

WHAT IS YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION?

Support material for first-rate substance education



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TO THE READER

The Ministry of Education and Culture has supported the development of substance abuse prevention actively since before the 21st century began. The goal has been to support both the actual prevention work and the skills and training of those working with young people and to develop and network the operations. It has also been found important to define the contents of youth substance abuse prevention as a part of other preventive youth work. Preventiimi – a knowledge centre for youth substance abuse prevention – has been operating since 2003. It is a development unit supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the tasks of Preventiimi has been to determine the issues that make youth substance abuse prevention special.

The approach of youth substance abuse work is humane and individually centred, not problem-centred. Some young people are in need of special support. It is important to identify these individuals and offer them targeted substance abuse prevention in order to strengthen the protective factors and diminish the effects of the risk factors.

On the basis of the information mentioned above, the first contentual structures describing youth substance abuse prevention have been created. This support material is aimed at bringing out the perspectives of youth substance abuse prevention and facilitating more target-oriented youth substance abuse prevention. A vast group of co-operation organisations have been working with Preventiimi, creating this understanding. These organisations have increased common understanding of the phenomena in the lives of young people and established youth substance abuse prevention in practice.

In Helsinki on 1 December 2009

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1. THE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE WORK

The general purpose of substance abuse prevention is to promote health and well-being by encouraging a substance-free way of life and by reducing substance use and substance-related harm. Often prevention work is targeted at young age groups, but in spite of this, there is no clear definition for youth substance abuse prevention. This publication aims at defining some general starting points and goals of youth substance abuse prevention that the actors in the field can use in the planning and quality assurance of their operations. The purpose is not to limit anyone's operations or exclude any responsible actors from the field of substance abuse prevention. By contrast, specifying the central concepts and starting points encourages interaction and co-operation among various actors. Naturally, the most important goal is to enable successful, first-rate youth substance abuse prevention.

Substance use among young people has been on the decline since the start of the 21st century, especially among those under 18. Regardless of this, the work among young people must be continued, in order to maintain this positive trend, and to extend it to other age groups as well. Substance abuse prevention must be well rooted, a permanent part of youth education, and it must be able

to reach each new generation as well. It is not justified to put unfounded blame on young people or vilify them as a special problem group. Moralising, stigmatising, and blame have been proved to be poor methods of influencing substance use, regardless of the age of the target group.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO CONSIDER
YOUNG PEOPLE AS A SPECIAL PROBLEM
GROUP WHERE SUBSTANCE USE IS
CONCERNED.

Youth substance abuse prevention is respected and extensively implemented in Finland today. The field of actors can, however, be considered relatively disconnected and individual operations are often carried out with scarce resources. Employees on the ground cannot always perceive the wider social significance of their work or at least sufficiently emphasise it. Sometimes it also remains unclear who is, in fact, responsible for substance abuse prevention; who can provide it; and who monitors the quality of the work. Because of these issues, there is justification for collectively highlighting the social grounds, regulations, and political programmes that provide

the foundation and support for youth substance abuse prevention. Similarly, this publication aims at presenting some central issues concerning quality that must be considered in work with young people. It is important to define the position of substance abuse prevention as part of the guidance, communication, and education work in the youth sector, in order to enable the professionals in the field and – most importantly – the young people themselves to understand the meaning of various forms of work.

CENTRAL LEGISLATION

The legislative base for youth substance abuse prevention lies in the basic rights defined in the Constitution (731/1999). So-called well-being rights secure the prerequisites of life worthy of a human being, such as a livelihood, education, and social and health services. The basic rights include the right to equality and inclusion. When interpreted more freely, substance abuse prevention can be seen as a part of the well-being rights of the citizens, and it has a part to play in bringing about the realisation of equality and basic rights. Risks of individual and life difficulties can limit the realisation of the basic rights of an individual, and, in extreme cases, they can prevent equal inclusion of the citizen in normal operations in the society. The basic rights are also one quality metric for the implementation of substance abuse prevention. Up-to-date legislation and the index of amendments to the legislation can be found in the Finlex database at <http://www.finlex.fi>.

The Alcohol Act (1143/1994) aims to prevent harmful societal, social, and health effects caused by alcoholic substances, by controlling alcohol consumption. The Alcohol Act is strongly in favour of sobriety of minors and finds it reprehensible to offer alcohol to a person under 18 (according to the act on amendment to the Alcohol Act, 642/2009). Restaurants are not allowed to serve alcohol for persons under 18. The possession and transportation of alcohol beverages that are not legally manufactured or imported is prohibited. The possession and transportation of alcohol beverages for purposes of sale is also prohibited if selling is not permitted under the terms of the Alcohol Act or there is no valid permit. Breaking these regulations can result in a fine or a prison sentence. The Alcohol Act is among the most important acts where youth substance abuse prevention is concerned. Alcohol is the substance most generally used for intoxication purposes, and it is the greatest cause of detrimental health effects among all age groups.

The purpose of the Act on Measures to Reduce Tobacco Smoking (693/1976) is to prevent the health risks and harm caused by smoking. Under this act, it is illegal to sell or otherwise supply tobacco products or devices to persons under 18. In addition, the possession of tobacco products is prohibited for persons under 18 (according to the act on amendment to the Act on Measures to Reduce Tobacco Smoking, 698/2010). Starting to smoke at a young age is seen as related to the building of social relation-

ships between young people. Giving up smoking is especially difficult when the smoking started at an early age. The addiction caused by long-term smoking is strong; therefore, the dangers of tobacco products in comparison to other substances must not be underestimated.

According to the Narcotics Act (41/1972), the production, manufacture, import or export from Finland, transport (including through transport), distribution, selling, handling, possession, and use of narcotics are prohibited. Narcotics offences are defined in the Criminal Code (39/1889), Section 50. Some further substances classified as narcotics have been added to the Narcotics Act (by the act on amendment to the Narcotics Act, 595/2010, §3). The National Institute for Health and Welfare is responsible for monitoring and compiling statistics on narcotics.

