

SERVICE DELIVERY

Research indicates the most effective efforts towards the prevention of alcohol and drug use among children, youth and families involves entire communities. Targeting just the 'drug user' will not necessarily result in significant changes; parents, local businesses and the media need to also be active partners in any community response. AADAC, a key partner with the St. Albert Community Drug Response Committee provides extensive research literature indicating key starting points in the delivery of programs and services, as well as key transition points in the lives of children and youth.

With this knowledge we can incorporate **education, prevention** and **treatment** services that build on protective factors within children and youth. These services are not meant to replace the great work already happening in our schools and throughout community organizations, but will provide enhanced resources and materials to augment existing programs.

The following programs and services are a coordinated effort of the many service providers from within St. Albert. From educational programs delivered by our youth, to a community wide "Drug Endangered Children" protocol, to specialized treatment services, together we are all working towards a common goal, to ensure a successful response towards the prevention of substance use and or abuse.

EDUCATION

EXPECTING RESPECT - A PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM

Expecting Respect is an innovative program based on the principle that peer education is an effective strategy to deliver messages that encourage healthy decision-making in youth. Research indicates that interactive peer education is an effective tool in promoting healthy attitudes and behaviors.

Students

- Presents peer educators as role models and credible source of information.
- Increases awareness, leading to healthy decision-making.
- Offers lesson plan topics based on issues relevant to students.

Senior High Topics

- Sexual health and reducing your risks.
- Sexual health and decision-making.
- Harassment.
- Healthy relationships.
- Tobacco and social justices.
- Decision-making.
- Sexual decisions.
- Substance use/misuse.

Junior High Topics

- Healthy relationships.
- Bullying.
- Media.
- Tobacco.
- Drugs, alcohol and gambling.



Teachers and Schools

- Provides an alternative learning strategy.
- Ties into many curricula – science, English, phys-ed, health, CALM, religion and more.
- Strengthens school climate and community connections.

Expecting Respect Will Provide Youth School With

- Peer educator training.
- School coordinator training.
- Program resources and materials (manuals/videos).
- On-going support.

Peer Educators

- Develop leadership and presentation skills.
- Provide community service, work experience and course credit opportunities.
- Build confidence and self-esteem.

HEALTH HYPE

“Health Hype” is a school newsletter insert from School Health Nurses designed to provide useful health tips to parents. A series of six articles was created to enhance parents understanding of the factors that influence substance abuse prevention. These will be distributed to all schools to be included in their school newsletters.



RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION

Most children grow up healthy and confident, and avoid using drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Several factors have been identified that separate those children and youth that use drugs from those who do not. “Risk factors”, such as living in a chaotic home environment, appear to make drug abuse more likely. “Protective factors” appear to reduce the risk of substance abuse. Protective factors include those things that help children and youth cope more effectively with risk factors and stressful life events. This ability to “bounce back” is called resilience”.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Strong family bonds, or a positive bond with at least one other caring adult.
- Parental supervision of children’s activities and their choice of friends.
- Good social skills.
- Clear, consistently enforced rules of behavior.
- Success in school.
- Participation in positive social activities.

Studies have shown that children at risk who have even one protective factor are less likely to become involved with drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.



BOUNCING BACK: ENCOURAGING RESILIENCE IN YOUR CHILD

“Resiliency” is a hot concept in mental health research these days. It assumes that everyone has abilities that can help one survive and even thrive in stressful situations. It is the ability to “bounce back” from misfortune or change, and it is related to decreased potential for substance abuse.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT CHILDREN

- They have social skills.
- They have good problem solving skills.
- They demonstrate independence (autonomy).
- They have a clear sense of purpose and direction.

HOW CAN PARENTS NURTURE RESILIENCE IN THEIR CHILDREN?

- Be aware of key milestones and transitions in your child’s life, such as entering or changing schools, or changing or losing friends. Be available and supportive at these times.
- Listen to your child. They should always know that you are there for them.
- Allow your child to solve some of his or her own problems. Let them see you struggle with and solve your own problems, and model when it is time to seek help with your problem.
- Let kids know how capable they are. Everyone needs a cheering section!
- Encourage them to ask for help when necessary.



