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*Effective Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Programs
for Every Community*

Start Taking Alcohol Risks Seriously (STARS) for Families

Start Taking Alcohol Risks Seriously (STARS) for Families is a health promotion program for preventing alcohol use among at-risk middle and junior high school youth (11 to 15 years old). The goal of STARS for Families is to have all youth postpone alcohol use until adulthood. The STARS for Families program matches media-related, interpersonal, and environmental prevention strategies to each child's specific stages of alcohol initiation, stages of readiness for change, and specific risk and protective factors. This innovative program has been shown to result in avoidance of, or reductions in, alcohol use among participants.

INTENDED POPULATION

STARS for Families is designed for middle and junior high school youth and their families. The program has been tested and shown useful for 11- to 15-year-old youth in both urban and rural schools and for youth attending physical exams for sports teams.

BENEFITS

- Delays the onset of alcohol use among youth
- Reduces quantity and frequency of any alcohol use and heavy alcohol use among those already drinking
- Increases motivation to avoid alcohol use
- Reduces alcohol use risk factors and beliefs that support the use of alcohol
- Increases protective factors and resistance skills
- Increases parent-child communication about alcohol use prevention

Proven Results*

STARS for Families participants are:

- 3.6 times less likely to plan to use alcohol in the next 6 months
- 4.8 times less likely to have drunk alcohol in the past 30 days
- 3.3 times less likely to be in an advanced stage of alcohol use
- 3 times less likely to drink alcohol during any length of time
- 2.3 times less likely to have drunk heavily during the past 30 days

**Results compared to control group.*

INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

Indicated



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

OUTCOMES

A longitudinal study of STARS for Families found that, relative to the controls, participants:

- Were less likely to be in more advanced stages of alcohol initiation 3 months after completing the program
- Were less likely to have drunk alcohol in both the past 7 days and past 30 days, 3 months after program completion
- Were less likely to have drunk heavily during the past 30 days, 3 months after program completion
- Were less likely to be planning to drink in the next 6 months, 1 year after the program ended
- Decreased their intention to drink in the future, 1 year after the program ended
- Had greater motivation to avoid alcohol use, 1 year after the program ended
- Experienced fewer total alcohol-use risk factors, 1 year after the program ended

HOW IT WORKS

STARS for Families consists of three primary strategies:

- **Health Care Consultation**—A nurse or other health care provider delivers a brief (20-minute) annual health consultation concerning how to avoid alcohol use. The intervention is designed to reach youth at specific stages of alcohol initiation and readiness for change and provides a range of prevention messages.
- **Key Facts Postcards**—Ten *Key Facts* postcards are mailed to parents or guardians in sets of 1 or 2 per week for 5 to 10 weeks. The cards tell parents what they can say to their children to help them avoid alcohol. Parents can return a detachable postage-paid portion of the card to provide information about their interaction with their children and its usefulness.
- **Family Take-Home Lessons**—Parents and guardians are provided with four weekly take-home prevention activities they can complete with their children and return. The lessons include an alcohol avoidance contract for the child to sign and a feedback sheet to collect satisfaction and usage data from parents.

Unlike most existing programs that consist of several weeks of classroom lessons, the STARS for Families program uses very brief, potentially cost-effective strategies. These strategies can be implemented within schools, health clinics, youth organizations, work sites, families, religious organizations, and communities, using little time and causing minimal organizational disruption.

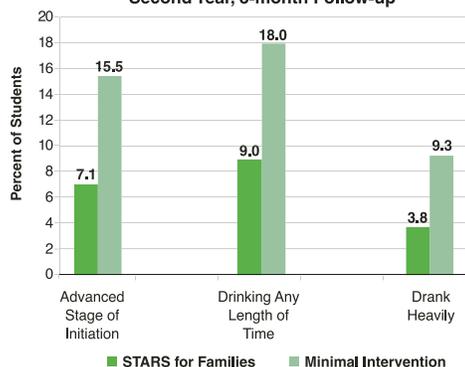
IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Successful replication of STARS for Families involves:

