

Environmental Prevention for Alcohol, Tobacco, and Illicit Drugs

Environmental Prevention

Environmental prevention strategies for alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs change the context or environment in which substance use occurs.

Environmental prevention is grounded in a public health model that shows individual behaviors are influenced not only by characteristics of the individual but also by relationships with peers, family, and friends, by community factors, such as community attitudes, schools, and workplaces, and by societal factors, such as media, social and cultural norms, and policies.¹

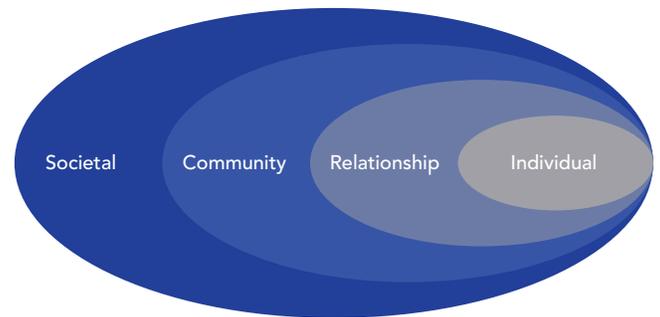


Image retrieved from CDC, The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention. www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html

Five Components of Environmental Prevention:

The components of environmental prevention listed below are adapted from environmental strategies described by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in *Changing the Larger Environment, 1999*. Comprehensive environmental prevention strategies often target all of the components in order to achieve prevention goals.

Component	Individual Change	Environmental Change
Policy	Policies set standards for a community. Policies at all levels -- school and workplace policies, city, county, state, and federal laws – make an impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum purchase age laws • Alcohol excise taxes • Zero tolerance laws • Smoke-free workplaces policies • campus alcohol policies • social host ordinances • local ordinances on community festivals, etc.
Enforcement	Laws are most effective when enforced. Increasing enforcement of certain laws can reduce problems while also shifting community norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled party dispersal training • Compliance checks • Sobriety checkpoints
Education	The public must be informed about the magnitude of the problem as well as related policies, laws, and prevention strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Server-seller training • Parent education on social hosting laws and consequences • Town hall meetings
Communication	Public perceptions about the problem play a significant role in prevention. Communication strategies help to educate and change perceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social marketing • Media advocacy • Mass media campaigns
Collaboration	Groups of people working together can have a greater impact than individuals working independently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy groups and coalitions collaborating with law enforcement, parents, clinicians, business owners, educators, youth, etc.

Individual Change vs. Environmental Change

Environmental prevention differs from individual prevention strategies in that individual strategies focus on changing an individual's behaviors whereas environmental prevention focuses on changing policy, laws, norms, and attitudes. An example of the differences between individual and environmental change are shown below.

	Individual Change	Environmental Change
FOCUS	An individual's behavior	Policy, laws, attitudes, norms
GOALS	Reduce an individual's alcohol use or risky drinking	Reduce alcohol use and related consequences community-wide
TOOLS	Education, counseling	Media and policy advocacy, increased law enforcement, mass media campaigns, social pressure
WHO	Parent, teacher, teen, child	Shared community power

Examples of Environmental Prevention Strategies²

Environmental prevention strategies to limit access:

Environmental Strategy	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit Drugs
Purchase laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum legal drinking age • Minimum purchasing age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum legal smoking and purchasing age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws prohibiting possession and use
Price controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excise taxes • Bans on price specials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excise taxes; • Bans on rebates after purchase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply reduction efforts to raise drug prices
Restrictions on retail sales or vendors, such as amount, location, density, and days and hours of sale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ordinances establishing minimum distances between alcohol outlets and schools and churches • Zoning restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits on the number of tobacco vendor licenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil actions to eliminate locations drugs are sold • Physical barriers to sales (gates, increased lighting, etc.)

