

# PREVENTION OVERVIEW

New York State's Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) defines prevention as a proactive, evidence-based process that focuses on increasing protective factors and decreasing risk factors that are associated with alcohol and drug abuse in individuals, families, and communities.

The overarching goals of all OASAS supported prevention programs are to:

- Prevent any alcohol and other drug use by youth under the age of 21.
- Prevent the use of any illegal drugs by all individuals.
- Delay the age of first use as long as possible, with particular emphasis on gateway drugs.

OASAS's approach to alcohol and substance abuse prevention and the conceptual frame - work that supports it has continuously evolved over time, and it is based on emerging national research findings and the state's experience in program development, implementation and evaluation. Current research of prevention efforts is proving that effective substance abuse prevention includes evidence-based strategies for addressing risk and protective factors across multiple domains – individual, family, community, and environment. In addition, these strategies must be implemented at appropriate levels of intensity and in appropriate settings such as schools, workplaces, homes and community venues.

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) has developed the following effective strategies that contribute to comprehensive prevention programming:

- Information dissemination- Provide accurate, age appropriate alcohol and other drug information in a culturally sensitive manner. Education
- Promote social competencies and life skills, such as decision making, problem solving, communication, and resistance skills and stress management techniques.
- Positive alternatives Support activities that focus on fun rather than alcohol and other drug use.
- Community and professional mobilization Training in prevention techniques for those individuals and systems who have an impact on the behavior of others (parents, educators, employers, health care professionals, peers, public policy makers and religious leaders).
- Early intervention Identify individuals at highest risk as early as possible, with the provision of intervention services and linkages in an appropriate environment.
- Social policy and environmental change Influence the social policies and norms regarding alcohol and other drug use and abuse.

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