

## Examples of Different Interventions

Interventions that prevent substance misuse include programs, practices, and environmental strategies. Some interventions focus on changing individuals, while others focus on changing the environment in some way.

For instance, certain education-based programs are designed to help individuals develop the intentions and skills to act in a healthy manner. Policies, on the other hand, focus on creating an environment that supports healthy behavior.

The success of any intervention, or combination of interventions, depends on strong collaboration. By working together, partners can bring different perspectives to bear on a problem, thereby effecting change.

Following are descriptions of some of the different types of interventions.

**Education-based programs** focus on helping people develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to change their behavior. Education is one of the most commonly used strategies for attempting to discourage young people from using alcohol and illegal substances. Other common education-based programs are for parents, merchants (who sell alcohol), and beverage servers (who work in restaurant and bars).

**School and community bonding** activities address the risk factor of low attachment to school and community. Specific interventions can include mentoring and alternative activities, such as opportunities for positive social interaction.

**Communication and public education** involves the media because of the significant role it plays in shaping how people think and behave. Many of the messages on television, billboards, and the Internet, as well as in music and magazines, glamorize drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. Yet, the media can be used to encourage positive behaviors, as well. Communications strategies such as social marketing and media advocacy can be used to influence community norms, increase public awareness, and attract community support for prevention.

- Social marketing uses advertising principles to change social norms and promote healthy behaviors. Social marketing messages are designed to convince specific

groups to adopt a new behavior by showing them the benefits they will receive in return.

- Media advocacy focuses on shaping the way social issues are discussed in the media in order to build support for changes in public policy. It involves working directly with local newspapers, television, and radio to influence both the amount of media coverage provided and the content of that coverage in order to affect the way people talk and think about an issue.

**Policies** are standards that are formalized. But for policies to be adopted, they must reflect the accepted norms and intentions of a particular community. Imagine, for example, trying to regulate smoking in public places 50 years ago, when smoking was not only acceptable but chic. It would have been impossible!

**Enforcement** is essential if policies are going to be effective in deterring people and businesses from illegal behaviors. Enforcement can include surveillance, community policing, and arrests. There must also be significant penalties—this makes a difference.