

CSAP

Partnership Perspectives

Volume 2
Number 2
Summer 1995

Employers as Partners in Prevention

Can employers make a difference in the prevention of alcohol and other drug problems? The answer is yes. In SAMHSA's CSAP Community Partnerships, employers have become an increasingly important resource and are assuming new leadership roles.

The growing emphasis on involving employers is consistent with the mission of comprehensive, community-wide organizing for prevention. Among the private-sector organizations CSAP grantees are encouraged to include in their partnership efforts, local businesses are particularly important. Employers can be a powerful force for positive change within the community. Through their roles as community leaders, they can be a significant factor in legitimizing and sustaining prevention efforts. Because adults spend so much time at work, employers are more than an economic force in their communities; they are potentially a major influence on families and on community values, norms, and behaviors.

Two Major Roles for Employers

Community Partnerships have involved employers in two main areas of alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. First, they have encouraged employers to focus on the broader community by getting involved in local prevention efforts. These have ranged from serving on partnership task forces and committees to donating resources, funds, or in-kind goods and services to local programs. In many communities, employers have played key leadership roles.

Second, Community Partnerships have encouraged employers to focus on the internal community of the workplace by establishing or enhancing their own employee assistance and wellness programs. Partnerships have also worked closely with employers to support workplaces that are free of alcohol and other drug use through such measures as prohibiting alcohol at social functions.

Workplace prevention efforts can range from counseling employees with substance abuse problems to establishing a comprehensive written policy and providing health and wellness programs for both employees and their families. Many Community Partnerships offer information, materials, and technical assistance to employers wanting to establish drug-free workplace policies and programs. Once programs

in the workplace are initiated, partnerships have assisted with training for supervisors, managers, and employees. They have also helped to link small businesses with local employee assistance consortia—groups of businesses that pool resources in order to make services more affordable.

Community Partnership leaders have explored many different ways to reach out to employers in their communities and have become involved in new local networks. Nonprofit organizations—government agencies, schools, colleges, clinics, and hospitals, for example—deal with many of the same workplace issues as large for-profit businesses. Clubs and service organizations like Chambers of Commerce, the Jaycees, and local chapters of Lions, Rotary, and Kiwanis are closely aligned with businesses in their efforts to reduce substance abuse. Small businesses (those that employ 100 or fewer people), unions, and trade associations have become an important part of the process as well.

What's in It for Employers?

For many years, larger employers have acknowledged the relationship between the health of their employees and their own profitability by operating Employee Assistance Programs and/or Drug-Free Workplace Programs closely tied to employee performance measures. They have found that by attempting to prevent alcohol and other drug abuse and related problems in the workplace, they can minimize or reduce the impact and cost of accidents, absenteeism, and workers' compensation expenses. Employers also report improved morale and appreciation for a safer workplace when such programs have been established. By collaborating with local community leaders and agencies, employers are also investing in their current and future workforce.

The Special Needs of Small Businesses

For small businesses, which are often struggling with day-to-day management and operational issues, just making next week's payroll may be a concern. Small

Continued on page 4



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

SAMHSA

Partnership Perspectives

Partnership Perspectives is published quarterly by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Director, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Elaine M. Johnson, Ph.D.

Director, Division of Community Prevention and Training

Ruth Sanchez-Way, Ph.D.

Chief, Community Prevention and Demonstrations Branch

Dave Robbins

CSAP Liaison

Barbara Anderson Kosogof

Editor

Hank Resnik

Managing Editor

Marilyn Barstow

Editorial Advisers

Pat Green

Margaret K. Gwaltney

Carol Marcus

Charles Williams

Publication of information in *Partnership Perspectives* does not imply endorsement by CSAP or the Federal Government.

Comments are welcome. Address them to the editor at:

Partnership Perspectives

The CDM Group, Inc.

5530 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 1660

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Prevention WORKS!

IN THIS ISSUE

Keeping Employers Involved	2
Interview: Melvin Forbes	3
CSAP News	5
Partnership Profiles	6
Q & A	8
Resources	10
Toolbox	11

Keeping Employers Involved

by Ruth Sanchez-Way, Ph.D.

Director, Division of Community Prevention and Training

Since the inception of SAMHSA's CSAP Community Partnership program, we have recognized that it is critically important to involve local employers as active partners in prevention, both in the workplace and the community. The benefits to all the participants—to businesses and to the community as a whole—are numerous. Yet many partnerships find working with the business community a challenge. Even when local employers do become involved, sustaining their involvement requires knowledge and skill.

CSAP has learned over the years that a few basic principles can be helpful for involving businesses in prevention and keeping them involved. Perhaps most important, Community Partnership leaders who are not themselves business people need to understand the perspective of those who are. To borrow from the traditional Native American saying, it's important to "walk in the shoes" of an employer or business manager in order to develop a long-term, cooperative relationship. People in the business world see things somewhat differently from those in the human and social services.

