

Campus Drug Courts



Information Brief

December, 2004

An Innovative Solution to an Intractable Problem

Overview

A prevalent and troublesome health problem facing colleges and universities in the United States today is high-risk alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse. Experts agree that AOD use by students causes academic problems for the student, increases the number of crimes on campus and in the surrounding community, and reduces retention rates at the institution. At higher prevalence levels, AOD use can result in a school being branded as a "party school."

According to the College Alcohol Study (CAS) of Harvard University's School of Public Health, alcohol is the number one drug of choice on college campuses throughout the nation. Students also use illicit drugs, with marijuana use the highest at almost 36 percent. Alarming, about 10 percent of all students use club drugs (e.g., Ecstasy), and that number is on the rise.

Some institutions of higher learning are seeking new and creative ways to combat AOD use on campuses through innovative prevention and treatment programs. One innovative approach is the use of a campus drug court program pioneered by Colorado State University.

Extent of the Problem

"Binge drinking" at colleges and universities is widespread. Researchers define "binge drinking" as drinking five or more drinks in a row for men and four for women. Forty-four percent of college students are binge drinkers. According to a study by the Prevention Research Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 10 percent of the time, the binge drinkers consume 12 or more drinks during a single session. Many admit to consuming in excess of 23 drinks in a row.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) reports that each year, approximately 1,400 college students die from alcohol-related causes; 500,000 suffer serious, non-fatal injuries; 400,000 engage in unprotected sexual relations; 100,000 are too intoxicated to remember whether they consented to sexual intercourse; and 2.1 million drive while under the influence. NIAAA also reports that almost 700,000 assaults, 70,000 of which are sexual assaults, can be attributed to alcohol use by students.

While students use illegal drugs at significantly lower rates than alcohol, illicit drug use also leads to assaults, sexual and otherwise, hospitalization for overdoses, and death. Disturbingly, Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse found that 90 percent of all rapes on campuses are due to AOD use by either the victim or the assailant.

Clearly, AOD use on American college campuses is a major problem, not only for the students and the institution, but also for the neighboring communities. Even though expelling a student may "solve" the problem for the university, that student's AOD use likely will become the problem of another institution or the community at large. So, what can be done to combat the problem?

Campus Solutions

Many institutions of higher learning are implementing educational efforts, such as lectures, workshops, mailings, posters and articles, about the effects of AOD abuse on campus. However, even at institutions with programs targeting AOD abuse, a significant portion of students are not impacted by such educational efforts. For example, despite the University of Iowa's continuous efforts to curb substance use by students, during the 2003-04 academic year, AOD-related arrests and citations increased 17 percent from the previous

Quick Facts

- An estimated **1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related causes.**
- Experts define **binge drinking** as drinking **five or more drinks in a row for men and four for women.**
- **Forty-four percent** of all college students are **binge drinkers.**
- **2.1 million** college students **drive under the influence.**
- **Ninety percent** of all rapes on campus are **substance-abuse related.**
- In 2000, **Colorado State University (CSU)** created its **Day IV Program** which adopted the principles of the **drug court model.**
- Because of its **Day IV Program**, **CSU has gone from a 100 percent dismissal rate to a 12 percent dismissal rate** for students with substance and substance-related problems.

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year. Similar findings have been reported at Penn State University, the University of Michigan and a host of other colleges and universities throughout the nation. Accordingly, universities are increasingly implementing creative programs and aggressive policies to reduce AOD use.

The need for these institutions to apply effective prevention methods is emphasized by the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act, which requires colleges and universities to adopt and enforce policies to prevent and punish illicit AOD abuse. Every two years, schools also are required to review the effectiveness of their AOD programs.

A number of campuses are implementing on-campus intervention and recovery programs. For example, Case Western Reserve University developed Recovery House, a residential program assisting students who are in various stages of recovery. Colorado State University (CSU) implemented its Day IV Program, modeled after community drug courts in the United States.

Drug Court Programs

In 1989, criminal justice and treatment professionals in Dade County (Miami), Florida developed an intensive community-based drug court program for felony drug offenders. With its success came the proliferation of similar programs. Now, with almost 2,000 drug courts throughout the nation, these programs have had a demonstrated impact on the disposition of drug or drug-related offenses and on the management of substance or substance-related offenders.

A drug court is a special court given the responsibility to handle cases involving substance-abusing offenders through comprehensive supervision, drug testing, treatment services and immediate incentives or sanc-

tions for compliance or non-compliance. Bringing the full weight of all interveners (e.g., judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and treatment providers) to bear, through a team approach, drug courts force the offender to confront his or her substance abuse problem. By using a systematic approach to dealing with the issues, drug courts consistently have proven to be successful in reducing crime and its concomitant costs to the community as well as in producing drug-free, law-abiding citizens.

Colorado State University's Day IV Program

In 2000, CSU created its Day (Drugs, Alcohol and You) IV Program, which adapted the principles of the community drug court model to students who violated the university's student conduct code. Targeting students who are facing dismissal from the university, Day IV combines CSU's campus judicial system with resources throughout the campus community.

Through collaborative efforts of campus officials (e.g., judicial affairs, student government and campus police) and local representatives from the criminal justice community (e.g., the district attorney and the judiciary), Day IV came to fruition. The goal of the campus drug court is to decrease AOD use in a group of students not ordinarily reached by traditional interventions. When a student violates the law or CSU's written "rights and responsibilities," either on or off campus, and is facing dismissal from the university, he or she voluntarily is presented to the Day IV team as a candidate for screening for the program.

The multi-phase program emphasizes accountability through intense monitoring of the student participants. Through weekly staffing meetings, case management, spe-

cialized treatment plans, case reviews, random drug tests and incentives and sanctions, the program allows students to remain in school to accomplish their academic goals while addressing their AOD abuse. The first phase focuses on abstaining from substance use; the second focuses on personal leadership and development; and the third requires them to be involved in a volunteer program on campus or in the community. A student who remains substance-free and without additional infractions, achieves pre-set academic goals, and completes AOD education and classes will successfully graduate from the Day IV Program.

Although still new, Day IV is succeeding. CSU is addressing, head-on, the problematic student population engaged in high-risk substance use. With a significant success rate, in one year, CSU has gone from a 100 percent dismissal rate for the population to a 12 percent rate. Numerous representatives from colleges and universities across the country have visited CSU's Day IV Program, hoping to replicate its success on their own campuses.

Conclusion

A portion of students on campuses who engage in high-risk drinking and illegal drug use and abuse jeopardize their health and safety and the health and safety of other students. They act as vectors for the spread of substance abuse problems, reduce the overall quality of a school's focus on academic excellence, and force schools into policing and protecting. Based on the community drug court model, CSU's Day IV Program provides a creative means to address this difficult problem.

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