



PREVENTION UPDATE

The Role of Law Enforcement in Prevention

Overview

As campuses and communities across the country grapple with problems related to unruly house parties, neighborhood disruptions, and alcohol-fueled “celebratory” incidents, they are developing partnerships with law enforcement agencies to implement strategies to reduce such problems and protect the health and safety of students and residents alike. In fact, tier 2 prevention strategies in [A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges](#) from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in 2002 identify enforcement of minimum drinking age laws (see [September 2011 Prevention Update](#)) and enforcement of other laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving. Another tier 2 strategy relies on enforcement measures: “Comprehensive community interventions have also shown that increased enforcement and publicity of laws to reduce alcohol-impaired driving have produced significant reductions in the types of motor vehicle crashes most likely to involve alcohol and alcohol-related traffic deaths.”

Enforcement is not necessarily intended to apprehend and punish those who violate the law. [The Role of Alcohol Beverage Control Agencies in the Enforcement and Adjudication of Alcohol Laws](#) points out that “enforcement is designed to increase the perceived likelihood that a violation will be detected, which is a key component of deterrence. . . . Deterrence involves three key components: the perceived likelihood that a violation will lead to apprehension, the perceived swiftness with which a penalty will be imposed, and the extent of the penalty.”

A [community trials study](#) conducted from 1992 to 1996 implemented a comprehensive, communitywide set of interventions, including new restrictions on alcohol availability, responsible beverage service training, media advocacy, and increased enforcement of alcohol sales and alcohol traffic laws. The evaluation revealed significant reductions in alcohol-related traffic crashes. These studies point to the importance of alcohol law enforcement in protecting the public’s health and safety.

What the Evidence Tells Us

An evaluation of [Common Ground](#), a media campaign–supported prevention program featuring increased enforcement, decreased alcohol access, and other environmental management initiatives targeting college student drinking found that intervention successfully altered perceptions of alcohol enforcement, alcohol access, and the local alcohol environment. The researchers found that the initiatives “significantly increased students’ awareness of formal alcohol-control efforts, perceived likelihood of enforcement, and perceptions of responsible beverage service while decreasing perceptions of student misbehavior at off-campus parties. Archival data indicated substantial decreases in complaints to local police regarding student disturbances in the community over the course of the initiative.”

The [Safer California Universities Project](#), a comprehensive community-based program focused on the first weeks of the academic year, comprises several alcohol control measures (enforcement of underage sales laws, roadside DUI operations, social host party patrols with local ordinances) along with a multifaceted media advocacy campaign via channels unique to college student audiences. The program was implemented among campuses in the two California public university systems (University of California and California State



University) and proved efficacious in reducing intoxication and alcohol-impaired driving among college students.

Lessons Learned From Colleges and Universities

Berkeley's Joint Southside Safety Patrol

A joint police patrol by the University of California Police Department and the Berkeley Police Department was launched in 2010 to improve public safety at night in the city's Southside neighborhood. It resumed on August 18, 2011. The [Joint Southside Safety Patrol's](#) main charge is to suppress violent crime. It also focuses on the challenging town-gown issue of unruly parties of 10 or more people in off-campus student rental housing and fraternities that create a significant public nuisance. Because of the connection between alcohol consumption and students becoming victims of violent crime, the Joint Southside Safety Patrol strictly enforces laws related to alcohol consumption, including underage drinking, use of false identification, public possession of open containers of alcohol, and public drunkenness. City and campus police team up in two squad cars to cover the neighborhoods near campus Thursday through Saturday nights between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. Police officers may issue citations when they find violations of any kind, and this information is quickly shared with the campus's Office of Student Conduct. Students, who receive the majority of the public nuisance citations, hear promptly from student conduct staff. The city will notify property owners and managers of the citations, since unpaid fines for citations issued to their tenants could result in liens being placed on the owners' property.

Declines in Violations at the University of Colorado

According to the [Colorado Daily](#), new programs implemented by the University of Colorado (CU) Police could be credited for a drop in 2010–11 drug and alcohol violations on campus. From the fiscal year July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011, CU police issued 381 drug violations and 516 alcohol violations—almost 10 percent fewer than the previous year, according to statistics provided by the department. In fall 2009, CU Police partnered with the Office of Student Conduct to present the first “Responsibility 101” class during freshman orientation. The course offers basic safety tips as well as an overview of university policies focused on drugs and alcohol. CU Police also expanded patrols by adding four motorcycles to the department in the spring, which allowed officers to access and monitor areas of campus that aren't accessible with police cars. The department has also spent the last three football seasons re-evaluating their large-scale security procedures. “Last year, as a whole, was a smoother year than the year before,” said CU Police Cmdr. Robert Axmacher. “The department will continue to move forward with these and other programs in hopes of another decrease in alcohol and drug violations next year.”

Higher Education Center Resources

- [A Campus-community Coalition to Control Alcohol-related Problems Off Campus: An Environmental Management Case Study](#)
- [Catalyst: \(Winter 2007\) Vol. 8 No. 2: Law Enforcement](#)
- [Law Enforcement and Higher Education: Finding Common Ground to Address Underage Drinking on Campus](#)
- [The Off-Campus Environment: Approaches for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems](#)

This Prevention Update (offering an overview of current topics, news, legislation, research, or innovations in the field) was funded by the Office of Safe and Healthy Students at the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-04-CO-0069/0005 with Education Development Center, Inc. The contracting officer's representative was Phyllis Scattergood. The content of this Prevention Update does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government. This Prevention Update also contains hyperlinks and URLs for information created and maintained by private organizations. This information is provided for the reader's convenience. The U.S. Department of Education is not responsible for controlling or guaranteeing the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. Further, the inclusion of information or a hyperlink or URL does not reflect the importance of the organization, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.