

The Role of Sex Education in Substance Abuse Prevention

Presenter: Dessa Bergen-Cico Ph.D. Associate Professor, College of Human Services and Health Professions Syracuse University – and - Director of Curriculum Research and Development Outside The Classroom E-mail: dkbergen@syr.edu

The primary motivation for substance use is to facilitate sexual opportunity and interpersonal connection. Moreover, substance use is a factor in the majority (75%) of sexual assaults among college students. (U.S. Dept of Justice) Among college students 52.2% of males and 34.2% of females consumed 5 or more alcoholic drinks the last time they drank; with 24.7% of males and 6.4% of females consuming 9 or more drinks. (ACHA, 2006) Current literature and clinical experience demonstrate that alcohol consumption at this rate reduces the likelihood that college students practice safe sex, obtain or give consent and increases their likelihood of engaging in either nonconsensual sexual activity or sexual experiences they later regret. Given the co-occurring risk factors associated with substance use and sexual behavior effective prevention must encompass both content areas.

The federal government has acknowledged the importance of sexual assault among college students by mandating that sexual assault prevention efforts be conducted on campuses that receive federal funding (Neville & Heppner, 2002). In 2006 the State of California passed legislation requiring all state colleges and universities to provide sexual assault prevention to all incoming first year students. In response to these state and federal mandates college education programs have emerged as one of the more popular strategies for sexual assault prevention. At the same time prevention in higher education has become increasingly specialized by topic and department i.e. separating mental health, physical health, sexual health, violence prevention, alcohol and other drug use. There is emerging support in the literature to approach sexual health and sexual violence prevention as part of the constellation of young adult/adolescent risk behaviors; whereby including substance use in conjunction with sex education and sexual violence prevention addresses the risk factors universally common to these behaviors.(Morrison, Hardison, Mathew, and O 'Neil, 2004)

This program will review legislation, research and clinical case studies that support the integration of both alcohol and other drug prevention with sexual health and sexual assault prevention. Participants will review national and campus specific evidence based programs and discuss both clinical and community outreach application.

Objective #1: Discuss and explore models of effective prevention programs in higher education
Content:

- Presentation of innovative and effective sexual assault and substance abuse prevention programs in higher education
- Review of effective universal prevention demonstrating college students ability to understand how alcohol effects one's ability to give consent
- Case reviews illustrating the seamless connections between these issues and how to efficiently and effectively reduce sexual health risks and substance abuse among college students

Objective #2: Identify and articulate why sex education is a critical component of effective substance abuse prevention

Content:

- ACHA National College Health Assessment data
- Current research in national college alcohol and other drug use and associated consequences
- Department of Justice data

Objective #3: Identify the co-occurring risk factors among college students related to substance use and sexual health and safety

Content:

- Primary motivation for alcohol and other drug use
- Primary risk factors for unprotected sex
- Risk factors for sexual assault among college students

References:

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