According to the Act on Welfare for Substance Abusers (41/1986), the purpose of welfare for substance abusers is to prevent and decrease substance abuse and the related detrimental social and health effects and to promote the functional capacity and safety of the substance abuser and his or her family. There must be co-operation between the authorities and communities working on welfare for substance abusers. Special attention must be paid to the co-operation between those attending to welfare for substance abusers and social and health-care workers, temperance education personnel, housing

authorities, labour authorities, educational authorities, youth workers, and the police.

The Temperance Work Act (828/1982) aims at accustoming the citizens to healthy ways of life by guiding them to avoid intoxicating substances and smoking. The general management, monitoring, and control of the temperance work are a responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Each municipality must have its own body responsible for the implementation of temperance work and the monitoring of alcohol issues. The Temperance Work Act authorises and obliges municipalities and organisations to work to prevent substance abuse also among young age groups. Municipalities answer for co-ordinating substance abuse work in their municipality as a whole and ensuring its quality.

The Child Protection Act (417/2007) aims at safeguarding children's right to a safe growth environment, balanced and versatile development, and special protection. The Child Protection Act's §25 defines the announcement requirement by which everyone is obliged to inform the social welfare authorities of the municipality about a child whose need for care, circumstances endangering his or her development, or own behaviour requires assessment of the need for child protection. This section lists numerous groups of professionals working with children and young people from the fields of social and health services and education.

The prevention-oriented child protection aims at promoting and ensuring the growth, development, and well-being of children. The act obliges those working in education and youth services to provide a child or young person with special support when he or she or the family is not a child protection client. The common fields of operation of social and youth work meet in the field of preventive child protection. A child is defined in the Child Protection Act as a person below 18 years of age and a young person as a person between ages 18 and 20.

The Youth Act (72/2006) provides strong background support for youth substance abuse prevention. The act aims at supporting the growth and independence of young people, promoting the active citizenship and social strengthening of young people, and improving their growth and living conditions. The Youth Act emphasises the significance of preventive work, and it provides the education platform for substance abuse prevention. From the standpoint of the Youth Act, substance abuse prevention has a strong educational goal and it therefore is justified to apply the concept of substance education among young people. The growth and living conditions of young people must be organised in such a way that young people can grow into independent and functional citizens. These legal acts concern all citizens below 29 years of age.

The aim of youth outreach work (addressed in the act on amending the Youth Act, 693/2010) is to reach those young people in need of support

and to help them to access services and support that promote their growth and independence and their participation in education or work. Outreach-based youth work is primarily based on the information provided by young people themselves and their estimates of the need for support.

Youth outreach work requires handling of confidential personal and contact information. According to the Personal Data Act (523/1999), information concerning the living conditions, state of health, official benefits and support, and financial status of an individual is confidential. Submitting such information to another authority requires permission from the relevant individual or his or her guardian. The information must, however, be delivered to the home municipality of the young person for the purposes of outreach work if the young person has not received any formal education beyond basic education, if a young person below 25 discontinues his or her studies in vocational or upper secondary education, or if a young person is released from military service or civil service because of lack of competence.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME WORK

At the national level, there are statutory programmes operating under ministries. In addition, the government has various political programmes in place. The programme work aims at developing the structures and services of the community in accordance with programme-specific schemes. A few of the programmes are de-

scribed below. These can be considered central for substance abuse prevention.

The National Alcohol Programme 2008–2011, implemented by the state, municipalities, and organisations, aims at reducing the adverse effects experienced from alcohol. The previous programme period was 2004–2007.

The Kaste Programme 2008–2011 is a national development plan for social and health-care services. Its goals are to increase involvement; decrease social exclusion; increase health and well-being; and improve the quality, effectiveness, and availability of services, as well as reduce inequalities between regions.

The goal of a key public health programme – Health 2015 – is to support and promote health in all sectors of the community. The primary emphasis is on promoting health rather than on developing the system of health services.

With Mieli – a national plan for mental health and substance abuse work that extends to 2015 – the development of mental health and of substance abuse work are being examined for the first time as a single entity at the national level.

Policy programmes (2007–2011) are extensive, multi-agency task entities that aim to meet the central goals of the government. They are defined in the government programme. Policy

programmes consist of measures, projects, and grants from the fields of several ministries. The current policy programmes are:

- Policy programme for employment, entrepreneurship, and working life
- Policy programme for health promotion
- Policy programme for the well-being of children, youth, and families

The child and youth policy development programme (LANUKE) is approved at intervals of four years by the Finnish government, with the current term being 2007–2011. It includes the goals for the national child and youth policy and guidelines for the child and youth political programme work of provinces and municipalities. The programme is prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture in co-operation with other ministries.

Overall, there are two social approaches for examining youth substance abuse prevention. The first of these is the planning guidance of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, which on the basis of the Child Protection Act (417/2007) extends to the job descriptions for those handling municipal social and health care. In addition, the Temperance Act (via the act on amendment to the Temperance Act's §3, 1730/2009) assigns the management, guidance, and control of substance abuse work to the Ministry of Social Affairs and to the regional state administrative agencies. The second approach is the re-

sults control under the Ministry of Education and Culture, in the municipal education and culture departments in accordance with the Youth Act (the act on amending the Youth Act, 693/2010). Since the elimination of the state provincial offices, the local co-ordination lies within the remit of the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. There are, in addition, a vast group of actors from municipalities, parishes, and the third sector working in youth substance abuse prevention.

The complexity of the planning guidance used in substance abuse prevention has become an evident challenge in the field. The separate preparation of the key laws, programme work,

and directions guiding the relevant operations are setting significant challenges to implementation of youth substance abuse prevention at the municipal level. The legislation concerning the development programme for child and youth policy and the municipal welfare plan for children and young people has been found especially challenging, and it imposes mutually contradictory obligations for municipalities.

**YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION
CAN BE EXAMINED BY USING TWO
DIFFERENT APPROACHES: YOUTH WORK
AND SOCIAL WORK.**



2. SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

Substance abuse work is an important part of broad-based welfare work, which requires commitment from several administrative sectors and actors along with general common efforts. Substance abuse work is not just municipal social and health-care service. Substance abuse work is carried out in schools, youth work, culture and leisure activities, community planning, and business life. Organisations and other third-sector actors have their own tasks in substance abuse work.

The concept of substance abuse prevention was created in the field of social and health-care services, but it is used more and more in other fields as well. It is a far-reaching concept that describes the approach of social and health care to one aspect of substance abuse work. The basic concepts and general quality criteria of different work forms have been defined in the 'Reaching for the Quality Star' publication of Stakes (now the National Institute for Health and Welfare – THL), from 2006.

The quality criteria are meant as tools for substance abuse prevention workers, and they aim at proper directing of resources and support. The quality criteria are also designed to give decision-makers and the community a general idea of the current methods of decreasing the adverse effects of substances. There are no separate in-

structions for youth substance abuse prevention provided in these criteria.

In the quality criteria, substance abuse prevention work is defined as action aimed at promoting health, safety, and well-being. According to the quality criteria, substance abuse prevention has an influence on substance-related knowledge, attitudes and rights, and factors for protection against, as well as risk factors exposing the individual to, substance-related harm and substance use along with specific patterns of use. The entity of the influence targets is vast, and the actor must plan carefully with regard to which aspects he or she can affect and how large an effect is desired. The extensiveness of the effect can be evaluated at anywhere from the individual level to the social or even international level.

The basic concepts of substance abuse work are presented in Chart 1. In the quality criteria, substance abuse work is seen as a broader concept that is divided into preventive and corrective work. At the level of actual operations, it can be divided into three further forms of substance abuse work: general prevention, risk prevention, and substance abuse care. Each work form uses its own work methods. The selection of work forms depends on the needs of the target group in question and the objectives. In practice, the bounda-

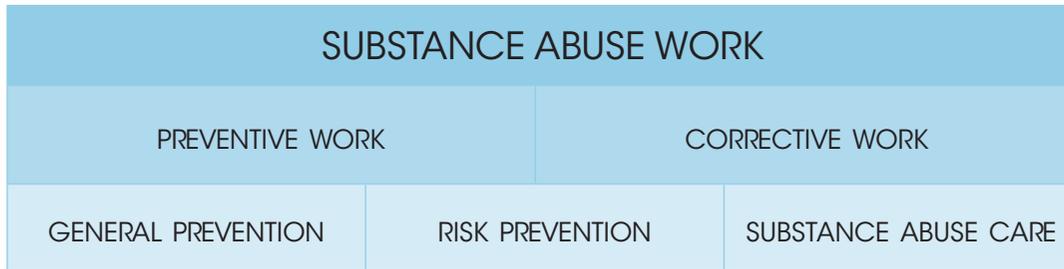


Chart 1: Structure of substance abuse work

ries between various work forms are not always as strict as the chart might suggest. It is, however, essential that the professionals are able to detect the primary work form meant for their current work and how extensively other work forms can be used in relation to their professional skills.

Corrective substance abuse work can be carried out in collaboration with other mental health services, since substance-related and mental health problems are closely connected among young people as well. Corrective work is performed within the framework of general services of a municipality, such as in social and health-care services and child protection. Those working in successful multidisciplinary tasks recognise the perspective (preventive or corrective) from which they are approaching this boundary. This publication wishes to emphasise substance abuse prevention; therefore, the text concentrates on the work forms of general prevention and risk prevention while the issues related to substance abuse care are not discussed.

Substance abuse care and rehabilitation do not belong to the traditional work field of youth work. However, some youth work is carried out in youth work facilities, at rehabilitation centres for young people, and in workshops. Risk prevention is the boundary between, and at the same time the common work field of, preventive and corrective work. It is also worth remembering that, especially, advanced corrective work is preventive work as well, since it aims at preventing return to a lifestyle favouring substance use. Therefore, strict division between these two work fields is neither self-evident nor even possible.

The distribution of work content between preventive and corrective substance abuse work is not adequately discussed in substance abuse work. Preventive work has been partially overshadowed by corrective work, which is given much more resourcing. Because of the fractured position of substance abuse prevention, its role is fairly unclear on all levels of society instead of it having an established position in service production.

TARGETING SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AT YOUNG PEOPLE

We all have our own idea of who is considered young, so it might come as no surprise that, when evaluated more closely, youth is a fairly difficult concept to define. Generally in modern society, youth can be seen as a fairly long phase of life, during which a child gradually disconnects him- or herself from the parents and grows independent, obtains an education, and prepares for independent life and takes responsibility for his or her future. Sometimes youth as a phase of life is positioned between certain ages, but the age limits are difficult to set when one considers the various development and life situations on an individual level.

There are several sections in the legislation that define youth and the rights and responsibilities assigned to young people. The acts listed in the first section of this document specify some age limits or stages of youth, but each

act discusses the issue from its own perspective. This is the reason for the inconsistencies in the definitions in legislation. In Finland, 18-year-olds are considered adults and from the viewpoint of child protection they become young people at this exact age. In the Youth Act, the age limit is higher and people below 29 years are considered young. There is no lower limit for youth in this act.

From the standpoint of legislation, youth is not a gradual transition to adulthood, but certain rights are gained at the same time and the limit of 18 years is decisive with respect to the availability of alcohol and tobacco. For stronger alcoholic beverages, the limit is 20 years.

