

A Prevention 101 Series Publication

Building an Infrastructure For AODV Prevention Coalitions and Statewide Initiatives



The Higher Education Center for
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention
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U.S. Department of Education

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Building an Infrastructure for AODV Prevention

Coalitions and Statewide Initiatives

by William DeJong, Ph.D.

The environmental management approach to alcohol and other drug abuse and violence (AODV) prevention is based on the principle that college students' conduct can be shaped through concerted efforts to reengineer the environment that shapes their behavior.¹ Constructing a campus, community, and state-level environment that will protect students and help them make healthier and safer decisions is challenging work, which requires an organized and participatory process to develop, implement, and evaluate a sound strategic plan.²

This process includes three types of participatory efforts.³ On *campus*, the college president or chancellor can begin by appointing a permanent task force that represents several important constituencies, including key administrative staff, faculty, and students, and possibly alumni and parents. To guide *community-level* efforts, the task force can collaborate with, or evolve into, a full coalition that includes both campus and civic leaders. Finally, work at the *state level* can be facilitated by a statewide association of academic, community, and state prevention leaders.

This publication outlines how campus officials can organize and work collaboratively with campus and community coalitions and with statewide initiatives to accomplish their AODV prevention goals.

Community-level Coalitions

Prevention work in the community surrounding a campus is best facilitated by a campus and community coalition. The main purpose of a campus and community coalition is to direct and oversee the design and execution of a strategic plan. Some coalitions are directly involved in putting these programs and policies into operation, while others act as catalysts for identifying community needs, selecting or designing initiatives, and mobilizing campus and community support.⁴

Both the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking⁵ and the National Academies⁶ have endorsed campus and community coalitions as the primary vehicle for pursuing community-level prevention work. In some locales, campus officials will be able to join an existing coalition, but where no such organization is in place, top academic administrators can take the lead in beginning one, perhaps building from a campus task force.

Evaluations of Campus and Community Coalitions

Recent evaluations have shown that mobilizing a campus and community coalition can foster successful prevention efforts.

In 2005, the Bellingham–Western Washington University Campus Community Coalition launched its Neighborhoods Engaging with Students (NEST) project to decrease disruptive off-campus parties.⁷ Enforcement interventions, all heavily publicized, included additional police patrols in targeted neighborhoods and increased compliance checks at both on- and off-premise alcohol retailers near campus. A Web site and a series of neighborhood forums educated students regarding their rights and responsibilities as community residents. NEST also featured a neighborhood mediation program to help settle disputes involving students. At the same time, Western Washington University boosted its late-night programming on campus, especially for underage, first-year students. A second public university in Washington created a similar program. Student surveys showed that the prevalence of heavy episodic drinking was lower at these two intervention schools than at a third comparison university.

The University of Rhode Island's coalition experience was mixed.⁸ In 2000, university officials joined with town leaders to form the Narragansett–URI Coalition, a monthly forum for addressing alcohol-impaired driving, student parties, and other off-campus problems. In short order, the coalition developed a model lease with explicit penalties for police incidents; set up a system to notify absentee landlords

when police had responded to a disturbance; launched an annual neighborhood spring clean-up day; and supported a keg registration bill in the Rhode Island General Assembly.

By 2005, however, it was evident that the coalition was stalled. In response, the URI staff began to reach out to specific constituencies in Narragansett and South Kingstown, another nearby community, to implement environmental prevention strategies, including enhanced police enforcement and a cooperating tavern program, all of which were publicized in a media campaign. Surveys showed increases in student awareness of formal efforts to address student alcohol use, perceived likelihood of apprehension for underage drinking, and perceived consequences for alcohol-impaired driving, but no reductions in reported alcohol use.

