Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
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Factsheet

How teachers can guide students against drug and alcohol related harms



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year:

Targeted Drugs: Alcohol, Drugs (General)

Tags:

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What can teachers do?

Young people are likely to spend more waking hours in the school environment around teachers than at home with their parents, making the school's social environment a key factor influencing the development of young people.

Research has shown that a positive relationship with school, which creates a greater sense of community, attachment, and performance, is associated with reduced potential for drug abuse. As a teacher, you can help a student have a positive relationship with their school by:

- Setting clear rules and boundaries that are consistently enforced in a reasonable and measured manner;
- Keeping an open mind and asking students for their opinions;
- Giving praise and reward for students' good behaviour, achievements and accomplishments;
- Modelling a sense of optimism and a positive view of learning;
- Encouraging constructive use of time and participation in extracurricular activities;
- Encouraging reading for pleasure outside of school hours;
- Being a good listener.
- Modelling appropriate alcohol use behaviours at school events. The availability of alcohol at school events may interfere with drug education and prevention efforts. Be considerate of your school's liquor licensing policy and check if it is in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations for alcohol-free events where children are present.

As a teacher, you can help by correcting common misperceptions that young people have about alcohol and other drugs. One of the most widely held misperceptions is the idea that it is common or normal to use drugs, when **in fact the vast majority of young people have never tried an illegal drug**. See our factsheet on Common Drug Myths.

When talking to young people about drug use, it is most useful to openly communicate the facts, without lecturing or exaggerating.

See also:

- Talking to a young person about alcohol and other drugs
- How to help someone who has taken a drug
- School based-drug prevention programs: What works?

School-based Drug Prevention Programs

A number of drug prevention programs that have been developed for implementation within schools within the context of the Australian curriculum. Developed in consultation and collaboration with teachers, these programs are shown to reduce alcohol/drug use and related harms through skill development and increased awareness. BrowseSchool-based Drug Prevention Programs that have been evaluated and shown to have positive outcomes in Australia.

"If we can offer support through teenage years, we can help; if we offer education we can prevent use."

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

See Teacher booklet for more information.

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