
MODELS FOR PRACTICE

FOCUS AREA: SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Program Name: Project Northland

Location: Center City, Minnesota

Problem Addressed: Alcohol Use and Other Substances of Abuse

Healthy People 2010 Objective: 26

Web Address: <http://hazelden.org>

SNAPSHOT

Project Northland is a program that effectively addresses the problem of alcohol use by youth and has also been successful in reducing tobacco and marijuana use. While the program is now implemented throughout the United States, it began in a rural area of northeast Minnesota in response to a disproportionately high level of alcohol-related morbidity and mortality in a six-county area. Targeting sixth through eighth grades, the program is based on the social learning theory and is focused on the role of parents, peers, and the community in influencing alcohol use as well as other substances of abuse.

Targeting sixth through eighth grades, the program is based on the social learning theory and is focused on the role of parents, peers, and the community in influencing alcohol use as well as other substances of abuse.

THE MODEL

Blueprint: Project Northland is a substance abuse program that is initiated in sixth grade and follows students through eighth grade. These grades were selected because these are the grades of first use of substances of abuse. Each curriculum year has a theme and is tailored toward the developmental level of the adolescents. In sixth grade, students learn reasons not to use alcohol. In seventh grade, students learn strategies to deal with peer pressure. Finally, in eighth grade, the focus shifts from individual and peer pressure to community-level changes. A critical element of the program's success is the use of peer leaders and involvement of parents and the community. Successful replication of the model is achieved through student involvement during sixth through eighth grade, teacher training, and use of peer leaders.

Making a Difference: The original study was designed to follow 2,400 students from sixth through eighth grade to determine the impact of the program, if any, on alcohol-use patterns, as well as tobacco and marijuana use. After three years of study, it was found that students participating in the program were significantly less likely to be users of alcohol, marijuana, and tobacco at the end of eighth grade compared to the control group. At the end of the eighth grade, students participating in the study exhibited a 28 percent reduction in monthly drinking, a 46 percent reduction in weekly drinking,

and a 27 percent reduction in alcohol and tobacco use compared to the control group. For those students who were non-users at the initiation of the study (in sixth grade), the results revealed a 37 percent lower rate of cigarette smoking and a 50 percent lower rate of marijuana use at the end of eighth grade compared to the control group.

Beginnings: The project was initially developed by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health under a grant from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. The research-based program was designed to address individual behavioral change and environmental change. The specific goals are to delay the onset of drinking, reduce alcohol use by current users, and limit alcohol-related problems of youth. While the majority of the students were Caucasian (94 percent), American-Indian students comprised 5.5 percent of the study's participants (seven American-Indian reservations are in the study area). The study was conducted in this six-county, extremely rural area of northeastern Minnesota because it had the highest alcohol-related morbidity and mortality in the state, with one county being number one in the state.

Challenges and Solutions: Project Northland is a research-based program designed to be replicated in other school districts. Interested schools have turned to State Incentive Grants (SIG) and Drug Free School money as mechanisms to fund the program's implementation. Community involvement is also a critical element. Drug Free Communities money (through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP]) is one funding source utilized by communities to implement the program.

Project Northland has received numerous awards including identification by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) as a Model Program, recommendation by the U.S. Department of Education, and an "A" rating in *Making the Grade: A Guide to School Drug Prevention Programs* (published by Drug Strategies). It also was published in the *Journal of School Health* (1994, 1996), and *American Journal of Public Health* (1996).

Beginning fall 2002, the program will expand to address substance abuse among high school students.

PROGRAM CONTACT INFORMATION

Kay Provine, Senior Training Specialist
Project Northland, Hazelden Information and Educational Services
15251 Pleasant Valley Road
P.O. Box 176
Center City, MN 55012-0176
Phone: (800) 328-9000 ext. 4009