An evaluation of the A Matter of Degree (AMOD) initiative confirmed that campus and community coalitions can often be effective but that there are no guarantees. AMOD funded 10 campus and community coalitions over several years. Compared with 32 similar comparison sites, five of the participating universities saw small, but significant decreases in heavy drinking, driving

after drinking, and other alcohol-related problems. All five were institutions whose coalition implemented several campus and community environmental change strategies, including efforts to provide substance-free alternatives, reduce alcohol availability, bolster law and policy enforcement, and restrict alcohol advertising. The other five campuses had less successful coalitions, implemented relatively few programs or policies, and showed no significant progress.⁹ A retrospective analysis of the AMOD coalitions identified several key factors that contributed to success, which are reviewed in the sections below.¹⁰

Building a Successful Coalition

A study of five campus and community coalitions in Massachusetts pointed to the need for strong support from college presidents or chancellors, as evidenced by their public stances, the financial and staff resources they allocated to the problem, and their accessibility to the coalition.¹¹ A summary report describing lessons learned from the AMOD initiative also cited the importance of support from both the chief executive on campus and community leaders.¹²

Another critical factor identified in the Massachusetts study was whether the coalition leadership had good community organizing skills.¹³ The AMOD summary report stated that the usually campus-based project director for a campus and community coalition should work full-time and have strong skills in political organizing, coalition management, and media advocacy.¹⁴

A coalition's success also depends on having a broad range of campus and community representatives.¹⁵ Membership should include individuals from key departments, organizations, and

associations, plus content experts and representatives of important constituencies. Important membership categories for a coalition include the following:

- *Campus leaders:*
senior administrators, faculty and staff, students, campus police chief
- *Business representatives:*
liquor store owners, bar and restaurant owners, apartment owners
- *Local government leaders:*
elected officials, public health director, community development and zoning officials
- *Local law enforcement officials:*
municipal police chief, alcohol beverage control (ABC) officials
- *Prevention and treatment experts:*
AODV treatment directors, community-based prevention leaders (e.g., MADD representative), community-based traffic safety leaders
- *Other community leaders:*
neighborhood coalition leaders, faith-based organization leaders, local news media representatives, and parents

Among others, the coalition leadership will want to include members whose agency, office, or department has staff resources or funds that can be channeled into prevention-related work while also serving to meet their own priorities.

Effective coalition members will be committed to the coalition's mission, especially its focus on applying environmental management strategies, both on and off campus; action-oriented; willing to give the coalition control over some of their prevention efforts; capable of working effectively with people who have competing interests; and willing to

Years of discord between a college and the surrounding community can make it difficult to find common ground. It is not ideal, but if necessary, campus administrators can work outside a coalition structure to form action-oriented partnerships with individual community agencies to implement new programs and policies to address students' off-campus behavior. Any progress that is made might help pave the way for reconstituting an effective coalition at a later time.

make a long-term commitment to participating in and sustaining the coalition.

Membership selection should also be guided by the perspective, work style, skill sets, political clout, networking contacts, public credibility, and other assets that individuals might bring to the group.¹⁶ The AMOD summary report emphasized the importance of having members who will speak out publicly and be advocates in the political process.¹⁷

Student members can add greatly to the coalition's credibility, but they should be selected with the same criteria in mind so that they can contribute to the coalition's work more fully. Some coalition leaders who have successfully included students cite the need to train students in prevention theory and the literature on evidence-based strategies so that their recommendations are grounded in the research about best practices.¹⁸

Recruiting and then nurturing a productive coalition calls for effective relationship building.¹⁹ When recruiting new members, the coalition leadership team can explain the purpose of the coalition, describe specifically what members could do to help, and outline how they would benefit from participating, all while conveying a sense of excitement about what the coalition can accomplish. Over time it is critical to recruit new

Trying to recruit coalition members by telling them that being involved in AODV prevention is the "right" thing to do is usually ineffective. Instead, identify a specific way in which participating will address their concerns or interests.

There are several steps that a coalition's leadership team can take to develop a sense of group identity and unified purpose among coalition members:

- Give the coalition a title that captures both the scope and importance of the coalition's work.
- Establish ground rules that allow members to express their positions openly, but without rancor or finger pointing.
- Identify and address any preconceptions or assumptions that individual members might have about student AODV problems.
- Work with the group to develop a common understanding of the nature, scope, and consequences of the problem.
- Acknowledge that turf issues are an inherent aspect of collaborative work and can be resolved over time.
- Encourage members to seek common ground.
- Provide continuing opportunities for members to get to know each other.

members who can match the evolving needs of the coalition and bring new ideas and energy to the group. Staggering membership terms can help ensure that there is always a core group of experienced members.

