



Roanoke Area Youth Substance Abuse Coalition
Promoting a Safe & Drug Free Roanoke Valley

www.raysac.org

RAYSAC Radar

Population Level Approach In Reducing Teen Drug and Alcohol Use

Communities across the Nation are becoming more aware of the dangers and health risks associated with underage drinking and drug use. Rapidly reducing these problems would substantially improve the economic, public health and public safety conditions of every state in the Union.

Families United, a group of passionate individuals who are concerned with reducing teen drug and alcohol use are using five evidence based *kernels* (*Embry and Biglan, 2008*) to alter the environment of risk and protective factors that seem to predict youth alcohol, tobacco, and drug use along with related problems of delinquency, violence, poor academics, and early sexual behavior. The five kernels can be utilized for all children between the ages of 5 and 18 (adapted to age and developmental stage) and involve the following:

Increasing Family Monitoring: Parental & family clarity and commitment to their child about not using alcohol, tobacco and drugs (ATOD) and about that child's friends' not using alcohol, tobacco and drugs. This includes a commitment to speak to the child's friends' parents. This clarity and commitment can significantly reduce ATOD use and related delinquency.

Rewarding Not Using or Breaking Rules: Family recognition and reinforcement of children and teens doing the right thing (e.g., not using ATOD or not engaging in deviant behaviors associated with ATOD) has been widely shown to reduce problematic behavior more effectively than punishments, and the same procedure can dramatically reduce ATOD use if the child has already started using based on studies from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Such rewards increased parent-child warmth, key to children's disclosure to parents.

Reducing Sleep Deprivation: Ensuring a child has good sleep patterns, by reducing access to electronic media before bedtime, has multiple effects on risk and protective factors associated with ATOD, school success, family relations, mental health, aggression and obesity.

Changing Fatty Acid Ratios in Child's Diet: Based on extensive data the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse reported by the Institute of Medicine's Report on the *Prevention of Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, increasing children's "brain food" (omega-3 found in fish oil and reducing omega-6 found in processed foods) protects a child's basic brain function, brain receptors and brain chemistry from the risk of ATOD as well as other problematic behaviors including depression and aggression.

Increasing Parent Networking to Child's Friends Families: Sharing and communicating the above with five of the parents of one's child's friends, fosters a community norm of enforcing these protective factors by all families to benefit all children in the community, which then provides a population-level public health and safety benefit.

Parents! Use Your Voice...they are listening!

(source: www.PAXIS.org)