Environmental strategies to change culture and context of substance use:

Environmental Strategy	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit Drugs
Legal deterrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower blood alcohol concentration for young drivers • Administrative license revocation for DUIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fines for selling tobacco to minors; • Media advocacy to increase vendors' perceptions of risk of selling to minors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Drugs-Lose Driver's License laws for youth • Workplace drug testing • Asset forfeiture
Controls on advertising and promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bans on alcohol sponsorship of sporting events and cultural events • Advertising restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgeon General's warning on cigarette packs • Restrictions on distribution of free samples and coupons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public service announcements regarding hazards associated with drug use

Environmental strategies to reduce negative consequences of substance use:

Environmental Strategy	Alcohol	Tobacco	Illicit Drugs
Measures that reduce consequences of negative use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe rides for intoxicated patrons • Non-breakable drinking glassware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated non-smoking areas to reduce secondhand smoke exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of bleach for disinfecting drug paraphernalia • Needle exchanges
Less damaging substance substitutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low alcohol beer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low tar and self extinguishing cigarettes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methadone maintenance

Positive Effects of Environmental Strategies

The table below shows the effects of various environmental strategies to prevent and reduce substance use. For example, implementing minimum purchase age laws has been shown to reduce sales and use, traffic crashes, certain violent crimes, and suicides.²

Environmental Strategy	Sales/Use	Traffic Crashes	DWIs	Violent Crimes ⁱ	Suicide	Long-Term Health Consequences ⁱⁱ
Price Controls	X		X	X ⁱⁱⁱ	X	X
Density restrictions	X	X		X	X	X
Minimum purchase age laws	X	X		X ^{iv}	X	
Restrictions on use	X					
Selling/serving controls		X	X			
Impaired driving laws		X	X			
Counter-advertising	X ^v					

i. violent or assaultive offenses = rape, robbery, assault, homicide
 ii. cancer or cirrhosis mortality
 iii. rapes and robberies
 iv. youth homicide
 v. effects for tobacco only. (Stewart & Carmona, n.d.)

Additional Environmental Prevention Examples for Alcohol and Other Drugs³

The table below shows the effects of various environmental strategies to prevent and reduce substance use. For example, implementing minimum purchase age laws has been shown to reduce sales and use, traffic crashes, certain violent crimes, and suicides.²

Alcohol Use Prevention	Other Drug Use Prevention
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ending alcohol sales before dark at public events 2. Selling only single cup servings per person at public settings 3. Responsible beverage server training 4. Refusing alcohol sponsorship of community events 5. Publicizing the use of cell phones to notify police of suspected DUIs in progress 6. Sober graduation events 7. College campus drinking policies for underage students 8. Social host norming 9. Employer alcohol policies of no use during the work day and on expense accounts 10. Community police compliance checks for illegal sales to underage persons 11. Zoning and land use conditions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lighting requirements outside alcohol outlets where drug dealing and use occur 2. Small claims court for nuisance properties 3. Employer drug free workplace policies 4. Employer drug testing for applicants 5. After school safe room for grades K-12 available on campus 6. Colleges notifying parents of students' alcohol and drug offenses 7. Train retailers about products they sell that have the potential for inhalants 8. Authorized compliance checks by underage youth for illegal tobacco sales 9. "Take Back Our Streets" programs/activities 10. Pharmacy practices to track prescriptions and identify abuse patterns 11. Emergency room practices to identify, assess, and refer alcohol and other drug related injuries

Sources: 1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Social-Ecological Model: A Framework for Prevention. Retrieved Sept. 2013 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>. 2) Stewart, K.G. & Carmona, M. G. (n.d.). Environmental Prevention Strategies: Evidence of Effectiveness. Retrieved Sept. 2013 from http://www.vyfs.org/images/stories/An_Introduction_and_Overview_for_Environmental_Prevention_Strategies.pdf. 3) California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. (2003). Fact Sheet: Environmental Prevention. Retrieved Sept. 2013 from <http://www.adp.ca.gov/FactSheets/Environmental-Prevention.pdf>.