When these different views are all taken into consideration, youth can be seen as a long phase of development in modern society. There are, however, certain fixed age limits. For youth substance abuse prevention, the age of 18 years is a very important watershed. Work must be car-

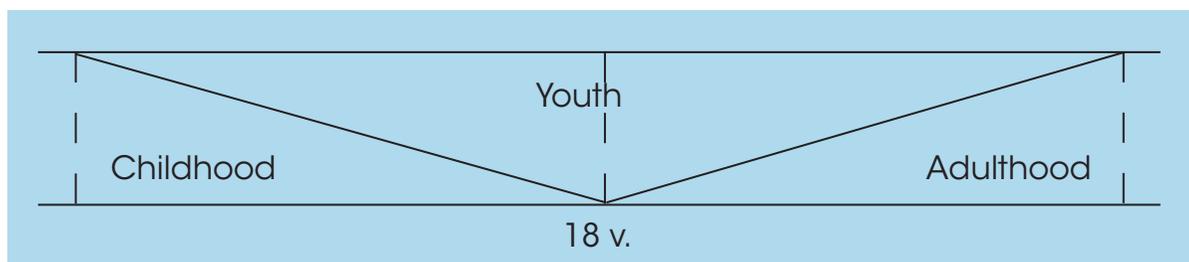


Chart 2: From childhood through youth to adulthood

ried out both before and after one reaches this age, but with different approaches. In the work with young people below 18 years, the age limits must often be emphasised, but in work with those who have crossed this threshold, the main emphasis is often on the responsible use of substances and on acknowledging the risks of substance use. However, it must be remembered that work in accordance with the Youth Act concerns young adults aged 18 to 29 as well.

Chart 2 shows the initial state from which a child begins to turn into a young person. As certain developmental tasks of childhood are completed, the child starts slowly to turn into a young person. The highest point of youth is in the centre of the chart. This is the top point of youth, when turning into an adult begins. As the stages of development in youth gradually are completed, the challenges of adulthood begin to increase. Youth ends on the right side of the chart and adulthood begins. This chart facilitates examination of the relationships between childhood, youth, and adulthood, but it does not take the differences between individual life situations into account.

In youth work, youth is considered a special phase of life, during which the growth and development of the young person requires holistic support and in which professional youth work has its own place alongside families, others close to the youth, and other professionals. Youth must

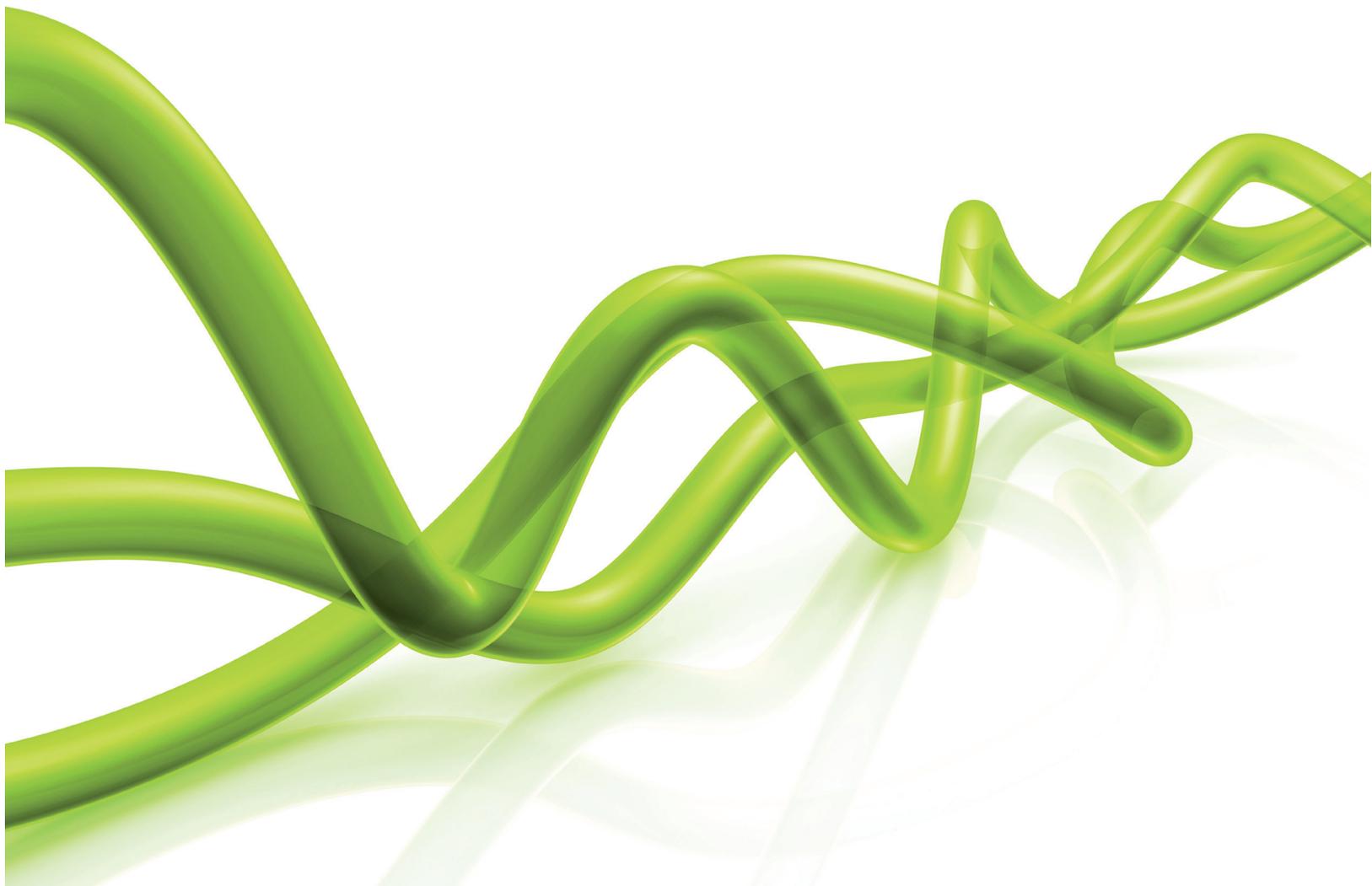
not, however, be considered a problem or to be a problematic phase of life, and the work in the field cannot be simply problem-based. Young people must be provided with support and assistance in the process of natural socialisation and personal growth. This is a time of many kinds of questions, needs, and thoughts.

