

Substance Abuse



Harvey A. Siegal, Ph.D.
Director, Substance Abuse Intervention
Programs (SAIP)
Professor, Community Health and
Sociology

For more than 20 years, SAIP has developed community service programs, provided educational opportunities to health professions students, and conducted significant research in several areas of substance abuse intervention and treatment. Studies have quantified local teen substance abuse, tested AIDS prevention programs for injection drug users, and shown the effectiveness of education and referral treatments for drivers convicted of driving under the influence (DUI). Recent studies examine the intersection of substance abuse use among individuals with disabilities.

Sponsor: National Institute on
Drug Abuse

Community-Oriented Research: A Model to Build Upon

Although Wright State University School of Medicine was established as a community-based school without its own teaching hospital, some viewed the geographical distance between basic and clinical departments as a barrier to research. Others saw it as an opportunity to involve the community in the research mission. The opportunities soon became national models, and the problems posed by distance diminished by technology.

While other schools clung to tradition, the new Dayton model created its own tradition by embracing a community partnership model. Faculty quickly adapted their knowledge to community needs and strengths, forming partnerships and applied research programs that became models for the rest of the country.

For example, in 1978, Harvey Siegal, Ph.D., began the Weekend Intervention Program (WIP), a program to intervene early in the substance abuse cycle. "Substance abusers find their use adversely affects them three ways: with their families, on their jobs, and with the criminal justice system," explains Dr. Siegal. "Early intervention with

families is difficult, and by the time a problem worsened so it affected job performance, work-place initiatives and programs would kick in."

Dr. Siegal looked at the area's criminal justice system as an intervention site and DUI (Driving Under the Influence) as the kind of offense "many would commit; as such, it opened a large window to identifying people in trouble with alcohol and/or drugs. Ultimately we are at the mercy of society's most fragile and most troubled members," he explains. "Our job is to help these people, but also to improve the systems and organizations that deal with these societal issues. If we don't, we all suffer."

WIP, a combination of assessment, education, and referral, became a conduit between the community's criminal justice and human services systems. More than 36,000 convicted DUI offenders have been mandated by the courts to attend WIP since its inception, and WIP has proven to be more effective than either fines or incarceration for recidivism rates. The program has been replicated throughout North America.

"Ultimately we are at the mercy of society's most fragile and most troubled members. Our job is to help these people, but also to improve the systems and organizations that deal with these societal issues. If we don't, we all suffer."