MODELING A HEALTHY ATTITUDE TOWARD ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Parents have a very important role in preventing their children from becoming involved with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. There are several simple ways to give your children the right kinds of messages about substance abuse. Here are some things you can do:

- Carefully examine your own alcohol, tobacco and drug use. **Your behaviors have a very big influence on your children!** Talk with your children about why you have chosen to use or not use certain substances, and in what circumstances.
- Talk with your kids, at an age appropriate level about substance use. You can raise the topic while watching television or while involved in a family activity. Help your children make sense out of conflicting messages. You do not have to be an expert to talk to your child about these issues!
- Teach your child that medication is not always necessary for minor physical complaints. Lying down is often as effective as a pain medication for a mild headache.
- How you respond to “Can I have a taste of your drink?” really depends on you and your beliefs. Unless allowing children to drink is part of your cultural background, it is probably best to say “no”.
- Learn what you can about alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Your children will be more likely to ask you for advice.



HOW TO ACTIVELY LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD

It can be tough to talk with your kids, especially about sensitive topics like drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, and it can be hard to listen to them, especially when you don't like what they are saying!! However, if you are open, honest and easy to talk with, you will build a stronger relationship with your children. This process works in two ways: **hearing** what your children are saying, and **sharing** your own thoughts and feelings with them.

HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR KIDS

- **Ask** open-ended questions that require more than a one-word answer.
- **Repeat** what your child has shared with you, or say it back in your own words. This will ensure that you have understood what was said.
- **Affirm** your child's feelings. This will make your child feel supported.
- **Summarize** what you've heard. This shows your child that you have been listening.

Choose a time to talk that is free of distractions, and ensure privacy. For example, a good time to talk may be while driving your child to an activity.



PROTECTING YOUR CHILD FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE

We all want to ensure that our children stay away from alcohol, drugs and tobacco, but talking with your child about these topics can be challenging! You may not know where to start, or you may feel unsure about your subject. Here are some guidelines for parents to use to help protect their children from substance abuse:

- The **most** important thing you can do is to communicate with and listen to your child.
- Educate yourself on the **facts** about drugs and alcohol. Try logging on to www.aadac.com for accurate information. Scare tactics do not work with kids!
- Use examples from the media to talk about alcohol, drugs and decision making.
- Have a disciplinary style that is fair with clear, consistently enforced guidelines for behavior. Kids with problems often come from families where discipline is either very strict or permissive.
- Demonstrate responsible decision-making in your own use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
- Help your children feel good about themselves by recognizing their efforts.
- Encourage participation in a variety of activities.
- Let your child know it is natural to have problems and make mistakes.
- Talk with your child about how you made difficult decisions in the past. Discuss whether or not you would make the same decision today, and why.



DRUGS AND ALCOHOL: SAYING NO AND STAYING COOL

As children get older, their friends become increasingly important, and parents may feel that their own influence is decreasing. Still, as a parent, you have a significant role in helping your kids learn the skills they need to resist negative peer pressure and to remain popular.

Kids need to know in simple, immediate terms why smoking, drinking, and experimenting with drugs is inappropriate and sometimes dangerous. Here are some tips for discussion with your kids:

- Emphasizing immediate consequences is more effective than discussing issues that children and youth perceive as happening only to “old people”, such as lung cancer. You could instead describe how smoking turns your teeth turn yellow, and makes your breath, hair and clothes smell bad.
- Illegal drugs are usually mixed with other, possibly very dangerous chemicals and other drugs. You don’t know exactly what you are getting.
- Drug use can interfere with physical and emotional development in young people.
- Help your children understand that their true friends will respect their decisions, and that “friends” who do not, are not really the sort of friends they want.
- Rehearse with them as many ways of saying “NO” as possible.
- Reassure them that doing the right thing is a mark of maturity, and a sure sign that they are growing up.

