

FIGHTING BACK

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO REDUCE DEMAND FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Charlotte NC ❖ Columbia SC ❖ Gallup NM ❖ Kansas City MO ❖ Little Rock AR ❖ Milwaukee WI ❖ Newark NJ
New Haven CT ❖ Oakland CA ❖ San Antonio TX ❖ Santa Barbara CA ❖ Vallejo CA ❖ Washington DC ❖ Worcester MA

Leadership! Linkages! Local Data!

Throughout the life of the Fighting Back Initiative, three factors have repeatedly surfaced as significant to the success of the many different strategic approaches in all of the communities: ***leadership, linkages and local data***. Sometimes all three have been involved, sometimes two and other times one of the three has been the foundation by which an effort has been able to move forward. This newsletter and the ones that follow will identify and highlight outstanding examples of ***leadership, linkages, and local data*** in Fighting Back communities.

Fighting Back communities have demonstrated a variety of dynamic, creative, and courageous ***leadership*** skills that are necessary to solve complex problems.

The communities have formed ***linkages*** between systems and individuals that have not traditionally worked together to maximize resources and impact. For example, treatment, aftercare, job training and job placement should operate in seamless, mutually constructive and interactive efforts.

Fighting Back communities have aggressively pursued comprehensive ***local data*** and statistics to gain a contextual understanding and focus of ***their*** city's overall drug problem. The reality of substance abuse in a particular community is often different from the issues highlighted by national and state aggregate statistics.

As you read these stories, think about the examples of ***leadership, linkages, and local data*** in the efforts to reduce substance abuse that exist in your community.

Fighting Back Sites Receive ONDCP/OJJDP Drug-Free Communities Grants

Four Fighting Back Communities have been selected to participate in the first round of the ONDCP/OJJDP Drug Free Communities Support Program, which under the Drug-Free Communities Act provides grants directly to 93 cities and towns to enhance their efforts to reduce alcohol and drugs at the local level.

This program is unique because funds are sent directly to communities to support their anti-drug strategies, instead of being funneled through the states, as is the case with the SAMHSA and criminal justice block grants. The Fighting Back communities that will receive funding include Santa Barbara, San Antonio, Milwaukee and Gallup. The experiences and linkages these communities have developed as a result of their involvement with Fighting Back efforts provided the foundation for their proposals. They have comprehensive community strategies and broad-based collaborations between diverse groups to reduce substance abuse at the local level. The Safe and Drug Free Communities funding will help these communities sustain and institutionalize various elements of their Fighting Back strategies.

For example, Santa Barbara's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse received approximately \$99,000 to extend its Fighting Back strategies by supporting the Youth Services Specialists (YSS) initiative in middle and secondary schools. This important effort sends YSS staff into the schools to interact with students and identify those having

problems with alcohol and drugs. The YSS staff are in a unique position to also learn of family substance abuse problems, organize prevention efforts and educate teachers on how to recognize the signs of substance abuse problems among youth. The money will be used to support tracking and monitoring of client interventions in the YSS program, as well as to support a mentor training program and coordinated media campaign targeting youth and their parents. Penny Jenkins, Executive Director of Santa Barbara Fighting Back, says, "This funding really offers a basis for establishing the strategies we have identified through Fighting Back."

Approximately \$100,000 was awarded to San Antonio Fighting Back of the United Way. These funds will be used to sustain and enhance the Fighting Back strategies to reduce substance abuse that have been developed over the past few years. Fighting Back will expand its mentoring program, enhance community policing efforts and establish substance abuse screening, referral and treatment programs. The overall objectives of the strategy include a measurable reduction in illicit drug use among middle and secondary school students, prevention of drug-related crime and increased availability and access to substance abuse treatment.

Northwest New Mexico Fighting Back, a Fighting Back Project since 1989 and now participating in The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Healthy Nations program, *continued on last page*

Linkages: Youth Programs, Identification and Referral, Client Interventions and Community Participation

Lessons Learned from Kansas City CEWG: Linking Data with Practice

Diverse institutions participate in Kansas City's efforts to gather data on local substance abuse problems. Working together they have forged and strengthened relationships with one another, brought focus and precision to strategies, and redefined the way the community perceives its most important substance abuse problems.

The Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) in Kansas City is comprised of representatives from the police department, the schools, COMBAT Drug Court Program, Truman Medical Center, the Missouri Department of Mental Health, the NIDA National CEWG project, and a local community mental health clinic. Together, they contribute existing data and develop new sources of information to monitor and analyze drug use patterns in their community.

