

Using the “Getting To Outcomes™” Approach to Help Communities Prevent Underage Drinking

Underage drinking is a significant problem in the United States.

- Alcohol is the primary contributor to the leading causes of adolescent deaths.
- Between 12 percent and 20 percent of all the alcohol consumed in the United States is drunk by people who are legally too young to drink alcohol at all.
- For many individuals, the heaviest drinking period in their lives is before they reach the age of 21.
- More than 95 percent of U.S. adults who are alcohol dependent started drinking before they were 21.
- For some, early use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs may actually change brain development in long-lasting and detrimental ways.

Despite these facts, most communities have cultural norms, policies, and conditions that accept or promote underage drinking.

To address this important problem, a team led by RAND researchers developed a guide to help communities plan, implement, and evaluate

Abstract

Underage drinking is a significant problem in the United States. To address this problem, RAND researchers developed guides to provide key accountability questions, worksheets, tools, and examples to help communities plan, implement, and evaluate their efforts to reduce and prevent underage drinking. The framework upon which these guides are based emphasizes integrating community needs with evidence-based practices in a manner that respects cultural diversity and promotes sustainability.

efforts to reduce and prevent underage drinking (*Preventing Underage Drinking: Using Getting To Outcomes with the SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework to Achieve Results*). The overarching framework for the guide is the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The SPF is a five-step approach broadly

This Highlight summarizes RAND Health research reported in the following publications:

Chinman, M., P. Imm, and A. Wandersman, *Getting To Outcomes 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-101-CDC, 2004, 178 pp., available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR101/

Chinman, M., P. Imm, A. Wandersman, A. De La Torre, and J. Gómez González, *Obteniendo Resultados 2004: Promoción de Responsabilidad a Través de Métodos y Herramientas de Planeación, Implementación y Evaluación [Getting To Outcomes 2004: Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation]*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-101/1-CDC, 2005, 356 pp., available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR101.1/

Imm, P., M. Chinman, A. Wandersman, D. Rosenbloom, S. Guckenburger, and R. Leis, *Preventing Underage Drinking: Using Getting To Outcomes with the SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework to Achieve Results*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TR-403-SAMHSA, 2007, 308 pp., available at http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR403/

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applicable to prevention efforts, including substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, and violence. The SPF strongly emphasizes integrating community needs with evidence-based practices in a manner that respects cultural diversity and promotes sustainability.

In this guide, the operating system for how to “work” the SPF is the “Getting To Outcomes™” (GTO™) model. The original GTO manual, which also has a Spanish version, was written to help local groups develop or improve substance use–prevention programs. The GTO approach includes a participatory process that builds practitioners’ prevention capacity, empowering them to address all aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The recent guide, *Preventing Underage Drinking*, tailors the GTO model specifically for evidence-based environmental strategies shown to be effective in tackling the problem of underage drinking. The strategies target four key areas that influence alcohol problems: access and availability, policy and enforcement, community norms, and media messages.

To help bridge the gap between research and practice, *Preventing Underage Drinking* provides 11 accountability questions to guide communities when they are using the SPF to address underage drinking:

1. How can we organize the community to profile community needs and resources regarding underage drinking?
2. What are the underlying needs and conditions that must be addressed in the community to reduce underage drinking?
3. What are the community’s goals, target populations, and desired outcomes?
4. What capacities need to be strengthened to develop and implement a plan to reduce underage drinking?
5. What evidence-based environmental strategies will be useful in helping to achieve the goals?
6. How will the environmental strategies to reduce underage drinking “fit” within the community context?
7. What is the plan for reducing underage drinking?
8. How will implementation of the plan be assessed?
9. How well are the strategies in the comprehensive plan working?
10. How will we ensure that the strategies to reduce underage drinking improve continuously over time?
11. If the plan is successful, how will it be sustained?

The guide provides a general format for addressing these questions. Each chapter includes suggestions and ideas for answering the accountability question; a summary checklist for each question; and worksheets and tools for planning, implementing, and evaluating the ten evidence-based environmental strategies presented in the guide. Each chapter concludes with an example from a community that used the accountability question in its work.

The guide can be used by novice coalitions as well as by those with substantial resources and experience in using environmental strategies. ■

Evidence-Based Environmental Strategies

Preventing Underage Drinking provides examples corresponding to the 10 environmental strategies for reducing underage drinking that have the strongest evidence base. Each example includes a brief research summary and additional text that describes issues related to planning, implementing, and evaluating the strategy. The examples also include samples of tools, worksheets, or ordinances to facilitate the community's work. The ten strategies are briefly described below.

1. **Responsible beverage service** is a merchant education program designed to reduce sales to minors and intoxicated adults. It involves media advocacy to promote policy changes, manager training, and server/seller training.
2. **Alcohol compliance checks** are thought to be most effective when they are frequent and well publicized, solicit community support, and involve penalties for the licensed establishment rather than just the server.
3. **Happy hour restrictions** eliminate one of the environments most conducive to overconsumption of alcohol.
4. **Controls on alcohol outlet location and density** reduce the accessibility of alcohol to young people by making it less prevalent in their immediate environment.
5. **Sobriety/traffic-safety checkpoints**, which are very effective in reducing alcohol-related traffic accidents, injuries, and deaths, are even more effective when combined with a vigorous public awareness campaign.
6. **Graduated drivers' licensing laws**, which entail clearly specified learner, intermediate, and full license phases, are effective in reducing crashes among teen drivers, but they need to be adequately enforced.
7. **Social-host liability laws** state that adults providing alcohol to minors or those who are obviously intoxicated are legally liable if the person is killed or injured, or kills or injures another person.
8. **Keg registration** is intended to prevent friends or relatives of legal drinking age from buying beer kegs for teen parties. Registration can be achieved in a number of ways, for example, permanent markings on each keg that identify where and when it was purchased or a requirement that keg delivery requests be made in person at the store.
9. **Restricting sales of alcohol at public events** controls the availability of alcohol at gatherings such as concerts, street fairs, and sporting events.
10. **Increasing taxes on the sale of alcohol** leads to reductions in the levels and frequency of drinking and, especially, heavy drinking among youth, as well as lower traffic accident fatality rates and reduced incidence of some types of crime. Several surveys indicate that most Americans support increased alcohol taxes.

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