PREVENTION

AADAC School Strategy – Model For The Prevention of Addictions Through Education and Early Intervention

The AADAC School Strategy is a model for how AADAC will work with others to provide more effective prevention and early intervention school-based programs across Alberta. Research shows that strength-based comprehensive and long-term programs are the most effective. Young people are least likely to abuse alcohol, other drugs and gambling when prevention programs are provided throughout their school years.

The AADAC School Strategy has seven goals to guide service in schools:

- Helping Alberta students develop a practical understanding of issues related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and gambling.
- Encouraging a commitment to healthy lifestyles and the avoidance of substance related problems and addiction (including tobacco and gambling).
- Helping students develop specific skills that allow them to evaluate and avoid situations of risk.
- Helping educators, parents and other key adults enhance protective factors and resilience.
- Helping schools respond constructively to risk factors including addiction in the home.
- Providing early intervention and harm reduction for high-risk students.
- Providing access to smoking cessation and treatment for alcohol, drug and gambling problems.

AADAC's School Strategy emphasizes creative ways to work together to deliver effective and comprehensive programs in schools. Program elements that can be used consistently across the province will benefit youth. Resources based on best practice will shape our school-based programs. Together we can better meet the needs of students and set the stage for an addiction-free future for Alberta's students.

RCMP St. Albert Detachment and K-Division Drug Endangered Children Program

St. Albert has been identified by the RCMP as a desirable location to pilot a "Drug Endangered Children" Program. The program is intended to enhance community education, mobilization and preparedness related to children and crystal-methamphetamine, as well as children found in drug-crime scenes (Marijuana grow-houses, clandestine labs and crack-houses).

The "Drug Endangered Children" Program has been developed by the RCMP through best practice research and on-site observation with other North American police and drug enforcement agencies. The Program's intent is to educate first responders (Police, Fire, Ambulance and Emergency Room staff), key community resources (support agencies, schools/educators, elected officials) and the public overall regarding the warning signs, risks and implications of crystal-meth in the community. In addition to this educational component, various tools and information will be provided to take the program beyond simple visibility to actually enhancing the coordinated mobilization of the community against this emerging problem and fostering partnerships between police, first responders, community organizations and citizens in addressing this issue.

Crystal-Methamphetamine – An Addiction Story

Starting in May 2004, and carrying on through the 2004/2005 school year, presentations will be made to Junior and Senior High school students and parents by a recovering teen addict who will share her story in the hopes of helping youth to make better decisions about drug use and to help parents recognize the signs that lead to drug use among teens.

Crystal-Methamphetamine Information Session For Retailers and Pharmacists

Crystal-meth manufacturing is on the rise using common household items sold in retail stores.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, Members from the RCMP K-Division Clandestine Lab will host presentations to St. Albert retailers and pharmacists to explore how, as a community, we can regulate and monitor the purchase of common household items used to make crystal-meth.

TREATMENT

AADAC is committed to providing a range of treatment services to youth including information, prevention, early intervention, outpatient counseling and treatment services. Community partnerships are key to AADAC's efforts to contribute to the optimal development of youth in St. Albert.

As well, AADAC has been instrumental in assisting the St. Albert Community Drug Response Committee establish the Expecting Respect Program, the AADAC School Strategy and is currently working on developing the AADAC Information Series and a youth treatment group specifically for the needs of the St. Albert community.

Through education, the 'AADAC Information Series' sessions provide a non-judgmental opportunity for youth to self-evaluate the effects of alcohol and other drugs on their lives. The program is designed to invite young people, who may be having problems because of substance use, to actively contemplate their own situation and to consider some choices. In particular, the objectives are to provide teens with an opportunity to:

- Increase awareness of the positive and negative effects of using alcohol and other drugs.
- Evaluate personal consequences of substance abuse.
- Examine choices that are available in relation to their alcohol and other drug use.
- Learn about resources available (self-help, student assistance, peer support, treatment options).
- Increase awareness of the process of change.