Establishing a Successful Coalition

Developing a cohesive and functioning team can take time. It is not unusual for early meetings to be dominated by community members who want to vent their anger over long-standing problems.²⁰ The challenge is to help coalition members move beyond their frustration to see that they share the same goals, are equally committed to the coalition process, and, together, can make things better.

This point can be reached faster if academic officials focus on making improvements on campus prior to reaching out to the community.²¹ Fair or not, both civic leaders and residents are likely to blame the college for student misconduct. Trust often cannot be built until the college has provided

effective education, toughened its policies, and extended jurisdiction to include off-campus behavior.

It is usually unrealistic to require coalition members to do a lot of work or to participate in every coalition activity. Coalitions usually form subcommittees to oversee activities that require focused time and specialization—for example, campus alcohol policies, substance-free events, alcohol access, neighborhood problems, law enforcement, fundraising, and media relations. A subcommittee structure gives coalition members an opportunity to provide input on the issues that interest or affect them most, while helping the coalition work more efficiently.²²

To promote coalition unity, it is also useful to involve the members in a few early activities in which everyone can play at least some part—for example, contributing to an environmental scan and problem analysis; establishing strategic priorities; brainstorming program and policy ideas; talking to members of coalitions in other campus communities; and identifying local, state, or national contacts.

Focusing on early objectives that can be easy “wins” can promote unity among the coalition members, while also demonstrating that the coalition can work effectively to create real change. Celebrating each accomplishment, with recognition given to individual participants for their part in the coalition’s success, solidifies a coalition’s sense of partnership and accomplishment.

Sustaining a Successful Coalition

Nurturing and sustaining a smoothly running and productive coalition is an ongoing process. One of the keys is to maintain a task orientation. Essential capacities for the coalition’s leadership include knowing how to: (1) run efficient and productive meetings, guided by a preset agenda; (2) build positive internal and external relationships; (3) engage members in work tasks; and (4) select, develop, and implement effective programs and policies.²³

Periodic member surveys can help assess the coalition’s vitality and identify areas for improvement.²⁴ A key area is the “sense of community” that members experience. Do they share a sense of connectedness and mutual dependence? Do they profess common beliefs and shared values? Are they able to work well together? Do they accept mutual responsibility for sustaining or enhancing the quality of their interrelationships? An adept coalition leader can keep demands on the members simple and realistic while at the same time encouraging members to regard and use the coalition as a resource that can help them do their own jobs more effectively.

Most critical, according to the AMOD summary report, is that the coalition members think long term. Demands for quick action are likely, especially if there has been an alcohol-related death or other serious incident. But changing the campus and community environment—an inherently political process—requires time to get it right, and then still more time to see measurable decreases in students’ high-risk drinking.

Another important dimension is “readiness for focused action.” This means that the coalition has a specific set of goals and objectives and a feasible plan of action.²⁵ Members are oriented toward helping the team function effectively and have the drive and resources to make things happen. A third dimension is whether the coalition has the capacity to mobilize.²⁶

Coalitions will be more effective if they (1) enact formal governance procedures; (2) encourage strong leadership; (3) foster active participation of members; (4) cultivate diverse memberships; (5) promote collaboration among member agencies; and (6) facilitate group cohesion.²⁷

What is the quality of the coalition’s leadership? Do they have the skills and organizational know-how needed to run the coalition effectively? Do the members communicate well with one another? Do the members have sufficient incentives to participate? Do they have behind-the-scenes support? Can the coalition get its ideas heard in the media?

Statewide Initiatives

Joining a statewide initiative offers several advantages in the effort to deal with campus AODV-related problems.²⁸ First, when several institutions step forward in unison, it is far less likely that any one campus will be singled out for special scrutiny or bad publicity. Banding together demonstrates that all institutions of higher education face these problems.