The mainly preventive nature of youth work stems from the idea that young people can get guidance, help, and support as needed in their growth and socialisation process where issues that they are not able to solve themselves are concerned. It is extremely important that young people always feel part of the solutions concerning their own life. This is the only way they can learn to understand the reasons behind the solutions and to follow set instructions and rules consciously. Forced and external doctrines often provoke resistance or at least are easily forgotten. The inclusion approach must be extended to the services directed at young people as widely as possible, and it concerns substance abuse prevention as a central principle as well.

**YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION
REQUIRES ITS OWN METHODS AND ALSO
EXPERTISE IN TARGETING THEM.**

Youth substance abuse prevention differs from substance abuse work in both its educational targets and the emphasis. In substance abuse prevention targeting adults, the health hazards and risk factors are emphasised, while in substance abuse prevention targeted at young people, substance abuse work can be performed without substances even being mentioned and by concentrating on supporting

the overall life management of young people. In work among young people, the goal is to affect attitudes toward substances in a more comprehensive manner and at an earlier stage than is possible with adults. Furthermore, it must be remembered that, because of its special nature, youth substance abuse prevention requires its own methods and expertise in targeting of the methods.



3. SOCIAL STRENGTHENING AND YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

Social strengthening refers to, for example, building and supporting communities for young people themselves, listening to young people, promoting inclusion, encouraging, being present, and being part of young people's everyday life as an adult. Youth substance abuse prevention can be seen as part of a larger whole, or along a continuum at one end of which is work aimed at social strengthening of the young person and on the other end of which is work aimed at correcting the young person's life situation, health, or position. Substance abuse prevention concentrates on improving young people's understanding of the risks related to substance abuse and on strengthening the protective elements. While substance abuse prevention is generally divided into general and risk prevention, in the related youth work there is one more level: social strengthening (see Chart 3). It is worth noting, though, that not all social strengthening is aimed at influencing attitudes toward substances. The role of social strengthening is built into almost all work performed among young people.

The evaluation of young people's attitudes, life situation, and behaviour from the angle of the factors protecting from substance use and the risk factors exposing one to them is essential. Protective factors are generally connected to the living environment and the social relations in

it. In substance abuse work, general prevention is primarily geared for strengthening the protective factors, although it can include discussing the risks related to substance use as well.

There are several protective factors. The following list includes some of the most general ones:

- Confidential social relations in the immediate community
- The possibility of influencing one's own position and future
- Good self-respect and self-knowledge
- Awareness of the risks of substance use
- Responsible attitudes of the immediate community to substance use
- Critical substance use cultures
- Restricted availability of substances, and practical control of them
- Responsible attitude to substance use

Risk factors are the characteristics related to the individual or the environment that in a certain group increase the probability of a disturbance or a problem. In substance abuse work, 'risk prevention' means decreasing these risks or their effects and strengthening the protective factors. Risk factors for substance use might be, for example:

- Social mistrust and weak self-respect
- Uncontrollable changes in the life situation

- Pressure favouring substances in the social environment
- Loneliness and exclusion from one's age group
- An unfavourable social circle, such as one with a common factor of dropping out of school or from work
- Ready availability of substances and lack of control
- Use of substances for the purpose of intoxication
- Use of substances when alone
- Risky behaviour and risk of getting into accidents while intoxicated

tors predispose young people to problems, but individual events or factors can also influence the choices they make.

The significance of protective factors and risk factors from the perspectives of target-setting and the sphere of prevention is illustrated in Chart 3. There are probably both protective factors and risk factors in the life of all young people, at work simultaneously, and they are not mutually exclusive. In targeting work and selecting the sphere of prevention, one must, however, be aware of what kinds of issues should be emphasised at the particular moment in question. If the young person's substance use and behaviour are associated with accident-proneness or violence, the work forms should be selected from the standpoint of risk prevention. If the work is carried out through provision of general information concerning the risks related to substance use, it must be approached from the perspective of general prevention and emphasis on extensive horror scenarios should be avoided.

The presence of numerous protective factors does not mean that a young person is completely safe from problems. Similarly, there being several risk factors does not mean that a young person automatically has a lot of problems. Protective factors strengthen young people and encourage them to choose the right path. Risk fac-

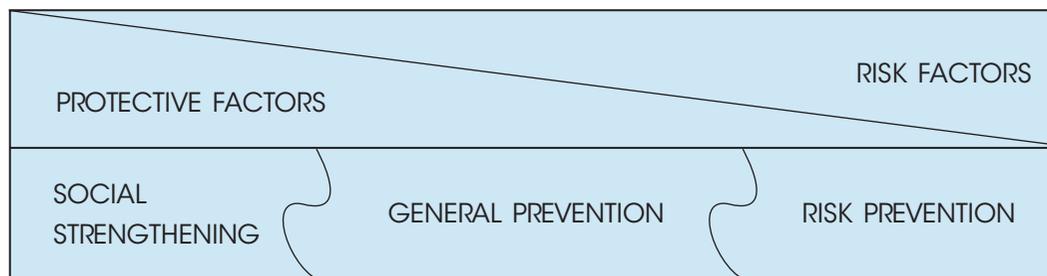


Chart 3: Protective factors and risk factors in relation to the sphere of prevention

4. METHODS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

There are several methods used in substance abuse prevention. These methods can be called tools, instruments, operating processes, or interventions. The professionals working in the field and with various targets generate new names for these methods. For the target-setting, selection of the correct method is one of the most central indicators of first-rate substance abuse prevention. The methods must be suited to the goals, target group, and resources. When one is selecting the method, the age of the target group must be taken into consideration, since not all methods are suitable for young people under 18. The limit is based on the legislation that aims to protect children from the detrimental effects of substances, since no substances are meant to be used by children under 18.

