

Executive Summary

This report details changes in key beliefs, risk perceptions, and motivation to reduce use that occurred among youth in Iowa who attended PRIME For Life between January and June, 2006. Their future drinking and drug use intentions following the PRIME For Life program are also examined. Results are based on 612 participants who completed pre- and post-test surveys.

Approximately 72% of program participants were male and 92% were Caucasian. Average age was 18.7 years. Seventy-four percent reported completion of high school or earning a GED. Thirty-three percent reported they did not make any high-risk alcohol or drug choices in the thirty days prior to PFL. Forty-nine percent reported experiencing three or more indicators of possible alcohol dependence. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents reported that a parent, grandparent or sibling has or has had serious problems with alcohol. Twenty-four percent had one or more arrests for impaired driving.

At post-test, participants reported somewhat higher past high-risk choices than they were at pre-test. For example, on the post-test the mean most drinks in a day during the 30 days prior to PFL was 9.8 drinks, and for the same time period reported at pre-test the average was 8.7 drinks. Similarly, at post-test 26% of the sample described themselves as ever having an alcohol or drug problem, while 18% indicated this at pre-test.

After the program, 23% indicated they are in Phase 1 (consistently making low-risk choices), 40% classified themselves in Phase 2 (making high-risk choices, but not yet psychologically dependent), 27% reported being in Phase 3 (psychologically dependent), and 6% indicated being in Phase 4 (physically dependent).

Changes in Attitudes, Beliefs, Perceptions of Risk, and Motivation to Reduce Use

High-risk drinking and drug use choices are supported by common attitudes, beliefs, and risk perceptions on several dimensions, as well as low motivation to reduce use. After attending PRIME For Life, participants who were 17 years old and younger and those 18-20 years old each indicated significantly greater:

- agreement with attitudes and beliefs that are supportive of making low-risk choices;
- perception of risk associated with high-risk drinking and drug choices;
- perception of personal risk for developing alcoholism;
- motivation to reduce their use.

The beliefs “If I drink as much as in the past, I could develop alcoholism,” and “If I use drugs as much as in the past, I could become addicted,” changed significantly more for participants who designated having three or more symptoms of possible dependence than for those who with no symptoms.

Behavioral Intentions and Detailed Plans

Participants were asked on the post-test about the drinking and marijuana or other drug choices they think they would make in the 30 days after the program. Forty-two percent of those who had been making high-risk drinking choices indicated they intend to make low-risk drinking choices in the 30 days following the program—15% intend to abstain and 27% to drink within the low-risk range. Thirty-four percent of those who used marijuana or other drugs in the 30 days before the program indicated intentions to not use in the following month. Nearly 70% of participants also indicated that they had made detailed plans to avoid high-risk drinking and drug use and to substitute other activities.

Course Evaluation and Summary

At the end of the course, most participants agreed that PRIME For Life helped them to decide to abstain, or drink and/or use drugs less, helped them feel confident in being able to abstain, or drink less or use drugs less, and helped them to develop skills to be able to abstain, or drink less or use drugs less. These findings are consistent with the participants’ reported intentions to make less risky choices in the future.