

Passive and Active ATOD Connections

Introduction

This document was created by the Prevention Unit staff of the Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs, at the Vermont Department of Health, as a way to clarify for Coalitions examples of and the differences between active and passive activities. This information is based on definitions and examples from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). According to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, social and recreational activities designed as part of a substance abuse prevention plan are more likely to be effective if they are:

- targeted to youth who may not have adequate adult supervision or who have few opportunities to develop the skills needed to avoid risky behavior,
- intensive, including many hours of involvement in the program,
- part of a comprehensive plan, serving to establish strong community norms against substance abuse, and
- incorporate skills-building components such as critical thinking, decision making and problem solving components into the program design.

Based on these recommendations, VDH Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (ADAP) grantees are required to assure that funded social and recreational activities are run by youth and adults who have had ATOD training, have a clear no use policy and a clear and direct ATOD focus. We often get asked the question, “Do you mean we have to lecture the kids, just when they’re beginning to have fun?” The answer to that is, “No”. It is our hope that the information below will prove helpful in explaining the difference between passive and active strategies, and provides some ideas that Vermont communities have successfully used to have fun and make the ATOD connection.

Passive Strategies

Passive strategies can be described as materials that can be visual and/or written, characterized by one-way communication, such as posters, signs, pamphlets, stickers, policy statements, etc... These strategies generally do not involve an interactive or learning discussion. A good example of a passive strategy that can easily become an interactive strategy is an anti-drug video. When videos were first used in the classroom, an interactive discussion was not always a part of the curriculum. Educators were quick to add a study guide with discussion questions to video presentations to ensure the students correctly understood the information presented and had the opportunity to apply this new knowledge.

Passive Examples:

- ◆ Substance free signs
- ◆ Pamphlets and other written materials
- ◆ Posters
- ◆ Anti-drug videos (with no opportunity for discussion)
- ◆ Gear exchange (with no opportunity for discussion)

- ◆ Banners
- ◆ Stickers, tattoos, magnets, buttons, t-shirts, etc...
- ◆ Policy statements
- ◆ Display with materials

Active Integration

In addition to passive examples of ATOD integration, such as pamphlets, signs and stickers (see complete list below), the integration of interactive ATOD prevention strategies into a substance free event is required by ADAP's New Directions grant program. Active integration is defined as an activity or strategy that engages participants into a discussion or dialogue about a substance.

Below is a list of interactive strategies for integrating ATOD into substance free events or activities. ADAP encourages Coalitions to engage youth to plan, develop and deliver these interactive strategies. The creation of the activity is in and of itself an educational opportunity for youth to increase their knowledge of substances through the researching of answers to the questions.

Active Examples:

- ◆ Games such as ATOD Trivial Pursuit, Jeopardy, Concentration, etc...that can be played with an audience at a dance, coffee hour, comedy/talent show, etc...
- ◆ Learning Stations that require participants to answer one or two "true" or "false" questions about a substance and then discuss with group
- ◆ Skits or role plays during a dance or coffee hour, etc... where the "actors" engage the audience in answering questions or discussing skit
- ◆ Workshops planned, developed and delivered by youth
- ◆ Scavenger hunt type activities that involve "finding answers" or discussing ATOD issues
- ◆ Tickets that allow youth to enter a dance or coffee hour with ATOD questions on them that require participants to visit a display or view posters to obtain the answers (allow for 10-20 different questions to avoid group answers)
- ◆ Discussion guide and questions after the viewing of a video
- ◆ Gear exchange if a question and answer discussion with youth is a component of the exchange

For more information on how to integrate active and passive ATOD activities into your substance free events, please contact regional Prevention Consultant.

References:

1. CSAP Technical Report #13, "A Review of Alternative Activities and Alternatives Programs in Youth-Oriented Prevention" (1997).