

# Substance Abuse Prevention Environmental Prevention Strategies

Environmental strategies seek to make change on the large scale of the community, impacting community norms, regulations, and access/availability of substances. These universal strategies can be implemented at the school, community or county level. While some prevention programs are directed towards specific individuals and are only able to reach a limited number of participants, environmental strategies work to improve the health and wellness of everyone in the environment or community.

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA) is dedicated to supporting efforts that are grounded in science. To ensure publicly-funded services are effective, HCA collaborates with researchers and prevention scientists at the University of Washington, Washington State University, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' Research and Data Analysis Division, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

HCA maintains a searchable online database of effective programs and strategies for general substance abuse prevention, mental health promotion programs, and environmental strategies. Examples of environmental strategies found in this database, the Excellence in Prevention Strategy List ([TheAthenaForum.org/EBP](http://TheAthenaForum.org/EBP)), include:

- 1. Advertising restrictions:** Implementing policies that limit alcohol and other drug advertising.
- 2. Changing hours and days of sale:** Changes in licensing that modify hours of service can have a significant effect on drinking and drinking-related problems.
- 3. Changing conditions of availability:**
  - a. Densities or concentrations of retail outlets:** The number of outlets may be restricted directly or indirectly through policies that make licenses more difficult to obtain (such as increasing the cost of a license).
  - b. Drinking locations and possession of alcohol:** Specifying locations where drinking cannot occur is a policy that has been implemented with laws about public drinking and/or public intoxication, as well as those prohibiting drinking in parks, other recreational locations, or at the workplace.
  - c. Restricting access to alcohol at social events:** This strategy involves restricting the flow of alcohol at parties and other events to reduce overall social availability of alcohol.
  - d. Restrictions on price, promotions and alcohol discounts:** Regulation or restriction of "happy hours" and other price promotions of alcohol.
- 4. Compliance checks:** The systematic checking by law enforcement of whether a licensed establishment actually sells alcohol to underage persons or "underage looking persons."

5. **Economic interventions (increasing taxes):** Increasing excise taxes on alcohol to decrease consumption.
6. **License suspension/revocation:** Sanction of suspending or revoking a license for underage individuals that violate drinking or marijuana use laws.
7. **Social host ordinance:** A local ordinance that establishes either a civil or criminal offense for a person who provides alcohol to persons under 21 years of age and enables law enforcement to cite the individual who hosted the party or who owns or controls the property where parties occur.
8. **Zero-tolerance laws:** Lower blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits for underage drivers and/or a risk of loss of license when an underage youth has been found to be drinking, even if the youth was not driving.

## Promising Programs to Prevent Youth Marijuana Use

Promising programs are those based on statistical analyses or a well-established theory of change, and those that have shown potential for meeting “evidence-based” or “research-based” criteria. As part of DBHR’s implementation of Initiative 502, the following environmental strategies are identified as promising programs or practices to prevent youth marijuana use.

- Policy review and development
- Purchase surveys coupled with reward and reminder
- Restrictions at community events

More information about environmental strategies is available at [TheAthenaForum.org](http://TheAthenaForum.org), including:

- Strategies for effective marketing campaigns, messaging and working with news media
- Environmental Strategy Implementation Fidelity Assessment Guide
- Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America’s (CADCA) The Coalition Impact: Environmental Prevention Strategies publication
- Guides for states and communities supporting environmental prevention
- CollegeAIM Alcohol Intervention Matrix

*“Evidence exists that well-conceived and implemented policies at the local, state and national levels can reduce community level alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems.”*

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program, Office of National Drug Control Policy, RFA 2015