A key difference is that in the business world there is often a concern with the financial impact and the short-term benefits of new initiatives. Once convinced that a new direction should be taken, a business leader is usually quick to implement the decision. Another contrast is that, in small businesses, decisions tend to be made by just a few people. Business people also tend to be results-oriented and impatient with abstractions. This is especially true of owners and managers of smaller businesses, many of whom are "take-charge" entrepreneurs.



Just like human service organizations, every business has its own distinct corporate culture, its own way of managing day-to-day activities and getting things done. The key to involving employers and keeping them involved is to find the common ground of business and prevention—and then to build on those commonalities.

Employers may not readily identify alcohol and other drug abuse as a concern. But most employers today are concerned about the increasing cost of problems such as health care, accidents, tardiness, and lost productivity, which may be related to alcohol and other drug abuse. A focus on these problems can lead to alcohol and other drug abuse prevention initiatives in the workplace. That, in turn, can lead to a greater concern with the overall health and well-being of employees and their families. And that concern can be tied to a healthier, more unified community.

More and more partnerships have come to view local employers as long-term partners in prevention. The progress has been encouraging, and we hope that partnerships will continue to see the benefits of getting the business community involved—and keeping them involved. ■

An Interview with Melvin Forbes

An Employer's Viewpoint

Melvin Forbes is president and chief executive officer of Corporations Against Drug Abuse (CADA), a not-for-profit organization based in Washington, DC. CADA was established by local businesses in 1990 to provide a vehicle for local employers to address alcohol and other drug problems in both the workplace and the community. It is supported by approximately 40 local businesses ranging from large companies like IBM and MCI to smaller, neighborhood businesses. At the time of this interview, Melvin Forbes was on loan from an executive position at MCI. He now has joined the permanent staff of CADA.

Perspectives: Why do you think it's important for people in business to be involved in prevention efforts?

Forbes: Potential funding sources for prevention are dwindling a lot faster than many people in the nonprofit world would like to think. As an executive on loan from MCI and a businessman, I understand that, and I think it's important to take proactive instead of reactive measures. As we've shown through CADA, the business community has a great deal to offer in solving community problems—in particular, substance abuse.

Perspectives: What is a key accomplishment of CADA?

Forbes: CADA has been able to bring together representatives of business, government, and the community to look at how we can maximize the energies of all and avoid duplicating efforts. Coming to my position at CADA from the business world, I discovered right away that many orga-

nizations were genuinely trying to make inroads in dealing with violence and substance abuse, but they didn't have the strategic and tactical expertise to link with other groups with similar goals.

Perspectives: What initiatives has CADA sponsored?

Forbes: We have supported several different initiatives—mainly because we don't believe in the "one pill fits all" approach to dealing with the problem of alcohol and other drugs. Programs have to be tailored to the needs of specific communities and target populations. One of our main efforts



has been support for the STAR (Students Taught Awareness and Resistance) curriculum in the schools. Our support for the STAR curriculum led to the realization that various programs are being offered to our children about violence and drugs, but what's missing is a connection with parents. That led us to develop a training module called Parenting and Prevention, which focuses not just on substance abuse but on interpersonal and communication skills and conflict

resolution. Many of our participating organizations have introduced the module as part of their regular employee training.

Perspectives: What motivated you personally to get involved in community improvement?

Forbes: I always felt people have two obligations in life: one has to do with your personal and professional aspirations; the other has to do with what you're going to do to help make the world a better place. I believe there has to be a balance between the two. For a long time I've been interested in politics, and I was fortunate to be appointed by the Governor of Maryland to various civic boards that dealt with community problems. I've helped the community, but I've also benefited. I think it's helped me to develop a better understanding of people.

Perspectives: What motivated MCI to "lend" you to CADA for 2 years? That represents a significant investment.

Forbes: MCI is not a traditional corporation. It's a company that encourages individual initiative. In addition, they're concerned about prevention. The chairman of the board and another top executive approached me in 1992 to ask if I would consider the position with CADA because they knew of my background in community affairs. They said they understood the need for prisons, treatment programs, and so on, but they believed there needed to be a change in the paradigm if we're ever going to deal effectively with the problem of violence, alcohol, and other drugs. They had already made a commitment to CADA, based

Continued on page 4

Employers as Partners in Prevention

from page 1

businesses have limited resources for establishing alcohol and other drug abuse prevention policies and activities or getting involved in community prevention efforts even when they may want to do so.

Community Partnerships have provided a variety of services that make it easier for small businesses to become active in alcohol and other drug abuse prevention. These include providing information, materials, and training, as well as brokering resources such as employee assistance services offered by local health and substance abuse agencies. In many communities, larger businesses with experience in prevention have acted as mentors and guides for smaller ones by hosting events and offering staff as resources for information and training.

CSAP Workplace Initiatives

Through its Workplace Community Prevention Branch, CSAP is involved in several initiatives that focus on involving employers both in substance abuse prevention in the workplace and in supporting the development of healthier communities. These include:

- The awarding of supplemental grants for workplace prevention efforts in the past 2 years to 80 Community Partnerships, with

corresponding training and technical assistance.

