Prevention of Substance Abuse in the Schools

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Introductions
Presenters
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Outcome Goals for Session
• Discuss effective components of addiction prevention programs, such as involving major stakeholders and covered topics.
• Discuss various formats of program delivery system.
• Describe relevant prevention programs utilized in Northern Virginia.
• Address strategies for adapting programs to meet local needs.
Overview

• Substance abuse is the top national problem in the United States, as it leads to enormous psychological pain for those addicted and their families and economic loss in our society (Sales, 2004; Tolan, Szapocznik, & Sambrano, 2007).

• Every dollar of prevention saves four dollars of treatment and counseling (UNODC, 2009).

• The economic savings are seven dollars when considering decreased crime, unemployment, loss of productivity, and healthcare costs (World Health Organization, 2009).

Why prevention?

• Substance abuse is the top national problem in the United States, as it leads to enormous psychological pain for those addicted and their families and economic loss in our society (Sales, 2004; Tolan, Szapocznik, & Sambrano, 2007).

• In 2003, adults (age 21 and up) reported the age in which they began drinking alcohol: before age 12 (4%); between ages 12-14 (14%); and between ages 15-17 (33%) (SAMHSA, 2004).

Why prevention?

• Of the 14 million adults (age 21+) who were classified as having alcohol dependence or abuse, 95% had begun drinking prior to the legal age of 21 (SAMHSA, 2004).

• In SAMHSA’s 2003 National Survey on Drug Use & Health, people who stated that they began drinking prior to age 15 were over 5 times more likely to report alcohol dependence or abuse than those who began drinking alcohol at age 21 or older (16% vs. 3%) (SAMHSA, 2004).
Prevention in the Schools

• According to ASCA (2004), School Counselors should be an integral part of the substance abuse prevention/intervention process in the schools.

• Through prevention, students can learn and understand:
  • decision-making and problem-solving skills
  • consequences to actions
  • coping with peer-pressure
  • making safe and healthy choices
  • the emotional and physical dangers of substance abuse

Prevention in the Schools

• Substance abuse prevention programs can impact child well-being and school achievement.

  School counselors are vital in providing preventative services as children will most likely approach teachers and school counselors about substance abuse concerns with themselves or their families (Schmidt, 1994).

Prevention in the Schools

• Programs selected should be able to meet the needs of a particular student body, including developmental level, cultural diversity, and social class (Sales, 2004).

• Special attention needs to be taken for children with a mental health diagnoses or family history of substance abuse.
Prevention Programs Focus
(Sales, 2004)

Suggested Prevention Topics
• Problem-solving and decision-making skills
• Communication skills
• Social skills and impulse control
• Study skills and time management
• How to make friends
• How to manage emergencies
• How to avoid or report abuse
• How to prepare for intimate relationships
• How to prevent pregnancy
• How to avoid drug abuse and resist peer and media pressure to engage in behavior that has negative consequences

Formats of program delivery system

• Three major components:
  - School curriculum
  - Personal growth
  - Anti-drug extracurricular activities

• Many ways to deliver preventive programs:
  - Individual students
  - Individual classrooms
  - School-wide with support from teachers, students, and parents
  - In the community

Individual Students Prevention Approaches Used in Northern Virginia

• With at-risk students violating tobacco, alcohol, or other drug regulations stated in the Student Rights and Responsibility handbook:
  - Focus is on impact of substance use on academic, physical, and emotional development

• Collaboration with other mental health professionals, such as professional counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and psychiatrists within the school and in the community
Individual Students Prevention Approaches Used in Northern Virginia

- Schools have Substance Abuse Prevention Program Specialists (SAP). They present during health/physical education classes as well as provide more intense counseling services in conjunction with Community Services Board.

