

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES

What are environmental strategies?

Environmental strategies are prevention approaches that are less concerned about the ATOD choices of individuals and more about seeking to change the environmental conditions that influence ATOD behaviors for large numbers of people. They are usually focused around influencing accessibility, availability, and social norms.

What are some common examples of environmental strategies?

Environmental strategies include alcohol or tobacco compliance checks, sobriety checkpoints, strengthening policies for public events or public areas, strengthening school policies, and media campaigns.

Why should I be doing environmental strategies?

Individual-based prevention programs involve working repeatedly with individuals and small groups, which means that tremendous resources would need to be involved to reach a large portion of the community population. These resources usually are not available. Environmental strategies, however, can affect large numbers of people. The impact on each person may not seem to be that great, but when multiplied across the large numbers affected, environmental strategies' effects can be very powerful.

Can I do environmental strategies by myself?

Most environmental strategies involve other agencies or decision-makers. Tobacco and alcohol compliance checks and sobriety checkpoints involve law enforcement. Policy changes must be accepted by those with the authority to do so, often public officials or principals. Collaboration is key for environmental strategies.

How should I decide what environmental strategies to use?

By gathering just a little bit of information, the decision can sometimes be easy, assuming you have the partnerships you need. If youth drinking and driving is a community problem, then public safety checkpoints make sense. If you learn youth are getting their alcohol or tobacco primarily from stores, then compliance checks would be smart. If schools have inconsistent or poorly enforced ATOD policies, then you would want to work with them on a better policy with consistent enforcement. If alcohol or tobacco is having a negative effect on people enjoying a public area or public event or are leading to dangerous problems, then that would be a good policy to address.

What does “blending” individual and environmental approaches mean?

Blending individual and environmental approaches is one of the six strategies in *The Governor’s Comprehensive Strategy for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention*. The concept refers to doing both types of programming and selecting programming where each set of interventions strengthens the effects of the other. For example, doing Project Northland, an alcohol-focused evidence-based curriculum, might be a good program to

do in conjunction with alcohol compliance checks. Together, these interventions may combine to have an even greater impact than each would individually.

Are all environmental strategies equally effective?

No. Most of the typical environmental strategies have been rated according to their effectiveness in reducing underage use on alcohol and tobacco. Those ratings can be found in sections 3 and 4 of the SC Toolkit (<http://www.daodas.state.sc.us/toolkit.asp>). In South Carolina, we consider those with a “very high” or “high” rating to be equivalent to “evidence-based.” You will also find that some strategies are described in detail on the website.