

# Strategy: Parental Involvement in Raising Drug-Free Youth

*Strategy Programs and mechanisms that incorporate parental involvement in raising drug-free children can reduce drug use and strengthen community . . .*

## Strategy

Programs and mechanisms that incorporate parental involvement in raising drug-free children can reduce drug use and strengthen community antidrug norms.

## Drug Problem Addressed

When drug information and antidrug behaviors learned at school are not reinforced at home, young people are more likely to turn to substance abuse.

## Key Components

The most important components of a parent-based strategy for drug prevention are **factual education and support from other parents** or community groups. Drug prevention efforts should include teaching parents the signs of drug use and informing them about drug paraphernalia. Parents should also be made aware of community resources if they are concerned that their children might be involved with alcohol or other drugs. An effective parent program strengthens communication between parents and children, supports parents who refuse to allow alcohol or other drugs at parties, provides information about

sources of alcohol and drugs, and reinforces other parents who are trying to keep their children drug free. In some communities, parents sign a pledge that they will not permit young people to bring alcohol or other drugs into their homes.

## Key Partnerships

Parents can work with school personnel, other community residents who observe young people in after-school or evening activities, law enforcement, community service providers, and youth. In some communities, leaders of youth organizations and athletic coaches have worked effectively with parents interested in combating drug use among youth.

## Potential Obstacles

Denial is a serious barrier to helping parents whose children are involved with alcohol and other drugs. Also, some parents may judge others too harshly, creating hostility within the parent support group. These barriers can be addressed through the expertise of trained family counselors or drug prevention specialists effective in communicating without expressing condemnation.

## Signs of Success

In *Adolescents at Risk* (1990), J. D. Dryfoos reviews the success of adolescent drug prevention programs and concludes that the **involvement of a caring adult in a parenting role is the "hallmark of effective prevention programs."**

Project Info in Whittier, California, works closely with youth who show early signs of drug or alcohol abuse, and with their families. Founded as a research project, the program now provides direct services. A

recent evaluation highlighted a 4 percent recidivism rate for youth participants.

## Applying the Strategy

In Houston, the Self-Help for African People through Education program formed a Parent Awareness Network to unite the community in the fight against drugs and crime and to improve neighborhood conditions. With help from local schools, the parents met weekly at the schools and at a housing development and signed a pledge to work together to keep their children drug free.

The Scott Newman Center, with headquarters in California, has been part of a strong movement to increase parental awareness of drug problems and how they affect families. The center's program, Neighborhoods in Action, assists existing neighborhood groups by providing drug education and drug prevention materials, teaching basic parent-child communication skills, and helping to resolve problems that arise from drug use.

The Parents' Communication Network of Minnesota connects more than ten thousand families in the state with newsletters and other printed materials on alcohol and other drug use, parenting skills, party hosting and restrictions, and other issues that concern parents of elementary and teenage children. The network also keeps parents apprised of effective antidrug curricula, legislative efforts to prevent substance use, state and national resources in drug prevention, and health issues.