- The publication *Making Your Workplace Drug Free: A Kit for Employers* and other materials to respond to the needs of the Community Partnerships in attracting, motivating, and retaining the business community as a partner in community prevention.
- A nationwide toll-free workplace helpline offering personal and confidential consultation on specific issues related to alcohol and other drugs in the workplace, including guidance on designing and implementing comprehensive workplace substance abuse policies and prevention activities.
- A pilot initiative in which seven Community Partnerships in the mid-Atlantic area are developing a network for sharing information and resources to promote effective involvement of small businesses in alcohol and other drug prevention.

In combination with the progress the Community Partnerships have made in involving employers, these initiatives are providing new impetus for employers to participate in comprehensive, community-wide prevention. ■

Workplace Prevention Programs: Five Components

A comprehensive program to address alcohol and other drug use at work should include, at a minimum, these five components:

- A written policy stating the rules regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs
- An employee assistance program for employees and their families
- Training for supervisors
- Materials and continuing programs for employees on alcohol and other drug education and awareness
- An alcohol and other drug testing program, if required, in accordance with Department of Health and Human Services scientific and technical guidelines

Interview

from page 3

on a study in the early 1990s showing that the business community in the metropolitan area was losing \$1.4 billion annually as a result of substance abuse and related problems.

Perspectives: How does CADA recruit new businesses and convince them of the value of being involved in prevention?

Forbes: We emphasize that it's impossible for U.S. businesses to continue to succeed in this highly competitive global economy if we don't have employees who are able to compete. If employees are having problems that involve alcohol and other drugs, that automatically makes their businesses less competitive. We tell employers about actual examples of how businesses have been hurt by substance abuse. Although we believe that individuals have a responsibility to deal with their problems, employers have a responsibility to help them and to make them accountable. We tell them you either pay now or you pay later.

Perspectives: Do you find that it's a hard sell when you try to get businesses involved in prevention activities in the community?

Forbes: Two years ago it was a harder sell than it is today.

Perspectives: Why is that?

Forbes: Employers are becoming much more aware. When employees have problems, employers eventually feel it through absenteeism, theft, and lowered morale. They may even see it in the form of violence. Before, employers didn't know what could be done about such problems. They felt isolated. Today, because of organizations like CADA and the Community Partnerships that are creating linkages between businesses and the community, they have a variety of options. ■

CSAP News

Seven Cities Pilot

CSAP has initiated the Seven Cities Pilot, a project that will demonstrate effective ways to motivate small businesses to develop new prevention efforts in the workplace and the community and strengthen existing ones. The pilot sites are the CSAP Community Partnerships in Charles Town, West Virginia; Martinsburg, West Virginia; Easton, Maryland; Lynchburg, Virginia; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Reading, Pennsylvania; and Wilmington, Delaware. Through specific technical assistance to these partnerships, the provision of prepared print ads and print releases, and assistance with media contacts, CSAP anticipates a measurable increase in business involvement in prevention. The project also encourages the use of CSAP and other Federal prevention resources, such as the CSAP National Workplace Helpline and the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (see "Resources," page 10). Another goal is for employers to access community and State resources, such as Chambers of Commerce and businesses that have experience with effective prevention programs. The project will work toward developing and implementing drug abuse prevention activities at the worksite for employees, their families, and the community. If the pilot is successful, CSAP may expand it to other Community Partnerships across the United States. For more information, contact CSAP's Workplace Community Prevention Branch (Jim Lipari at 301-443-8544 or Charlie Williams at 301-443-5254).

Working with the Chamber of Commerce

The American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE) is assisting CSAP in distributing the new CSAP publication *Making Your Workplace Drug Free: A Kit for Employers* to its members. The kit provides practical ideas and strategies for developing a comprehensive drug-free workplace program. The ACCE is a national organization composed of approximately 1,200 directors of Chambers of Commerce. For information about the kit, see "Resources," page 10.

Workplace Expert Panel Meeting

In February, CSAP convened a group of experts from around the country with diverse perspectives on the prevention of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in the workplace. Meeting in Warrenton, Virginia, the panel included employers, union leaders, service providers, researchers, and representatives of private and government organizations. The participants explored how specific trends in today's workforce and workplaces affect employment-based prevention efforts. Identifying several worksite and community models and strategies as successful within certain environments, they also discussed barriers to success and how to overcome them. The "best practices" presented at the meeting, participants agreed, can be used to enhance employment-based substance abuse prevention efforts in a variety of settings. The panel's recommendations will be published in papers and proceedings. For more information, call Mary Joyce Pruden at CSAP's Workplace Community Prevention Branch (301-443-0003).



Young representatives and members of the Community Partnership of University City in University City, Missouri, proudly display some of the CSAP saplings distributed at the 1995 National Workshop for Community Partnership Grantees held in St. Louis.