Second, the launch of a statewide initiative will be covered extensively by the news media, which can bring greater attention to the problem and put prospective solutions in front of policymakers. The launch event itself will be newsworthy, but other statewide initiative activities can be organized to draw press attention. In Ohio, for example, the Ohio College Initiative to Reduce High-Risk Drinking invites news coverage of its annual lunch for the presidents of the 45 participating colleges and universities. In 2009, President Roderick McDavis’s keynote address focused on the programs and policies that Ohio University administrators have implemented to reduce alcohol disciplinary cases. In 2007, Acting Surgeon General Rear Adm. Steven K. Galson was the featured speaker.

Third, a statewide initiative can help attract additional funding, from various departments of state government, the state alcohol beverage control agency, or private foundations.

Finally, a statewide initiative can eventually lead to the formation of an association of higher education officials who can present an academic viewpoint on various AODV policy proposals being considered at the local and state

level. For example, there are several policy proposals that could have a sizable effect in reducing AODV-related problems on campus by lowering underage students' access to alcohol and decreasing its misuse.²⁹

What factors contribute to a statewide initiative's success? One critical factor is presidential leadership. An active college president or chancellor can help recruit his or her peers, while also serving in a public role, articulating the initiative's goals and objectives, and attracting media attention.³⁰

A second factor is the availability of statewide networks of community-based prevention experts. For example, the Ohio College Initiative to Reduce High-Risk Drinking used both the Statewide Prevention Coalition and the Volunteers in Prevention Network to link individual colleges and universities with community-based prevention organizations and professionals in their area.³¹ Similar networks can be found in most states.

Another key factor is the availability of regional or state workshops to train members of the campus and community coalitions on prevention theory, best practices, and the strategic planning process. Some states organize their own training events. In addition, assistance is available through the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention (<http://www.higheredcenter.org>), and the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (<http://www.thenetwork.ws>) hosts regional trainings, conferences, and meetings.

Evaluations of statewide initiatives in Illinois, Ohio, and Maine found that campuses engaged with a statewide initiative were more likely than other campuses to implement a campus task

force, a campus and community coalition, and a strategic plan to address alcohol and other drug abuse prevention.³² In turn, such campuses were significantly more likely than campuses unaffiliated with a statewide initiative to implement new programs and policies. At the foundation of these achievements was a greater awareness among the coalition members of how the environment, both on campus and in the local community, affects high-risk alcohol consumption by college students. For most officials, the decision to focus prevention efforts on environmental management represented a significant paradigm shift.

Conclusion

The guidelines offered here will help campus officials organize and work more effectively with campus and community coalitions and statewide initiatives to accomplish their AODV prevention goals.

Moving forward, AODV prevention leaders need to manage a strategic planning process that entails: (1) conducting a thorough problem analysis and establishing a set of measurable goals and objectives; (2) identifying and selecting evidence-based AODV prevention strategies; and (3) using evaluation results to refine, improve, and strengthen both programs and policies.³³ The resources section below lists several Higher Education Center publications that describe these steps.

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Resources

ORGANIZATIONS

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/osdfs>;
 202-245-7896

OSDFS supports efforts to create safe schools, respond to crises, prevent alcohol and other drug abuse, ensure the health and well-being of students, and teach students good character and citizenship. The agency provides financial assistance for drug abuse and violence prevention programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

<http://www.higheredcenter.org>;
 1-800-676-1730;
 TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711

The Higher Education Center considers strategic planning and evaluation to be an important component of a comprehensive prevention approach. It has several publications and other materials, including literature reviews, to help campus administrators develop and evaluate prevention programs. These materials can be accessed for free from its Web site.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America

<http://www.cadca.org>;
 1-800-54-CADCA

CADCA works to strengthen the capacity of community coalitions in their effort to create and maintain safe, healthy, and drug-free communities by providing training and technical assistance, public policy advocacy, media strategies and marketing programs, conferences, and special events.

