

Substance Abuse Prevention 101

Substance abuse prevention can take many forms, including...

- School-based drug & alcohol education programs
- Intensive programs and interventions for "at-risk" children and youth
- Recreational & athletic programs
- Art and music programs
- Mentoring
- Faith-based programs and youth groups
- Alternative events, such as alcohol-free parties and dances
- Tutoring and academic support
- Media and advertising campaigns
- Parent education

When it comes to substance abuse prevention, the possibilities are endless. Even getting to know all the children on your street by name could be a substance abuse prevention effort if it helps create a more caring neighborhood environment for children. Any kind of program or activity that results in the reduction of the use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) can, in the broadest definition of the word, be considered "prevention."

In recent years, substance abuse prevention research has focused on developing evidence-based programming. **Evidence-based** programs rely on theories and program outcomes that have been developed using social science research techniques. Evidenced-based programs are also called **research-based** or **science-based**. One evidence-based approach to substance abuse prevention is the **Risk & Protective Factors approach**, which is based on the research of J. David Hawkins, Ph.D., Richard F. Catalano, Ph.D. and a team of researchers from the University of Washington. The Risk & Protective Factors approach is based on a simple premise: *To prevent a problem from happening, we need to identify the factors that increase the risk of that problem developing and then find ways to reduce the risk. At the same time, we must also identify those factors that buffer individuals from the risk factors present in their environments and then find ways to increase the protection.*

Other approaches to prevention include: The **40 Developmental Assets approach**, based upon the research of the Search Institute; **America's Promise**, based upon the work of Secretary of State General Colin Powell and his wife; The **Resiliency Approach**, based upon the research of Emmy Werner and others; and **The Social Development Strategy**.