In youth work, the target group of substance abuse prevention can consist of a group of young people or consist of just one young person. This will determine the various methods used and the nature of the target-setting. The group size must be taken into consideration in selection of a suitable method. In a large group, there can be young people with very different backgrounds and experiences. Also, when working with an individual young person, one should remember that the state of development varies and not all young people in the same age group

are in the same developmental phase. For example, some 13-year-olds may already have used substances while others have not even considered it yet. Therefore, evaluation of the relationship between protective factors and risk factors is very important if suitable methods are to be selected. Most importantly, the correct sphere of prevention should be chosen and the methods must be chosen according to the needs of the target group.

Chart 4 presents some examples of the goals that can be set on various levels of prevention in work with groups or individuals. The basic levels of youth substance abuse prevention are presented on the first line. There are, naturally, other factors to be considered in the selection of methods, but the chart aims to provide a general basis for the selection and to examine the matter as a multi-dimensional issue. In addition to the issues listed in the chart, at least the age of the target group, the available resources, and the professional skills of the actors must be considered. It is crucial that the methods be selected with awareness and that those using them know their purpose of use, groundings, and limitations.

When the issue is examined from the social strengthening angle, it must be remembered that the majority of young people are typical rep-

representatives of their age group. They need confidential relationships with adults, and they should be given opportunities to ponder the issues and phenomena that are important in their life. Social strengthening takes place in all growth environments on both an individual and group level. These environments could be, for example, clubs, youth centres, open cafes, organisation-arranged events, and self-organised groups of young people. Adults must facilitate versatile examination of these issues and phenomena in order to strengthen young people's responsible views on substance use. From the social strengthening angle, substance-related phenomena can be approached from a wider perspective and the issues discussed can include, for example, the social, economic, and societal consequences of substance use. The inclusion of young people in the discussion or actual operation and building

of their trust and sense of responsibility are essential.

The central goal of general prevention is to provide young people with topical information on various substances and the general risks they pose. All young people must have the right to receive correct and valid information on substances in order to facilitate them making their own choices. A significant amount of the existing body of methods and materials is meant to be used in the sphere of general prevention. In addition to health risks, the work can include discussion of the difficulties substances can cause between friends and in school work and family life. The methods, viewpoints, and examples that are employed should be as close as possible to the young people's own experiences. Describing horror scenarios or risks that are not part of

	SOCIAL STRENGTHENING	GENERAL PREVENTION	PREVENTION
GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS THE TARGET GROUP	GENERAL SOCIAL SKILLS	STRENGTHENING THE GROUP, TOLERATING GROUP PRESSURE	TARGETED WORK, SMALL-GROUP OPERATIONS
ONE YOUNG PERSON AS TARGET GROUP	STRENGTHENING SELF-RESPECT AND SET OF VALUES	EMPHASISING INDIVIDUAL CHOICES	INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT, REHABILITATION

Chart 4: Selection of methods in relation to the sphere of prevention and target

young people's reality often just causes unnecessary worry and anxiety. Methods of substance education that use intimidation can arouse curiosity, if anything, and that has very little to do with the goals of substance abuse prevention.

The challenge often faced in general prevention is lack of interest in substance abuse information on the part of those in the risk groups. The message does not seem to reach those who need it most. For example, in comprehensive school, substance awareness education reaches the majority of young people but not necessarily those at risk. Sometimes substance awareness education can attract young people's interest to substance use. This is a sign of a poorly selected target group and methods. However, all young people must have the right to receive information on substances, and target-setting in general prevention should not be done on the basis of the needs of risk groups alone. Prevention is also unsuccessful if the message does not reach everybody. In real life, an actor can check whether the information reaches young people as intended, by discussing the issues with them. This enables the actor to identify those risk groups in need of different methods.

Risk prevention refers to the actions targeted at a certain group or an individual. The risk behaviour of the target group has already been identified, or it can be clearly predicted. Risk prevention in youth substance abuse work can be

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO EVALUATE THE ATTITUDES, LIFE SITUATIONS, AND BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RISK FACTORS.

seen as a certain kind of targeted work. Not all young people of a certain age or group necessarily need it, and the basic information given in the general prevention is sufficient. In the risk prevention sphere, the methods of social strengthening and general prevention are not necessarily enough. In this case, the worker must consider the young person's own experiences related to substance use. A lifestyle favouring substances must be discussed critically, and its actual dangers to all areas of life must be presented in a concrete manner. The work can include various small-group tasks and individual support. These methods are used, for example, in operations in social work, targeted and youth outreach work, special youth work, workshops, and work within various organisations. Risk prevention must always be implemented by forming close networks among the actors near the young person and his or her family.

Youth substance abuse prevention can provide the principles for distinguishing the spheres of general prevention and risk prevention more

clearly from each other. Especially in risk prevention, the contentual emphasis could be reconsidered. Emphasising the common health risks caused by substance use is seldom concrete when examined from the standpoint of everyday life. Long-term health risks are of no interest to young people, because they want to live here and now. Therefore, prevention work could emphasise the risky behaviour caused by substances and provide examples concerning the daily life of young people. Substances are part of many accidents involving young people. In drink-driving, for example, young people aged 18–19 years present the most significant risk group. The social and financial problems caused by substances are

also very close to the everyday life of young people, or at least closer than are the health problems that may result from substance use after several decades.

The significance of the information behind the methods applied in substance abuse prevention should be emphasised in their selection and use. Competent methods are always based on information including groundings for the pedagogical starting points the methods lean on. No method automatically offers the desired results. Professionals using various methods must know the basics of the methods and know how to use the methods correctly in the appropriate situations.

5. FROM SUBSTANCE AWARENESS EDUCATION TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE SUBSTANCE EDUCATION

Although there are various methods used in substance abuse prevention, it is often understood as substance awareness education. Substance awareness education is a traditional form of substance abuse prevention that offers up-to-date information on substances to everyone or to a certain target group. It is typically used both in general prevention and in risk prevention. Substance awareness education has, historically, been the most frequently used approach for conveying information on the adverse effects of substances. It is based on the Finnish temperance work. The challenge of substance awareness education is partly due to the difficult targeting of the work and sometimes due to the vagueness mentioned earlier with respect to the boundaries of general prevention and risk prevention (see Chart 2). This can also be seen as a larger issue concerning youth substance abuse prevention. Consequently, it must be discussed in detail.