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

<http://www.thenetwork.ws>; see Web site for e-mail and telephone contacts by states and multi-state regions

The Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues (Network) is a national consortium of colleges and universities formed to promote healthy campus environments by addressing issues related to alcohol and other drugs. Developed in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Network comprises member institutions that voluntarily agree to work toward a set of standards aimed at reducing alcohol and other drug abuse problems at colleges and universities. It has more than 1,600 members nationwide.

NU Directions, University of Nebraska
<http://www.nudirections.org>

The NU Directions Coalition—part of the A Matter of Degree program funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—was founded to “create a community/campus culture that supports responsible low-risk drinking, including abstinence.”

PUBLICATIONS***Experiences in Effective Prevention: The U.S. Department of Education's Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Models on College Campuses Grants***

by W. DeJong

This publication summarizes elements of effective campus-based alcohol and other drug abuse prevention, based on the experiences of 22 grantee institutions funded from 1999 to 2004 by the U.S. Department of Education's Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Models on College Campuses grant program (86 pp., 2007).

Preventing Violence and Promoting Safety in Higher Education Settings: Overview of a Comprehensive Approach

by L. Langford

This publication reviews the scope of campus violence problems, describes the wide array of factors that cause and contribute to violence, outlines a comprehensive approach to reducing violence and promoting safety on campus, and lists specific recommendations that administrators, students, faculty, staff, and community members can follow to review and improve their policies and strengthen their programs and services (11 pp., 2004).

Strategic Planning for Prevention Professionals on Campus

by L. Langford and W. DeJong

This publication in the Higher Education Center's *Prevention 101 Series* introduces a strategic planning process for designing, implementing, and refining programs and policies to reduce alcohol and other drug abuse and violence problems on campus. Other publications in the series describe each planning step in more detail (12 pp., 2008).

Problem Analysis: The First Step Prevention Planning

by W. DeJong

This publication in the Higher Education Center's *Prevention 101 Series* outlines how to conduct a problem analysis by gathering objective data on the nature and scope of the problem, examining available resources and assets in the campus community, and analyzing and summarizing this information to clarify needs and opportunities (8 pp., 2009).

Setting Goals and Choosing Effective Strategies

by W. DeJong

This publication in the Higher Education Center's *Prevention 101 Series* explains the planning steps that follow the problem analysis: (1) establishing a set of measurable goals and objectives, and (2) implementing prevention activities that research or evaluation has shown to be effective in preventing high-risk drinking or violent behavior (in review).

Sustainability: Building Program and Coalition Support

by P. Glider

This publication in the Higher Education Center's *Prevention 101 Series* looks at various aspects of strengthening and maintaining comprehensive prevention programs, such as how collaboration facilitates institutionalization, how favorable publicity builds support, and how developing additional resources as part of the long-range plan is critical to the program's long-term continuation (8 pp., 2010).

Methods for Assessing College Student Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs

by W. DeJong

This guide describes methods for gathering and interpreting student survey data on alcohol and other drug abuse-related problems. Methods for developing questions, drawing a random sample of students, and achieving high response rates are outlined (12 pp., 2008).

Evaluating Environmental Management Approaches to Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention

by W. DeJong and L. Langford

This document outlines the basic steps for evaluating a program for alcohol and other drug abuse prevention that features environmental change efforts, including describing the intervention, identifying process measures, identifying outcome measures, selecting a research design, and utilizing the results (6 pp., 2006).

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10. *Alcohol and Other Drug Policies for Colleges and Universities: A Guide for Administrators* [In review]



Our Mission

The mission of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention is to assist institutions of higher education in developing, implementing, and evaluating alcohol, other drug, and violence prevention policies and programs that will foster students' academic and social development and promote campus and community safety.

How We Can Help

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help people at colleges and universities adopt effective prevention strategies:

- Resources, referrals, and consultations
- Training and professional development activities
- Publication and dissemination of prevention materials
- Assessment, evaluation, and analysis activities
- Web site featuring online resources, news, and information
- Support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues

Get in Touch

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

**The Higher Education Center for
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention**

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