

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).