The Higher Education Cannabis Prevention Toolkit

Missouri Partners in Prevention is proud to be Missouri’s higher education substance abuse prevention and mental health consortium. In order to see measurable change in the health, safety, and well-being on campus, campuses prevention practitioners must employ evidence-based strategies and models. This series provides a brief synopsis of the publications, articles, and resource documents available to campuses to assist in their substance abuse prevention and mental health intervention efforts. These documents provide a great deal of technical assistance and support. Browse our recommended reading synopsis to learn more about these publications.

Data

The Higher Education Cannabis Prevention Toolkit (published in 2018) was created by the Coalition of Colorado Campus Alcohol and Drug Educators (CADE), the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and researchers at Colorado State University to help institutions understand cannabis prevention among college students, especially as legislation around cannabis changes. The toolkit is divided into 4 sections: 1) Data, 2) health promotion and prevention theory, 3) evidence informed practice, and 4) resources.

The first section on data covers the prevalence and impacts of college student cannabis use, both nationwide and statewide (for Colorado, Oregon, and Washington). As the college environment provides increased access to cannabis, there is a higher risk for initiation of and increased use.¹ Use among college students is higher in states that have legalized cannabis for medical or adult-use, and changes in perception around acceptability, safety, and prevalence of cannabis use are clear. The toolkit then discusses campus-specific data from Colorado State University regarding concurrent alcohol and cannabis use, finding that overall, use of both are associated with negative consequences (lower academic achievement, driving impairment and injury, etc.) and that when used simultaneously, using cannabis after using alcohol significantly increased risk for both alcohol and cannabis related negative consequences.

Health Promotion & Prevention Theory

This section focuses on a few major theories in prevention and health promotion including the stages of change and the social ecological model. It also covers risk and protective factors for collegiate student use of cannabis and discusses the harm reduction model and its necessity, especially if use rates on campus are highly prevalent.
Evidence Informed Practice

The third section focuses on evidence informed practice to effectively prevent or reduce cannabis use among college students, including social norms campaigns and messaging, promoting protective behavioral strategies around cannabis use, utilizing screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment, using environmental management strategies such as policy review and enforcement, and implementing bystander intervention education around cannabis. The toolkit also recommends creating shared language on campus to bridge the gap between students and prevention practitioners. The Drug Free Schools and Communities Act is also mentioned as a reminder for compliance with federal law and how cannabis is not allowed on premises.

Information is also provided about collaborating with retailers while working to limit the availability and accessibility of cannabis for youth, particularly targeting the 4 P’s of marketing: price, place, product, and promotion.

Resources

Finally, resources to assist in this ongoing work are provided, such as helpful web links and a sample of the CUDIT-R (Cannabis Use Disorder Inventory Tool) which can aid in screening. Other research articles cited in this document are also listed.

Read ‘The Higher Education Cannabis Prevention Toolkit’ here!

naspa.org/images/uploads/events/Higher_Education_Cannabis_Toolkit.pdf

Citations