

From the Office for Substance Abuse Prevention

On July 28 and 29, 1988, the Minority Substance Abuse Prevention Project (MSAPP), Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (OSAP) met in Washington, DC for the purpose of drafting a training manual. The National Center has invited Grace Powless Sage, who attended the meeting in July, to offer her commentary on that meeting—Journal Manager

The Office of Substance Abuse Prevention was created by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act to provide a cornerstone of the Federal demand reduction strategy. OSAP's primary goal is alcohol and drug abuse prevention among young Americans. Research indicates that attitudes and practices toward alcohol and drugs are formed during the pre-teen and adolescent years. Almost no use of cigarettes, alcohol, or illicit drugs is initiated after age 25. Therefore, the most successful efforts to prevent alcohol abuse and other substance abuse problems must begin early.

OSAP places a special emphasis on high-risk youth—those young people who meet one or more of the following criteria: (a) abused and/or neglected youngsters; (b) homeless or runaway youths; (c) gateway drug (marijuana, alcohol, tobacco) users; (d) young people who are physically or mentally handicapped; (e) pregnant teens; (f) school drop-outs; (g) children of alcoholics and other substance abusers; (h) latch-key children; and (i) young people who are economically disadvantaged. OSAP has a strong commitment to youth who experience cultural and ethnic differences. High-risk youth usually have multiple risk factors, and cultural and ethnic differences magnify those risk factors exponentially.

High-risk youth are the most difficult of young people to reach and help. Recent surveys indicate that some illicit drug use by young people is declining. While that is very encouraging, we know less about high-risk youth, except that they tend to be heavier users. High-risk youth are seldom among the populations that are normally surveyed. Commonly used information gathering techniques fail to capture information about this elusive group. Because of the complexity of alcohol and substance abuse problems, there are no single, simple solutions. Instead, a variety of prevention and early intervention programs are needed. To attain efficacy, these approaches must be sensitive to cultural and ethnic norms, values, and patterns, as well as the integration of these programs across community institutions. OSAP seeks to assist communities in helping themselves through effective prevention and early intervention efforts.

Therefore, MSAPP and OSAP are developing this training guide/manual for work with community-based programs. These programs help identify and test existing and new prevention concepts for high-risk youth. The training guide was drafted with procedures and criteria to evaluate four areas:

1. How high-risk youths and their families are recruited and retained in the various programs;
2. What mechanisms are used to generate community support for alcohol/drug prevention programs among cultural/ethnic groups;
3. What adaptations are necessary to make conventional prevention approaches accessible and culturally acceptable to the diverse populations served by this and other grant programs; and
4. What new and innovative prevention and early intervention approaches and strategies can be identified from the practices of the grantees.

While MSAPP and OSAP are involved in the drafting of a relevant and useful training guide, it has become abundantly clear that what is a necessary link is the trainers who will use this training guide. They are important in providing a connection between the training guide and the application and mobilization of the training information. What we are seeking is people who are interested in becoming trainers. We feel those individuals must possess three valuable qualities: (a) they must be highly motivated presenters who can enable the audience (front-line service providers) to become involved and motivated as well; (b) they must help their audience to become actively involved in the training experience through highly participatory exercises; and (c) they must be trained (through education or experience) in the field of alcohol/substance abuse information so they can provide practical information to the audience as well as training guide modules.

Anyone interested in becoming involved at this level should send a resume, vita or other related materials to:

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These are volunteer positions with applications being accepted through December, 1988.