The group had to overcome many challenges to find common ground and build a level of trust within the team. "People and institutions can be very territorial," explains Dr. Jacob Gordon, Director of the Institute for Multicultural Leadership at the University of Kansas, who chairs the Kansas City CEWG. "Respect and understanding for what each person brought to the table, as well as for what they hoped to get out the process, both personally and professionally, was an important step in bridging personal differences."

The element of reciprocity was also an important factor for this group. It was imperative that the group members and their institutions were able to see the benefits of being part of the CEWG. "They needed to contribute and get something out of the process for themselves. This has been a huge part of the success with the group," explains Dr. Bill Geis, Information Specialist for the Kansas City CEWG and Behavioral Health Researcher at Truman Medical Center. Continuous recognition and appreciation of leaders of the participating institutions by the Fighting Back Board and staff has been a key factor in nurturing commitment and trust among group members.

The goal of the CEWG is to gather and analyze data on current drug use issues and gain a better understanding of the scope of substance abuse in the community. However, the group realized early that they needed to find new ways to collect some of the data they needed. This experience spurred enthusiasm among members to seek and develop support for new methods in their home institutions.

These activities and reports have brought focus and specificity to the community's perception of substance abuse in Kansas City. Each of the members plays a role in disseminating the information back to their institutions and the Fighting Back community to make sure their strategic approaches remain focused. "CEWG folks help oversight committee members to understand the impact and effectiveness of the strategies on the community's drug problems," explains Dr. Geis. Dr. Gordon continues, "The CEWG helps us collect data from a broad range of areas as well as to get a sense about how to communicate it so that it is understandable and user-friendly to the community-at-large."

In the most recent community report, CEWG data were used to refute the top ten myths about substance abuse in Kansas City and to paint an accurate picture of the problem. For example, one myth suggested that young people primarily use illicit drugs like crack cocaine or methamphetamine. The CEWG determined through its analysis of several data sources that the drugs most often abused among Kansas City youth include tobacco, alcohol and marijuana. The usage rates for these substances are currently in decline after several years of increase.

Another myth suggested that drug related crime in Kansas City was caused by young people under the age of 17. CEWG data shows that drug related arrest rates are highest among people ages 25-44. In fact, less than four percent of narcotics arrests are below the age of 17, while 59 percent are between the ages of 25-44. This information suggests that illicit drug use and crime is actually more of a problem among adults than teenagers. This is only a portion of the facts presented in the Project Neighborhood, Inc. Fighting Back Community Report.

The CEWG group sees its work as a dynamic process that will continually refine the accuracy of the picture of substance abuse in Kansas City. "We are beginning to broaden what we are doing to Kansas City beyond the initial geographic area of Project Neighborhood," says Dr. Gordon. "We realize this is important because we need to link Project Neighborhood in the context of its total environment in order get a better picture of the community's progress in addressing its most important substance abuse problems."

**Linkages:
Criminal Justice,
Schools, Health
Departments,
Community-
based
Organizations,
Universities,
Hospitals and
State Agencies**

A Community Leader's Reflection: The Links Between Economic Development and Strategies to Reduce Substance Abuse in Washington, D.C.

Linkages:
Economic
Development,
Job Training,
Treatment
and Aftercare
Support

Lloyd Smith believes that the economic vitality of a community is interrelated with the well being of its residents. This former president of the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization (MHCDO) has worked hard to link both elements as part of the community's overall strategy to reduce substance abuse.

Smith is a longtime resident and community leader in Ward 7 of Washington, DC, where MHCDO serves as the lead agency for Fighting Back. "Where there is no economic base or viability in a community there is a higher incidence of crime and substance abuse because of a perceived and actual lack of opportunity," Smith explains.

As the leader of MHCDO from 1980 to 1998, he supported important linkages between the social services needed to ensure residents health with job opportunities and sustained commercial development to bring stability to the area. He recognized the necessity of both factors

working together in order to safeguard the broader health of the community. As a result of Smith's innovative approach, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) cited MHCDO as "a national model for rebuilding troubled cities from the grassroots up."

