

The RIPRC defines **Prevention** as stopping the onset of destructive, high risk behaviors (such as alcohol and other drug AOD use) while promoting positive, productive, and healthy lifestyle choices with a focus on building individual and community assets.

#### Prevention includes:

- **Universal preventive interventions:** targeted to the general public or a whole population group that has not been identified on the basis of individual risk.
- **Selective preventive interventions:** targeted to individuals or a subgroup of the population whose risk is significantly higher than average.
- **Indicated preventive interventions:** targeted to high-risk individuals who are identified as having minimal but detectable signs or symptoms but who do not meet diagnostic levels at the present time.

#### Why young people engage in risk taking behaviors and use alcohol and drugs:

- Curiosity
- Belief that drugs are not harmful
- As an attempt to cope with traumatic experiences [e.g. childhood sexual abuse or school failure]
- Sensation-seeking behavior
- Substance use by family members
- Peer pressure
- Community norms
- Exposure to pro-use message in mass media
- Access and availability

#### Basic Strategies for Prevention of AOD:

- Raise awareness of the dangers of drug use and the benefits of constructive behavior.
- Promote good parenting skills and strengthen the family as the first defense against drug use and other risk taking behaviors.
- Build social skills to enable the development of strong self-image that leads to positive life decisions.
- Mobilize communities to establish environments enhancing positive personal development.
- Strengthen and support policies that promote healthy lifestyles and change community norms.

#### What Works? Here's what we've learned from evaluation of prevention programs:

- No single approach works for everyone.
- Sensitivity to and inclusion of the cultural values of the target community enhances effectiveness of prevention measures.
- **Among adolescents and younger children**, a psychosocial approach emphasizing personal skills development and task-oriented training often reduces alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and other risk taking behaviors.
- **Among adolescents at significant risk**, individual counseling and family intervention show promise in affecting long-term risk and protective factors.
- **Among adults**, changing the policies, regulations, and laws to alter the community environment reduces AOD problems.

**Content Sources:** Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) and Institute of Medicine (IOM).