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**Environmental Prevention Strategies Significantly Reduce College Drinking**  
 November 23, 2010

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Community-based, well-publicized environmental interventions can significantly reduce drinking and intoxication at off-campus locations, a multi-year experimental study performed at 14 universities in California found.

The [National Institutes of Health](#) reported Nov. 12 that researchers collected data from a randomized cross-section of undergraduates every fall between 2003 and 2006; baseline data was collected the first year. In all, 19,761 students were surveyed: 9,732 students at seven campuses randomly chosen to receive interventions, and 10,059 students at seven randomly-chosen "control" universities.

Interventions were implemented every fall and included a crackdown on nuisance parties and sales of alcohol to minors; enforcement of "social host" ordinances; checkpoints to identify drunk drivers; and heavy use of media to publicize the campaign.

Each campus where environmental prevention strategies were used showed about 900 fewer students getting drunk each fall at parties off-campus, and 600 fewer students drunk in bars and restaurants, compared to sites where no intervention occurred. Since students reported going to parties, bars and restaurants on multiple occasions, researchers extrapolated that each campus saw a reduction of about 6,000 incidents of drunkenness at parties off-campus and about 4,000 instances of intoxication at bars and restaurants, when compared to controls.

"Nearly as significant was that we saw no concurrent increase in drinking at non-targeted settings such as parks, beaches, or residence halls," said Robert Saltz, Ph.D., of the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, who led the study. "Some fear that more rigorous alcohol control measures will merely drive college student drinking to other, presumably more dangerous, settings, but that was not the case here."

He added that the study, funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), "should give college administrators and surrounding communities some degree of optimism that student drinking is amenable to a combination of well-chosen, evidence-based universal prevention strategies."

Results of the study, "Alcohol Risk Management in College Settings: The Safer California Universities Randomized Trial," were published online in the Dec. 2010 issue of the [American Journal of Preventive Medicine](#).

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