



Teaching Responsible Alcohol Use

F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY
Case Study

Discussion Guide

Background Information

Alcohol problems in the military are not unlike those in the general population. According to a 2002 survey by the Department of Defense, nearly half of all active-duty military personnel consume beer, wine or liquor in excess of what could be considered light or moderate drinking. Adverse consequences range from lost productivity, assault and domestic violence to problem drinking and alcoholism rates similar to that found in the general population.

Goal:

To create a responsible drinking culture at F. E. Warren Air Force Base.

Challenges:

- Translate the recommendations from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at US Colleges*, and The National Academy of Sciences: *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility* into actions that fit the culture.
- Overcoming a sense of hopelessness that the alcohol problem was just “too difficult to solve.”
- Change the widely held notion that “responsible drinking” was seven or eight drinks.

Approach:

A three-pronged, integrated approach was used:

1. Individuals (including at-risk individuals)
2. Base Population (campus)
3. Surrounding Communities

Primary Strategy:

F. E. Warren used norming as the central part of their program. The norm they use is 0-0-1-3. The numbers stand for four limits on alcohol:

- Zero alcohol for people under the age of 21.
- Zero alcohol if you are driving (zero DUIs).
- One drink per hour maximum, if you are drinking.
- Three drinks in a night, maximum.

Dramatic Outcomes:

- Underage drinking was slashed by 81%
- DUIs were cut by 86%
- The average age of offenders rose from 19 to more than 22 years old.
- Average BAC for incidents fell from 0.10 to 0.08

Key Learnings:

1. Guard against making DUIs your sole focus.

Drinking and driving is a significant danger and the chief cause of death and injury, but there are adverse consequences of all kinds that should be addressed. These include everything from sexual assault and domestic violence, to suicide and homicide.

2. Avoid the lure of media campaigns.

Don't be seduced into thinking that the right ad or clever slogan is the answer to your problems. Media campaigns are an essential part of culture change, but they must be part of a comprehensive, integrated whole campaign, including training.

3. Relate the idea of norming to your media campaign.

Set expectations in clear, defined terms. You must actually teach what is responsible, such as 0-0-1-3. Generic slogans such as "Drink responsibly" or "Friends don't let friends drive drunk" don't work.

4. Avoid any hint that your campaign is a moral effort.

Strategies should be based on science and safety, not morality. In spite of the incredible toll alcohol problems take on today's society, young people will turn a deaf ear if they suspect your underlying motivation is some form of neoprohibitionism, they will turn you off.

5. Provide young people with safe alternatives.

Always include your target audience in decision making – ask them what they like to do, where they like to go. Include a variety of niche options that appeal to a wide range of tastes. F. E. Warren used activities that ranged from pizza parties and midnight basketball-and-music sessions (Hip Hop Hoops) to pinball, movie and cartoon fests, club nights with DJs and group outings off-base.

“If you are concerned about the cost, the cost of doing nothing is too high. We have the research now and we can advance our health and safety to new heights if we will tackle the issues and have the humility to learn what works.”

-Evan Hoapili, Colonial, USAF
Commander, 90th Space Wing
F. E. Warren Air Force Base

4 Ways FACE Can Help You Get Started

- 1. Get Support:** Go to the FACE website (www.faceproject.org/storiesofchange) to find additional, free downloadable resources related to this Case Study.
- 2. Assess Your Community:** Take *The Community Alcohol Personality Survey*.[®] This survey will help you identify alcohol problems and contributing factors in your community. It will then identify research-based strategies that you can choose from to create a specific plan of action. You can download it free from our website.
- 3. Create Change:** Use *A Fork In the Road: The Path to Reducing Underage Drinking in your Community*[®] to communicate your findings and identify a plan of action that is relevant to your community.
- 4. Learn More About Youth and Alcohol:** Check out the additional resources on the FACE website.