

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



TIP SHEET

PROJECT ALERT: IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Project ALERT is a skills-based curriculum that teaches teens how to say “No.” Through a series of comprehensive lessons, Project ALERT motivates students against drug use, cultivates new non-use attitudes and beliefs, and equips teens with the skills and strategies they will use to resist drugs.

The Project ALERT two-year core curriculum consists of 11 lessons for 7th grade students, plus three booster lessons that should be delivered the following year when students are then 8th grade students. The Project ALERT core curriculum is organized into four parts.

1. Motivating nonuse (Lessons 1-3).
2. Identifying pressures to use drugs, learning to resist those pressures, and practicing resistance skills (Lessons 4-6).
3. Review of key concepts and resistance skills practice (Lessons 7, 9, and 11).
4. Special issues: Inhalant Abuse (Lesson 8) and Smoking Cessation (Lesson 10).

These lessons build on each other and should be taught in consecutive order.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ILLINOIS SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION PROVIDERS Project ALERT lessons should be implemented in 45 minute sessions and can be taught once or up to twice per week.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

HOW Project ALERT is taught, is as important as WHAT is taught. The following strategies, drawn from research on effective learning and behavior change, are critical to successful program delivery and have been incorporated into the curriculum.

Resistance Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual’s belief that he or she is capable of accomplishing a particular task. If we expect students to resist drugs, we must help them feel they can do so. A key mechanism is the teacher’s own belief that students are capable of resisting. As a teacher,

it is essential to communicate this belief clearly and honestly in the form of specific feedback after resistance practice. Some examples include:

- “You looked and sounded like you meant what you said!”
- “I like the way you worded that; I would have stopped pressuring you.”
- “You handled that well.”
- “That was a mature way of responding.”

Active Student Involvement and Practice

Student participation has been built into the curriculum whenever possible. Research indicates that people learn more, remember more, and feel more effectively if they actually do something that involves them in the learning process. Project ALERT activities encourage doing – making lists of reasons, discussing videos, performing “saying no” skits, rewriting ads, writing “saying no” responses, and suggesting alternative behaviors.

Modeling

In Project ALERT, the teacher models resistance skills, as do the older teens in the videos. Make sure you practice your modeling of resistance skills ahead of time to make sure you are comfortable with the situation and can effectively illustrate ways of resisting.

Reinforcement

Honest, direct praise can be motivating. Verbal reinforcement methods include repeating correct responses and solutions, elaborating on a student’s response, and directly reinforcing what the student said or did. Nonverbal methods can be just as reinforcing and include smiling, nodding, or giving the student a thumbs up sign.

Validation

Validation means acknowledging students’ feelings, sometimes before they express them or sometimes even when they deny them. For teens a sense of being valued for whom they are and for their uniqueness are essential for healthy psychological development.

Daily Goals

Each lesson begins with a statement of what students will accomplish that day. Teachers should begin each lesson by stating what the goals are and at the end of each lesson the teacher should reinforce the students’ abilities to achieve those goals. Research indicates that stating daily goals promotes learning and self-efficacy.

Respect

Students who are treated with respect are more receptive and motivated. Always look to respond gently to a wrong answer by acknowledging any truth in it, validating the students’ feelings (“Many people think that”), and providing follow up of the correct answer.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is contagious and primes students for success. When we teach with enthusiasm we send students the message we like what we are teaching and we believe in it.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about technical assistance or the services we offer, please contact providerservices@prevention.org or call 217-836-5346.

Project ALERT Overview and Internet Support: www.projectalert.com

SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices – NREPP
www.nrepp.samhsa.gov