Another challenge facing substance awareness education is the field's domination by methods based on one-way communication. The pedagogical methods and information-based methods do not reach the risk groups or their effect on the risk groups is insignificant. This is due not to lack of skills of the educators

but to the limitations of the viewpoints taken in substance abuse prevention. Providing information is not always enough. It should be checked how the young people have interpreted the information given and how the resulting understanding corresponds with their own experiences.

Substance abuse prevention should be interactive and consider the views and experiences of the target group concerning substances. Very young children sometimes have had experiences involving substances. Personal experience does not refer solely to the young people's own experiments with substances; these might come from seeing someone in their immediate community using substances. Extensive generalisations and overemphasising or exaggerating the risks of substance use in substance awareness education can result in young people connecting these risks to the people close to them. For example, use of alcohol by parents can cause anxiety in the young person's mind even if the use was moderate and far from problematic. In this case, the approach of substance awareness education has not been correct and the young person has interpreted the information differently than the educator had expected. These situa-

tions can be avoided through interaction and by providing enough time for substance education.

In the modern information society, there are vast amounts of information available, and the substance abuse educator must accept the fact that young people are these days' also active producers of information. In spite of numerous efforts and methods, substance awareness education of the 21st century does not take sufficient account of the theoretical starting points, such as the interactive nature of communication and the inclusion of the target group. Young people are seen rather more as targets of substance awareness education than as active actors building their own understanding, and they are expected to be ready to accept the information provided directly. The planning of substance abuse prevention should consider the interactive nature of communication and the effect of community.

In addition to substance awareness education, modern society needs comprehensive substance

**IN THE MODERN INFORMATION SOCIETY,
THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATOR MUST
ACCEPT YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTIVE
PRODUCERS OF INFORMATION.**

education for young people. Substance education has the same core – based on information on substances – that substance awareness education does, but substance education must have a more extensive target than simple provision of information. It must include guidance concerning life skills and values and offer such activities for young people that do not include intoxicating substances. The educational target is to convey the responsible attitude toward substances that enables the users to control their use themselves and to understand the related risks sufficiently.

DEALING WITH A GROUP IN SUBSTANCE EDUCATION

One of the strengths of providing substance education for groups is reaching a large number of people at one time. This enables simultaneous use of several methods. For example, in schools, health education creates a good foundation for substance use prevention. The problem arising in substance education in groups is that the education is limited to general prevention. This means that the risk groups are not reached well enough. The importance of interaction must be remembered for large groups as well. Although personal discussion with everyone is not possible, co-operation can be created by organising tasks in small groups, by utilising the young peo-

ple's own descriptions or writings, or by utilising the possibilities provided by the new technology in a network environment, for example.

Group-based substance education includes the following targets and features:

1. Offering information on substances and their effects
2. Discussing life skills and values
3. Learning refusal and tolerating social pressure
4. Highlighting substance-free ways of acting
5. Utilising peer education and support

Various group-based approaches are widely used in youth substance abuse prevention. Typically, they are used in schools, organisations, youth clubs, and similar environments. Often the responsibility for the actual implementation in substance education is given to an external party. For example, in comprehensive school the teachers may not see it as their task, there is not enough time for it, or they do not feel that they have sufficient skills for it. Thus it is that substance abuse education often can be arranged only once or on very rare occasions, and organised separately. Providing comprehensive or long-term education is therefore only rarely possible. External educators often do not have enough time to get acquainted with the target group, and there is

not enough time for forming confidential and interactive relationships.

Substance education should be linked to the basic operations in municipalities, parishes, and youth organisations, which include targeted cooperation with professionals of substance abuse prevention. Planning should aim at long-term and multi-level substance education. Youth substance abuse prevention and related long-term plans should be codified in the substance strategy of any relevant organisation. This helps to avoid only short-term and occasional substance awareness education events, which cannot offer a consistent, extensive picture to support the growth process of young people.

DEALING WITH A INDIVIDUAL IN SUBSTANCE EDUCATION

Sometimes it is forgotten in substance abuse prevention that many people do not see substances as problematic. Young people may have had many positive experiences of substance use that have shaped their overall attitudes toward substances into something more positive. Adults, however, have more extensive life experience so may be able to evaluate the positive and negative sides of substance use better than can young people who are just on the threshold of their first experiences. In this phase of life, they need edu-

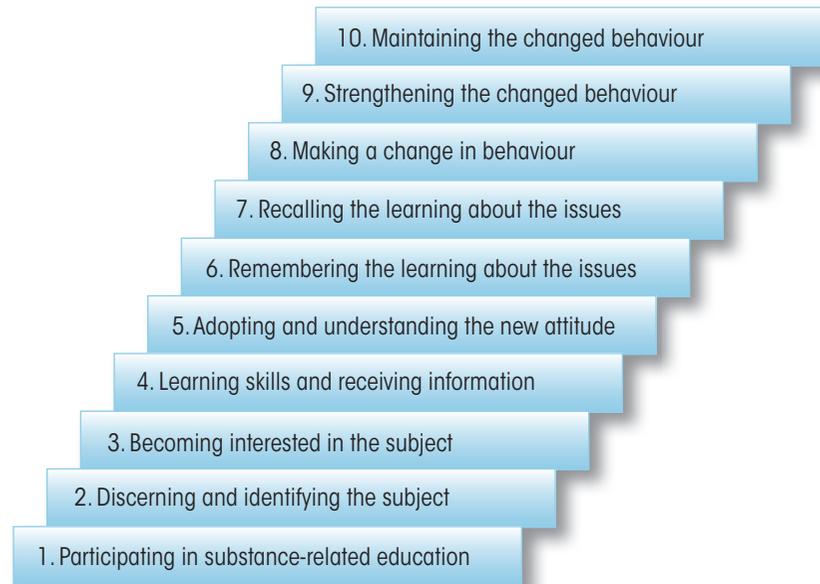
cational advice in order to approach issues from a broader perspective.

