

CHOICES is a brief alcohol abuse prevention and harm reduction program for college students involving interactive journaling. CHOICES engages students in a self-reflective process where they independently choose to change high-risk alcohol and drug behaviors using the information provided, the risks associated with excessive use and available alternative coping strategies. The CHOICES program at Minnesota State University, Mankato involves a 2 hour group workshop and a 45-minute Individual Follow up Meeting, both facilitated by the Coordinator of Alcohol and Drug Sanction Education or Alcohol and Drug Education Staff.

The CHOICES program is presented in a non-confrontational manner that enables students to make their own decisions about alcohol consumption. Because the central focus of this program is to help students make informed choices the journal is set up to provide participants with information and then they are asked to apply what they have learned in a series of self-reflective questions.

The core delivery principles of CHOICES are:

- Validate student decision-making
- Focus on providing accurate but nonjudgmental information
- Encourage reflection on personal options/choices
- Emphasize individual responsibility for change
- Focus on reducing exposure to harm
- Provide menu of options to reduce risk
- Create safe, confidential environment

CHOICES provides campuses with a brief, research-based, cost-effective and easy to implement method for helping students reevaluate their choices around alcohol. The program engages students in self-reflection and discussion about facts, risks and norms associated with alcohol while equipping them with the information, strategies and skills to make safe decisions.

Examples of potential discussion questions for a CHOICES class:

- List the desirable and undesirable things about drinking during college (from the students' point of view).
 - o What do you notice about each of your lists?
 - o Observations about the desirable things vs. undesirable things
- If you have ever drank past the point of diminishing returns or seen others who have, how did drinking that much or being around others who did affect you?

The *Interactive Journaling*® process provides critical information about college student norms while guiding students to apply information to their personal experiences. The approach emphasizes student safety combined with personal responsibility. CHOICES is designed to be appropriate for both universal preventions and sanctioned students.

CHOICES was created by The Change Companies®, Alan Marlatt, Ph.D., and George Parks, Ph.D. The program is based upon research by the University of Washington Addictive Behaviors Research. CHOICES has been recognized by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a leading alcohol abuse prevention program for college students. The CHOICES program utilizes theory in Motivational Interviewing and the BASICS Model (Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention of College Students).