dependent Drinkers

The risk for alcohol problems exists along a continuum. Targeting only students with identified drinking problems misses those who drink heavily or misuse alcohol occasionally (e.g. those who drink and drive from time to time). In fact, non-dependent, high-risk drinkers account for the majority of alcohol-related problems. It is crucial to support strategies that assist individual students identified as problem, at-risk, or alcohol-dependent drinkers.

Strategies are clearly needed to engage these students as early as possible in appropriate screening and intervention services, whether provided on campus or through referral to specialized community based services. One important effort to increase on-campus screening is National Alcohol Screening Day, an event that takes place in April each year. This program, supported by the NIAAA and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), provides free, anonymous testing and health information at a growing number of colleges and universities.

Student Population as a Whole

The key to affecting the behavior of the general student population is to address the factors that encourage high-risk drinking. They include:

- Widespread availability of alcohol beverages to underage and intoxicated students
- Aggressive social and commercial promotions of alcohol
- Large amounts of unstructured student time
- Inconsistent publicity and enforcement of laws and campus policies
- Student perceptions of heavy alcohol use as the norm

Specific strategies useful in addressing these problem areas tend to vary by school. Examples of some of the most promising strategies appear in the "Recommended Strategies" section of the report (www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/NIAAACollegeMaterials/TaskForce/CallToAction_02.aspx).

College and the Surrounding Community

Mutually reinforcing interventions between the college and surrounding community can change the broader environment and help reduce alcohol abuse and alcohol-related problems over the long term. When college drinking is reframed as a community as well as a college problem, campus and community leaders are more likely to come together to address it comprehensively. The joint activities that typically result help produce policy and enforcement reforms that, in turn, affect the total drinking environment. Campus and community alliances also improve relationships overall and enable key groups such as student affairs offices, residence life directors, local police, retail alcohol outlets, and the court system to work cooperatively in resolving issues involving alcohol.

Multivariate Perspective

What does a multivariate perspective mean? Alcohol research clearly indicates that multiple factors interact to produce various drinking patterns. Factors include:

- Students' genetic/biological characteristics
- Family and cultural backgrounds and environments
- Previous drinking experiences in high school
- Environment of the college in which they are enrolled

Even within one college, patterns may be influenced by students' participation in fraternities, sororities, sports teams, or other social groups. Research now has the capacity to bring this enlarged perspective to the problem of college drinking and to test models that take into account many of these factors.

Note: Parenthetical references from the original document have been omitted for readability. A complete reference page appears at the end of the report located at collegedrinkingprevention.gov

NIAAA 4 Tiers of Prevention Programs

The evidence supporting the substance abuse prevention strategies in the literature varies widely. These differences do not always mean that one strategy is intrinsically better than another. They may reflect the fact that some strategies have not been as thoroughly studied as others or have not been evaluated for application to college drinkers. To provide a useful list that accounts for a wide range of activities the NIAAA placed prevention strategies in descending tiers on the basis of the evidence available.

Tier 1: Effective Among College Students

- Combine cognitive-behavioral skills with norms clarification and motivation enhancement interventions
- Offer brief motivational enhancement interventions in student health centers and emergency rooms
- Challenge alcohol expectancies

Tier 2: Effective with General Population

- Increase enforcement of minimum drinking age laws
- Effectively implement and increase publicity and enforcement of other laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving
- Restrictions on alcohol retail density
- Increased price and excise taxes on alcohol beverages
- Responsible beverage service policies in social and commercial settings
- Form a campus-community coalition

Tier 3: Promising

- Adopt campus-based policies to reduce high-risk use (e.g., reinstate Friday classes, eliminate keg parties, establish alcohol-free activities in residence halls)
- Increase enforcement at campus-based events that promote high-risk drinking
- Increase publicity about enforcement of underage drinking laws and eliminate mixed messages
- Consistently enforce campus disciplinary actions associated with policy violations
- Conduct marketing campaign to correct student misperceptions about alcohol use on campus

- Provide “safe ride” programs
- Regulate happy hours and sales
- Enhance awareness of personal liability
- Inform new students and parents about alcohol policies and penalties

Tier 4: Ineffective or Lacking Evidence

- Informational, knowledge-based, or values clarification interventions *when used alone**

**The phrase “when used alone” is the most important part of this statement and is often overlooked or neglected in presentations about the Four Tiers. BACCHUS supports campuses in establishing comprehensive approaches in prevention efforts.*

NIAAA 2007 Update: What Colleges Need to Know Now

In November 2007, the NIAAA released an update to their 2002 Call to Action, titled What Colleges Need to Know Now: An Update on College Drinking Research. As discussed in this manual, the NIAAA originally outlined four tiers of strategies to prevent alcohol abuse within the college population, based on scientific research. The 2002 report also emphasized the 3-in-1 Framework. The 2007 update begins to report on progress and emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the campus and its surrounding communities. A few highlights are included here.

- In a study examining the effect of either an in-person brief motivational intervention (MI) or an alcohol education session for students mandated for prevention (i.e., policy violators), both groups showed decreases in high-risk drinking. However, those students who participated in the brief MI reported fewer alcohol-related problems.
- Students most in need of a prevention intervention appear to be least likely to seek out this assistance. Using arenas students may frequent for other reasons, such as a health or counseling center, and using trained student peers to help implement the intervention is receiving support in the research.
- As called for in the 2002 report, additional research is being conducted on the outcomes of campus-community coalitions. One study documented a “considerable drop” in student reports of driving after drinking, following a social marketing campaign, high media coverage, and strong enforcement efforts (i.e., DUI checkpoints).
- Research continues to support that the best campus prevention programs integrate multiple approaches.

To download a copy of the NIAAA’s 2007 update, visit collegedrinkingprevention.gov