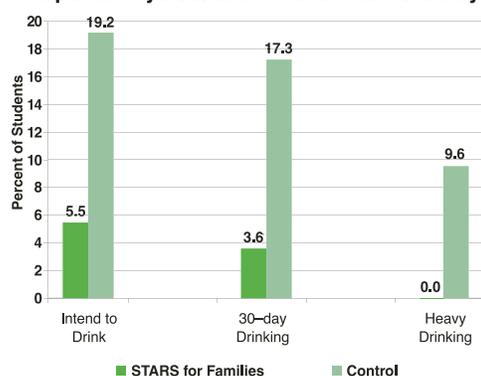
- Recruiting participating youth of middle or junior high school age
- Training nurses or health care providers to administer the program
- Delivering and monitoring annual one-on-one nurse-youth consultations
- Delivering and monitoring implementation of *Key Facts* postcards
- Delivering and monitoring implementation of family take-home lessons
- Conducting pre- and post-program outcome data collections to measure program effects

STARS for Families can be implemented anytime. A sample implementation timeline is provided in the STARS for Families Complete Manual, which also includes all intervention protocols, forms, process measures, program evaluation materials, and training materials. Intervention components are typically administered over the course of 1 to 3 years.

Longitudinal School Study
Second Year, 3-month Follow-up



Sports Physical Examination Clinic Study



STARS for Families requires participation of trained nurses or other health care providers and a program coordinator. These professionals receive 1 to 2 days of training, and the program can be implemented immediately after training. Even though STARS for Families' consultation protocols are highly scripted, training is recommended to ensure the implementation of accurate and effective consultations.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

STARS for Families was developed at the Center for Drug Prevention Research, University of North Florida, College of Health, with grants from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. STARS for Families is a health promotion program that uses health care providers and parent prevention materials to prevent alcohol use among at-risk youth.

The program is founded on the Multi-Component Motivational Stages (McMOS) prevention model, which posits stages of habit initiation in health-damaging behavior, such as substance use, that parallel and exist in conjunction with the stages of change described in the Transtheoretical Model. The McMOS prevention model hypothesizes that progression through the stages of initiation and change is influenced by risk and protective factors such as those described as constructs within contemporary psychosocial health theories. Finally, McMOS proposes the use of a range of communication channels for matching prevention content and strategies to specific stage status, including a media and media-related materials channel, an interpersonal channel, and an environmental channel.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The Center for Drug Prevention Research, University of North Florida, has conducted research studies of brief alcohol preventive interventions, including STARS for Families, for more than 8 years. The Center recently studied a modified version of STARS for Families using a randomized controlled trial that tested the program's feasibility and efficacy in physical examinations for school sports teams. The evaluation involved 178 seventh through ninth grade students from one urban, one suburban, and one rural school located in a northeast Florida county. Participating youth were recruited by project staff and introduced to participating nurses during physicals for school sports programs. Most subjects were male (52 percent), and either White (75 percent) or African American (13 percent), with a mean age of 13.1 years ($SD=1.00$). Subjects were randomly assigned to the intervention or a control group with a 6-month posttest.

PROGRAM DEVELOPER

Chudley E. (Chad) Werch, Ph.D., CHES, FAAHB

Dr. Werch has served as principal investigator on all grants resulting in the development and testing of the STARS for Families preventive intervention. He is graduate research director and distinguished professor, Department of Public Health Science, and director of the Center for Drug Prevention Research at the University of North Florida. Dr. Werch has participated as a consultant or principal investigator for numerous substance abuse prevention and health promotion projects, and is co-developer of another SAMHSA Model Program, Keep A Clear Mind.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To obtain printed materials, training information, or technical assistance, contact:

Dinky Hicks
Director of Marketing, Public Relations, and Curriculum Development
NIMCO, Inc.
102 Highway 81 North
P.O. Box 9
Calhoun, KY 42327-0009
Phone: (800) 962-6662, extension 114
E-mail: dinky@nimcoinc.com
Web site: www.nimcoinc.com

For research and evaluation information or technical assistance, contact:

Chudley E. (Chad) Werch, Ph.D., CHES, FAAHB
Graduate Research Director
Center for Drug Prevention Research
University of North Florida
College of Public Health
4567 St. Johns Bluff Road, South
Jacksonville, FL 32224-2645
Phone: (904) 620-2847
Fax: (904) 620-1035
E-mail: cwerch@unf.edu

RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Promising Prevention Program—The Urban Institute