Changes in attitudes are challenging for both adults and young people. Ambiguities in one's own values and targets can prevent changes in attitudes. Sometimes young people want to take the easy way out and use the same solutions as earlier. New alternatives can also be seen as troublesome or unpleasant. A young person's resistance to change can be caused by psychosocial or behavioural problems that manifest themselves as active resistance or denial. Sometimes the actions of a substance abuse educator can cause resistance in a young person, if the approaches used by the educator are unsuitable from the young

person's viewpoint. Traps provoking resistance can exist both in talk and in actions. Examples of typical expressions causing resistance:

- Trap of accusing: 'You were acting incorrectly and irresponsibly!'
- Trap of confrontation – i.e., denial: 'Substance use is wrong/forbidden/illegal!'
- Trap of expertise: 'I know what is best for you.'
- Trap of stigmatising: 'You are socially excluded – you have failed!'
- Trap of answering questions for someone else: 'Don't you feel that...?'
- Trap of hasty conclusions: 'So we agree that...'

Chart 5: Transformation of substance education into a new behavioural model (after the McGuire model).



The obstacles due to the substance abuse educator relate to structures and the encounter. The encounter requires the ability to listen to what a young person wants or what he or she is ready for. Sometimes advancing through the process is too rushed or the substance abuse educator has set the targets too high. In this case, one should also evaluate which individual approaches and work methods are suitable. The change can be hindered by lack of structure in the operations or by too strict a structure.

Chart 5 describes targeted substance education translating first into attitudes toward substances and then, finally, into a lasting behavioural model. The chart indicates that attitudes and behaviour cannot be changed quickly or with a single lesson of substance education. There are 10 phases shown in the chart, in all of which young people process the issue. As the issue has been discussed on several occasions, young people are able to recognise the subject, become interested in it, and gradually start to shift their attitudes in the right direction. As young people have more information and better understanding of substances, they will make better decisions concerning their use. They become confident of their choices, and these attitudes will be reflected in their everyday behaviour. Adults and other close people can support this process by confirming the positive actions, showing a negative attitude toward substances. The chart is designed to demonstrate that the change cannot take place overnight; in-

stead, it requires time and hard work. It also serves as a reminder that it is not necessary to implement a change quickly. Instead, the right kind of idea should be given to young people, who can then process it into desired operational models.

Guidance focused on building of resources encourages young people to participate, by asking them about their thoughts and by listening to them. Daily conversations are important, and they should be given time. This sends a message of the possibility of participating. The self-evaluation of young people is supported by tentative talk and questions. Listening and feedback, as does neutral presentation of alternatives, show respect for the young person's role as an expert in his or her own life situation. Direct talk, positive feedback, and peer talk indicate respect to another person.

PROVIDING INFORMATION
IS NOT ALWAYS ENOUGH.

THE ACTORS PROVIDING SUBSTANCE EDUCATION AND CO-OPERATION

There are a lot of professionals and volunteers working with youth substance abuse prevention. Not all actors participate in the prevention work full-time; for many, it is a part of other educa-

tional, guidance, counselling, support, or other assisting work among young people. Because of the diversity of the actors, the approaches and views concerning substance education can diverge somewhat. This should be seen not as a problem but as a resource. Since the issue of substances is very complex and broad-based, it is good that several approaches to this issue are used. The deciding factor, however, is for the work to be carried out with responsibility, high quality, and co-operation, and such that the actors can view each other with respect. The most important thing is to have young people at the centre of all operation.

Co-operation among various actors aids in understanding the grounds for different approaches and in enhancing everybody's work. Youth substance abuse prevention does not form one coherent organisation; rather, it operates with information received from various sources. Co-operation must be built on the activity of the actors. Professional peer support plays a significant role in all operations aimed at development and innovations.

PREVENTIIMI ENCOURAGES THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION TO ENGAGE IN RESPONSIBLE NETWORKING.



6. KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

This publication is the first to examine youth substance abuse prevention on the basis of the quality criteria for substance abuse prevention. There is plenty of further information available on the topic both in Finland and abroad. Substance use and attitudes toward substances among young people are systematically monitored. Similarly, various statistics, reports, evaluations, and studies provide the necessary knowledge base for the professional work. The main challenge is to get those working in the field to learn to utilise the available information sufficiently.

THE DECISION IN PRINCIPLE OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE CONCERNING THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE CENTRES ON 10 AUGUST 2010

The Ministry of Education and Culture has made a decision in principle to appoint 13 actors to serve as national development and service centres in youth work in Finland. The ministry's decision in principle is part of the general development of youth work and of creation of the prerequisites for it. The decision clarifies the actors in the national service structure for the youth work that the ministry supports regularly with annual operation grants. The actors accepted in the national service structure for youth work de-

velop youth work in their respective fields at the national level.

One of the actors appointed to serve in the service and development centre structure is Preventiimi, administered by the HUMAK University of Applied Sciences since 2003. Preventiimi is a knowledge centre that operates as a specialist and support service in the implementation of substance abuse prevention and provides guidance and counselling for professionals in this field on the national level.

The group aims to increase knowledge of the content of youth substance abuse prevention by promoting research, evaluation, and high-quality work. Preventiimi applies a holistic view of substance abuse prevention and organises high-quality further training for professionals in this field.

Preventiimi develops co-operation in substance abuse prevention by exercising and encouraging responsible networking. The partner network of Preventiimi is a national youth work development community that concentrates on producing new information and increasing expertise. The peer support meetings are venues for sharing expertise, preparing publications, and developing methods for youth substance abuse prevention. The Preventiimi network includes more than 80 organisations, which together have appointed about 220 key persons as members of the developer network.



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