

# CODA's Program Philosophy

Understanding how to work with youth is one of the key components of any successful youth-focused program. The Council on Drug Abuse is proud of the work which we do *and* the way that we do it. Our expert educators deliver programs that have been built around a strict philosophy. What follows is an introduction of that philosophy and the way in which we reach youth.

## CODA PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

**The most effective in-school prevention programs are those incorporating principles of the Social Influence Model:**

- Provide information about health and social consequences of drugs
- Motivate students to resist the pressures to use
- Create awareness of media and peer influence
- Teach students to develop skills that analyze and minimize the impact on student use

**The following factors are ineffective ways to provide information to students:**

- Only providing information about drugs, health risks and consequences of drug use on personal problems
- Providing didactic presentations in schools
- Presenting to large assemblies
- Using values clarification and scare tactics

**Program Structure:**

- Offer ongoing education in each grade from kindergarten to final year of high school
- Customize program so that it is appropriate for various subgroups
- Offer multiple presentations over time; this allows for tracking behavioural and attitudinal changes
- Involve students in the planning and implementation of curriculum

**Program Content:**

- Discuss why people use drugs, and present alternatives
- Present honest facts; accurate & balanced about the dangers and benefits (user perceived) of using/not using
- Focus on short-term effects when discussing drug-specific information
- Discuss the perceptions of occasional and social use
- Highlight the fundamental interrelationship among the user, the drug and the context
- Address only those substances with a pattern of use in the community
- Focus on a single drug per module, rather than addressing a number of substances
- Promote protective factors
- Heighten social influence awareness and analysis skills
- Provide cognitive behavioural and life skills training
- Directly tie all training to drug-related scenarios
- **All CODA programs are delivered over three phases; each phase focuses on a general theme:**

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- **Phase 1 – Drugs & My World**
  - ✦ Heightens awareness of drugs and how they interact with youth's world
  - ✦ Breaks myths and misconceptions of drug use in our world, including social/occasional use
  - ✦ Information reflects social & community context of students and the drug situation in their region
  - ✦ Highlights the presence of direct and indirect peer and media influences
- **Phase 2 – Drugs & Me**
  - ✦ Provides drug-specific information in reference to the interplay between drugs and the brain, body, social and family life

**Note: Grade 7 students receive a presentation with a 'general' drug focus; Grades 8 & 9 presentations are drug-specific**

- **Phase 3 – Drugs & My Strength**
  - ✦ Focused on skills building and capacity building
  - ✦ Goal is to increase protective factors of youth
  - ✦ Build capacity to make the right choice
  - ✦ Topics are related directly to drug-use scenarios

## Program Delivery:

- **All CODA programs are delivered over three phases; each phase focuses on a general theme (as explained in *Content*)**
- Provide tolerant atmosphere that supports an open dialogue between the program educator and students
- Emphasize active learning about drug effects rather than more passive techniques
- Use professional, skilled educators whom students can trust
- Present facts accurately and without bias
- Emphasize student-to-student interactivity, rather than student-to-teacher
- Discuss media and peer influence

## Monitoring and Evaluation:

Demonstrating impact in prevention programs is challenging, yet essential for program improvement and overall success. Ongoing monitoring of CODA programs is essential to overall program evaluation, as is frequent cyclical evaluation. Our comprehensive program evaluation model is complemented by a structural logic model and consists of four stages:

### Process evaluation

- Preliminary step
- Follows operational approach to review the execution of programs versus intended design

### Self-evaluation

- Uses standardized forms
- Provides feedback on quality and perceived benefits by end user

### Outcome evaluation

- Uses data from self-evaluation over long-term tracking
- Outcomes of program effectiveness can be inferred
- Allows for measurement of program outcomes versus organizational logic model

### Impact evaluation

- Assesses changes in well-being of individuals and their community that can be attributed to a specific CODA program