The current MHCDO Fighting Back strategy focuses on expanding access to treatment for recovered substance abusers by providing treatment and aftercare services that include **job training and placement**. Sobriety and recovery can only be sustained if individuals can be self-supporting. The re-building efforts in Marshall Heights link better housing, job development and improved health through treatment of substance abuse problems. Public safety and economic development are also linked to the disruption of drug trafficking to achieve overall improvements in the quality of life for residents of Ward 7.

Charlotte-Mecklenberg: Proposed Partnership Would Set Precedent

Linkages:
Substance Abuse
and Strategic
Action with
United Way
and Affiliates

The Charlotte-Mecklenberg Drug and Alcohol Fighting Back Project may soon form a partnership with the local United Way.

The Fighting Back Project plans to apply to become a member agency of the Central Carolina United Way. "If accepted, Fighting Back would be one of the first county-based public agencies to become a United Way member agency in Charlotte-Mecklenberg," explains Hattie Anthony, Executive Director of the Fighting Back Project.

"United Way membership has historically been an opportunity afforded only to 5013C certified independent, non-profit organizations," she says. But if the Fighting Back program is accepted, this will now change. This potential link with the United

Way is part of Fighting Back's strategic effort to expand their presence beyond the Fighting Back target area to engage the people and institutions of the broader Mecklenburg County in their work. United Way affiliation offers a path to institutionalize the strategic efforts to reduce substance abuse developed by Fighting Back.

"Our thought in linking with the United Way is that it would expand our community-wide presence to get the Fighting Back story and strategy out to a broader constituency," says Anthony. "This will also enhance our capacity to gain funding to sustain the work we are doing."

Fighting Back expects to learn of the United Way's decision by the end of the calendar year.

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received approximately \$100,000 to support its National Indian Youth Leadership Development Project. Developed during the Fighting Back years, this initiative has since helped Native American youth identify their assets and strengths and use them to develop new skills to resist using alcohol and drugs. The program also helps young people connect with their roots and strengthen their relationships with their parents and with the broader community. Funding through the Drug Free Communities Grant helps recognize the institutionalization of Fighting Back strategic elements in the Healthy Nations Communities.

Milwaukee Fighting Back, Inc. received \$100,000 to support a network of technical assistance providers who will link substance abuse treatment and prevention services more effectively with the community's consumers. The money will be used for prevention services geared to children whose parents are in court-ordered treatment programs, to enhance prevention resources available to treatment providers, and to increase the financial investment in prevention services by HMOs. "This grant has allowed us to formalize our Youth Advisory Council originally developed through our Fighting Back strategies," explains Tasha Jenkins, Executive Director of Milwaukee Fighting Back, Inc. "The formal incorporation of this Council gives youth greater input in developing strategies to reduce substance abuse in Milwaukee."

The Drug-Free Communities Support Program was created under the Drug-Free Communities Act of 1997 to strengthen community anti-drug coalitions across the country.

Newark Fighting Back Partners with Newark Housing Authority

"First Strike, You're Out." That's the slogan of a new eviction policy being enforced in public housing developments through a partnership between Newark Fighting Back and the Newark Housing Authority.

This policy, which was developed by the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development, calls for the eviction of tenants caught using drugs on their first offense.

Newark Fighting Back and the Housing Authority came together to try this initiative after a 1997 needs assessment revealed that drug activity and arrests were a serious problem in and around public housing developments throughout the city.

Citywide, the study found that 65 percent of all drug arrests were made

in the proximity of public housing, and in some city wards this number was as high as 84 percent.

As part of the initiative, the Newark Fighting Back Partnership will offer referral and mediation in the eviction process to help tenants and families who are at-risk for drug use get the help they need to keep from being evicted.

Fighting Back says that it hopes this new policy, with intensive efforts to help persons get connected with counseling, treatment and other supports, will help reduce crime and make neighborhoods safer – not only within public housing developments but also throughout the entire city.

Linkages: Public Housing, Police, Treatment and Support Services

The Fighting Back Newsletter is a periodic publication that reports on the Fighting Back community strategies to reduce substance abuse.

This newsletter is produced by the Fighting Back National Program Office, Join Together, Boston University School of Public Health
441 Stuart Street, Seventh Floor, Boston, MA 02116 P: (617) 437-1500 F: (617) 437-9394 Email: info@fightingback.org

For more information about community strategies to fight substance abuse, visit Join Together Online at:

www.jointogether.org

Co-editors: Barbara Charton and Lisa Falk

Watch for the Fighting Back Website coming in July 1999...www.fightingback.org