



Prevention Research Center

FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

EMERGING ADULTHOOD

The research program on preventing risk behaviors in emerging adulthood has been evolving in the Prevention Research Center for the past decade. The transition period following high school is a time of many changes as individuals make strides to adulthood. Some individuals attend college while others go on to receive technical training or join the workforce. This developmental phase has been characterized by Arnett (2002) as consisting of identity exploration, instability, self-focus, a feeling of being in-between adolescence and complete adulthood, and unparalleled opportunities. It is a time when individuals attempt to support themselves by part or fulltime jobs and establish many new friendship networks. This new independence requires the individual to make daily decisions regarding time use and life style choices without direct adult input. These same decisions are also required about the use of alcohol, drugs, and risky sex.

Unfortunately, data suggest that a high percentage of individuals make decisions to drink in a frequent heavy episodic manner, use prescription and illegal drugs regularly, and engage in high-risk sexual activities. Thus, it has been argued that these behaviors pose the greatest risk to the health of individuals as they make the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Hingson et al., 2002; Maggs & Schulenberg, 2005). The widespread prevalence of substance abuse and high-risk sexual activity has underscored the need for empirically supported interventions. As an example, numerous approaches to preventive interventions with have been forwarded, including universal (Turrisi et al., 2001), selective (Larimer et al., 2001; 2007) and indicated preventive efforts (Marlatt et al., 1998).

In addition to policy-based approaches (Bormann & Stone, 2001), suggested modalities for these interventions have included environmental, group-based, and individual-level interventions (see Larimer & Cronce, 2002; 2007 for a review). Each unique approach carries with it both advantages and disadvantages, and the scope of substance abuse requires that it be addressed across multiple domains, through the integration of various empirically-validated approaches.

The Prevention Research Center in the College of Health and Human Development, as part of its mission, promotes research on the etiology of preventing risk behaviors and developing sustainable evidence-based interventions for this critical developmental period.

GOALS

- 1) To conduct and support high-quality scholarship on the etiology of preventing risk behaviors in emerging adulthood that inform prevention efforts.

- 2) To conduct and support high-quality scholarship on developing sustainable evidence based prevention efforts as individuals' transition from adolescent into adulthood.
- 3) To develop and support a community of scientists and practitioners that conduct high-quality scholarship on preventing risk behaviors in emerging adulthood.
- 4) To disseminate scientific findings to support the prevention of risk behaviors in emerging adulthood for individuals, families, schools, communities, workplaces, and government agencies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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