



## Fact Sheet:



# Environmental Prevention

### Overview

Environmental (public policy) prevention actions alter settings and conditions where alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) are related to problem behaviors. Since the late 1980's, the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) has sponsored research and development of this approach, which now has growing national support.

Environmental prevention is related to systems theory that considers interdependent elements rather than separately focusing on isolated, individual pieces of a community or issue. ATOD use and problems are more complex than the individual user.

Environmental prevention's goal is to reduce economic, interpersonal, and social costs imposed on a community, neighborhood, organization, family, or employer, due to immediate and/or collateral problems related to ATOD.

### Prevention

ATOD prevention involves strategies, programs, and initiatives to reduce both the direct and indirect adverse personal, social, health, and economic consequences resulting from problematic ATOD availability, manufacture, distribution, promotion, sales, as well as use.

ATOD prevention promotes healthy and safe environments for individuals, families and communities.

### Process

Environmental prevention develops and/or modifies written and unwritten community standards, codes, practices, and norms, to reduce the frequency and severity of ATOD-related problems.

This involves cooperative efforts to develop support for solutions, formal adoption of plans, and follow-through to assure that the changes become sustained community norms.

Going beyond traditional individual-based ATOD prevention depends on generating a common interest in having a healthy, safe, and less costly community. This draws together prevention work across fields such as education, health care, social services, and law enforcement, which commonly focus on specific individuals. Although the mission of these fields is not ATOD prevention, their missions all are affected and benefit from prevention.

In the private sector, environmental prevention is part of ATOD-free workplace policies.

Environmental strategies can apply to specific places (problem alcohol outlets, public areas, the workplace, shopping areas, and housing areas) or events, (graduation parties, sporting events,

concerts, and street fairs). The focus is on measurable ATOD-related problems such as drug dealing, police incidents, loitering, violence, and public drinking that impose risk, cost, or poor quality of life on the public.

Environmental prevention operates with, and through, three interacting parties who have responsibility for any location or event:

1. Owner of the property having direct/legal responsibility for what occurs at a place or event.
2. Residents-neighbors-employees who occupy the location and are affected by, enable, confront or ignore the problem.
3. Officials-managers who have oversight/responsibility for health, safety, economic and social issues of a setting (supervisor, code enforcement, police, teacher).

Successful environmental prevention requires a clearly defined purpose that evolves from local assessment of problems. This unifying purpose carries participants past challenges posed by resistance from those benefiting from the current ATOD status quo. Participants must think ahead to assure that the changes attained are supported, enforced and sustained.

Environmental prevention shares common ground with the public health model, which describes problems in terms of relationships among:

1. The agent: ATOD, which is capable of causing individual,

social or economic harm when ingested.

2. The host: The person who is a current, former, or potential ATOD consumer
3. The environment: The settings in which hosts and agents interact that may amplify or moderate problems

### **Environmental Prevention Examples**

#### **Approaches to alcohol problems:**

- Ending alcohol sales before dark at public events
- Selling only single-cup servings at public settings
- Quality Responsible Beverage Server training
- Refusing alcohol-funded sponsorship of community events
- Publicizing the use of cellular phones to notify police of suspected DUI's in progress
- Sober graduation events
- College campus alcohol policies for underage students
- Social norming and media awareness
- Employer alcohol policies to prevent use during the work day
- Employers not paying for alcohol on expense accounts
- Alcohol-free employer-hosted social activities, parties and employer-sponsored team events
- Community police compliance checks for illegal sales to underage persons
- Zoning and land use conditions
- Social host ordinances

#### **Approaches to illegal drugs:**

- Water lawns in parks during evening hours to preclude activity

- Lighting requirements outside alcohol outlets where drug dealing/use occurs
- Classical music on outdoor speakers where loitering and drug use/sale occur
- Employer drug-free workplace policies
- Employer Employee Assistance Program services
- Employer drug testing
- After-school safe study rooms for grades K-12
- Colleges notify parents about their children's alcohol/drug offenses
- Train retailers about products they sell that have potential for inhalant abuse
- Compliance checks by underage youth for illegal tobacco sales
- Pharmacy practices to track prescriptions and identify abuse patterns
- Emergency room practices to identify, screen and refer ATOD-related injuries
- Community-Oriented Policing

Technical assistance is available through ADP's Community Prevention Initiative, [www.ca-cpi.org](http://www.ca-cpi.org)

The ADP Resource Center's Clearinghouse offers free printed materials that include environmental information at:  
[http://www.adp.ca.gov/RC/rc\\_catal.s.html](http://www.adp.ca.gov/RC/rc_catal.s.html).

This free booklet includes publication #3501, "Environmental Approach to Community AOD Prevention" that offers lessons learned through work in this area from the past 20 years.

For additional information, contact the Program Services Division, Prevention Services, at (916) 324-4398.