- REAL: Raising Education, Achievement, and Leadership
  - Run by Loudoun Community Services Board (LCSB), partner with Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS)
  - Prevention/Intervention services
    - Substance abuse prevention
    - Violence prevention
    - Gang prevention
  - Targeted Population
    - High-risk youth, 6-18 years-old
  - Comprehensive & Continuous Program
    - Interventions during:
      - School day, After school programs, Summer programs
      - Continues from one school year to next

- COA (children of addicts/alcoholics) (by LCSB)
  - Circle of Hope curriculum aims to validate children’s feelings, uncover their defenses, promote sharing feelings, learn coping and self-care skills, and focus on family strengths.
  - Substance Abuse Recovery Groups
  - Concerned Others Groups
  - Life Skills Groups
  - Anger Management Groups
  - Drug Education Groups
Individual Classrooms Prevention Approaches Used in Northern Virginia

- The Four-Fold Prevention Curriculum (Coker, 2001)
  - Classroom discussions on drugs and substances
- Family Life Education
- Health Curriculum
- School Counseling Curriculum
  - Drug education
  - Refusal and life skills
  - Personal responsibility
  - Decision making skills
- Al's Pals Kids Making Healthy Choices
  - Pre-school aged children: resilience based and has a teacher training component

School-Wide Prevention Approaches Used in Northern Virginia

- These programs may be implemented across grade levels or target specific grades, as well as be county-wide or building specific
- Programs are implemented by school counselors in collaboration with Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug (ATOD) specialists, SAPs, school personnel, parents, and community
- Fostering a positive school climate and opening the lines of communication are the most beneficial (Coker, 2001)

School-Wide Prevention Approaches Used in Northern Virginia

- Workshops for parents and families provide education about current trends in substance use, the impact on physical development, and some of the paraphernalia is used with substance use
- For example, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and Fairfax County Prevention Office informed parents and community about the results of the Fairfax County Youth Survey Report
Prevention Programs and Activities

- Red Ribbon Week in October (all ages)
- Alcohol Awareness month observed in April (all ages)
- Prom Promise (high schools)
- D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) (elementary schools)
- Drug-free clubs: SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions)
- Second Step
- Too Good for Drugs
- Guiding Good Choices (Program for parents of 6th-8th graders)

Other Preventive Approaches

- Community Prevention Approaches
  - Unified Prevention Coalition (2009) sponsors programs using prevention strategies involving business, consumers, and youth to promote anti-alcohol messages
  - http://unifiedpreventioncoalition.org/

Other Preventive Approaches

- School-Community Collaboration
  - Comprehensive school-wide substance abuse prevention programs are most successful when they incorporate the entire school, staff, members of the community, and parents/families
  - A comprehensive program also includes building a student’s self-esteem, and teaching decision-making and refusal skills
    - (Coker, 2001; McLaughlin & Vacha, 1993; E.g. The Four-Fold Prevention program)
Other Preventive Approaches

- School-Community Collaboration
  - The school counselor can encourage and arrange student participation in community events and organizations (such as The Boys and Girls Club, Scouting, religious organizations, and athletics) (Coker, 2001).

Practical Suggestions to Revamp Your Prevention Program

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify specific concerns for your school and community.
- Find out what is already available in your county
  - Search for existing programs: could they meet your needs?
- Most importantly, involve major stakeholders to foster program success:
  - Teachers, administrators, school counselors, school staff, parents, and community members (Sales, 2004).

Practical Suggestions to Revamp Your Prevention Program

- Conduct teacher/staff/community in-service training for all involved with program delivery.
- Be aware of any ethical considerations for selecting programs, solicitation of participants, marketing, and implementation.
- Consult other school counselors as you go through the process.
Questions

Resources

- Safe and Drug Free Schools in Virginia: www.safeanddrugfreeva.org/

Resources

- American Council for Drug Education: www.acde.org/
- Governor’s Office for Substance Abuse Prevention: www.gosap.state.va.us
- Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) – Evidenced Based Programs: http://captus.samhsa.gov/national/resources/evidence_based.cfm
Resources

• SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Prevention:
  http://prevention.samhsa.gov/
• SAMHSA Model Programs – Effective Substance Abuse and Mental Health Programs for Every Community:
  http://modelprograms.samhsa.gov/
• National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI):
  www.ncadi.samhsa.org
• Red Ribbon Works:
  www.redribbonworks.org

Resources

• PRIDE (Parent Resources and Information on Drug Education)–Youth Programs:
  www.prideyouthprograms.org
• Global Initiative of primary prevention of substance abuse:
  http://www.unodc.org/globalinitiative/index.html
• Fairfax County Prevention Services and Youth Survey Data:
  http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/youthpdf.htm
• Unified Prevention Coalition:
  http://www.unifiedpreventioncoalition.org/

References

• American School Counselor Association (2004). The Role of the Professional School Counselor.
  http://www.schoolcounselor.org/content.asp?pl=325&sr=133&contentid=240
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