



AIM Higher
Montana High School Association
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Activities In Montana

A Tobacco, Alcohol and Other Drug Education and Prevention Program for Montana's Students

What is AIM Higher?

Initiated by MHSA Board of Control in 1988, AIM Higher is an on-going project designed to assist local schools in providing possible solutions to the tobacco, alcohol and other drug related problems present in our schools as well as citizenship and sporting behavior problems. AIM Higher is the Montana High School Association's effort to prevent tobacco, alcohol and other drug use among our youth and to promote citizenship and positive sporting behavior.

MHSA Position Statement on Chemical Awareness

The Montana High School Association recognizes the use of mood-altering chemicals as a significant health problem for many adolescents, often resulting in negative effects on behavior, learning and the total development of the individual. This includes steroids and other performance enhancing chemicals.

Many people have been reluctant to accept the fact that student chemical use is as widespread as sources indicate. Many cling to the belief that students in activities are immune to these problems. But it is clear that chemical use problems exist equally among students in activities and the remainder of the student body. Schools, families, communities and the state at large must address the situations directly and determine practical responses.

Consistent with these realities the MHSA has made a commitment to promote and foster a quality program to assist school officials in planning and implementing chemical health programs for the 25,000 students who participate annually in MHSA activity programs.

Why Target Students in Activities?

Almost 60% of the high school student body, in the United States, participates in co-curricular activities during the school year. Co-curricular activities include sports like volleyball and football as well as debate, cheerleading, band, chorus, and other activities which complement the regular school curriculum. These students often represent significant peer leadership, and because they are involved in school activities are often assumed not to be drug users or abusers. Data, however, does not substantiate this assumption: In fact, these students prove to be as involved with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs as their peers. Moreover, their ability to influence opinions of not only their peers but also the younger student population makes it especially critical to focus our efforts on them. Certainly, those same ideas relate to issues regarding citizenship, respect and sporting behavior issues in our schools.

Sports and athletic activities have a strong impact on our culture. A recent survey conducted by "USA Today" reported that 90 percent of high school-age youth listed sports as their primary hobby. Students also show that sports figures, coaches, and team captains are very influential role models for youth. In any case, the coach/advisor's relationship with the student approaches that of a parent's relationship with a child. It seems clear that co-curricular activities such as athletics and fine arts are effective arenas for reducing the risk of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use by teenagers and for promoting citizenship.

- Nationally, 30% of high school seniors report having had "five drinks in a row" on one occasion or more during the last two weeks.
- Alcohol use ("ever having consumed") among 9-12 grade students in Montana is 83%.
- The average age people in the USA start to drink is now 11.5 years.
- Recently 135 coaches and players were ejected from athletic contests in one year.
- Twenty-five percent of all school children live in chemically dependent families.
- Cigarette use for students is on the rise while adult use is declining.
- Recently, four officials were assaulted by fans or players in a school year.

These are national and state statistics; consequently, they hold true for many communities. A survey of the co-curricular students in your community may determine more exactly the incidence of substance abuse and problems regarding poor citizenship and sporting behavior.

AIM Higher Goals:

The overall goal of the MHSA is drug-free schools and the production of good citizens from activity programs. More specifically MSHA goals include:

1. Workshops for school personnel that are designed to educate them more fully of the deleterious effects of tobacco, alcohol and other drug use among our students, to highlight the tremendous positive impact that school officials can have relative to the behavior of kids in activities and to equip the school personnel with skills and resources to initiate a chemical health program with their teams/groups. The same applies to citizenship and positive sporting behavior.
2. Workshops for student leaders in activities that are designed to address issues of leadership and role-modeling, peer resistance skills, self-esteem and their responsibilities in the tobacco, alcohol and drug area and their role as examples of good citizens.
3. To make the general public aware of the serious problems we have in the citizenship and alcohol and other drug area. To accomplish this, the MHSA will conduct advertising campaigns in all MHSA publications as well as the statewide media.
4. To have available a resource library for our schools to utilize featuring the most current prevention films and videos, speaker's bureau and information on national research and studies in the tobacco, alcohol and drug field as well as the citizenship arena.

AIM Higher Services Available to All Schools

1. Access to national research and studies, particularly from the National Federation of State High School Associations.
2. Bulletin articles with specific and timely information sent to all schools.
3. Information on how to conduct a preseason meeting and how to sell the community on the need to address chemical health issues and citizenship/sporting behavior problems.
4. Liaison to Justice Department on interscholastic drug-related issues and with the Office of Public Instruction on citizenship concerns.
5. Prevention posters/material sent to all schools regarding drug free and citizenship issues.
6. Presentations to schools and special interest groups from government agencies to private service organizations.
7. Promotional supplies and logos that create awareness regarding citizenship issues.

8. A variety of tobacco, alcohol and other drug related films and videos that are excellent sources of information. In addition, the MHSA has videos and publications on mentoring programs for high school students and other sporting behavior publications.
9. Workshops for athletic administrators, coaches, sponsors, advisors and students in activities.
10. Sportsmanship Award/Recognition programs.

Our Experience

To date the AIM Higher program has conducted workshops for thousands of athletic administrators, coaches, advisors, counselors, trainers, students and other school personnel.

The AIM Higher program has also trained 18 individuals, from Montana high schools, who facilitate the workshops throughout Montana. These individuals are coaches, administrators and chemical health coordinators in our schools.

The AIM Higher office sends out several items of information to schools each month which include videos, films and other informational and promotional items, as well as workshop information.

Information and Material

The AIM Higher Chemical Health Program can support your tobacco, alcohol and other drug initiatives with resources that include publications and other educational materials. Pamphlets on: sports and chemical use, program development for a specific activities, audio/visual materials, mentoring information and how to organize preseason meetings. This information is available to all member schools and related education agencies.

Find Out More

To find out more about AIM Higher services, write or call the Montana High School Association.

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