

INTERNET

using the internet for
drug abuse prevention



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime





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Vienna**

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Introduction

It is arguable that the creation and explosive growth of the internet over the last two odd decades have been the most significant technological development in recent times. The internet has changed the way we read, travel, shop and entertain ourselves. As with most new technologies, it is young people who are in the vanguard of this “netization” of our social existence. Not only do youth feel comfortable using the net they also bring with them their irreverence and questioning minds, thus pushing the limits of this medium, using it for things that were scarcely imaginable.

Given the widespread interest in this medium amongst our so called “target audience” and in order to tap into this exciting interface between young people, youth culture and the internet, the Global Youth Network project teamed up with the prevnet network (www.prevnet.net) to organize a hands on theme meeting of young people and youth workers who are already using the internet for drug abuse prevention.

The meeting was organized in Athens, Greece on the sidelines of a larger Prevnet conference on telematics and Prevention from 13 to 16 March 2002 (details of the larger conference are available at <http://www.prevnet.net/events/athens/index.html>). The idea was to bring together youth experts who have gained considerable experience in using the Net as part of their prevention programmes and ask them to help us write a short “How To” guide for other youth groups who would like to start using the Net. While it is true that the Internet has revolutionized the nature of knowledge, it can be as much of a decorative trinket as ill-directed TV programmes on drug abuse prevention. Its great power and visibility also make it important for youth to familiarize themselves with the medium before they actually start using it to make social interventions. These and many other issues were discussed by youth who attended the meeting from groups from Belgium, Canada, Finland, Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia. This How To guide is really their work and we hope we have succeeded in accurately representing their views.

This guide is the result of discussions between the participants and hours of hard work put in by our two consulting editors, Ms Tracey Powers Erkkila from the A klinik foundation in Finland and Ms Oonagh Maley, TeenNet Research Project, University of Toronto. Both of them spent a long time working and reworking the ideas that came up during the meeting and writing them up in a format that may be useful for net neophytes. We would formally like to express our appreciation for their efforts. Professor Harvey Skinner also of the University of Toronto helped us conduct some of the sessions during the meeting and has been a source of support. Gautam Babbar, Coordinator of the Global Youth Network project organized the overall initiative and along with Giovanna Campello, Coordinator of the global initiative on Primary Prevention at the UNODC Demand Reduction Section also contributed to the writing of this guide. Finally we would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the Governments of Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom, whose financial contributions made the Global Youth Network project a reality.

Participants contact details

OONAGH MALEY

Teen Net Office, Univ of Toronto
Fitzgerald Building, RM 121, 150 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada
oonagh.maley@utoronto.ca
www.cyberisle.org

JENNIFFER ELLIOTT

Fitzgerald Building, RM 121, 150 College Street
Toronto, Ontario
Canada
jlcpelliott@hotmail.com
www.cyberisle.org

OUTI LEHIKONEN

Kylanevantie 6 A 16, 00320, Helsinki
Finland
Outi.lehikoinen@elamaonparastahuumetta.fi
www.kultakala.com

NICOLAS NEYT

Haardstedestraat 50
9000 Gent
Belgium
Nicolas_neyt@yahoo.com

SAMI PAAKKANEN

Parthaninkatu 6 c 76, 00530, Helsinki
Finland
Sammy76ers@hotmail.com
www.kolumbus.fi/hubu
www.elamaonparastahuumetta.fi

HYLKE VERVAEKE

Westzaanstraat 11hs
1013 NB Amsterdam
Netherlands
hylkevervaeke@hotmail.com
www.drugsinfo.tk

BART DEBOSSCHER

Westzaanstraat 11hs
1013 NB Amsterdam
Netherlands
debosscherbart@hotmail.com
www.drugsinfo.tk

IGOR ZOR

Litijska 54 F, Ljubljana 1000
Slovenia
zor@drogart.org
www.drogart.org

HENNING PEDERSEN

Markveien 38 b
0350 Oslo
Norway
henning@futurebergen.com
www.futurebergen.com

CARINA FAYE SYVERSEN

Tertnesveien 68 A
S113 Tertnes
Bergen
Norway
carina@futurebergen.com
www.futurebergen.com

MATEJ SANDE

Vl 24 Junijska 33
1000, Ljubljana
Slovenia
matej@drogart.org
www.drogart.org

GAUTAM BABBAR

UNODC, P.O. Box, 500
A1400, Vienna
Austria
Gautam.babbar@UNODC.org

TAMARA LEDERMAN MAMAN

c/o UNODC, P.O. Box, 500
A1400, Vienna
Austria
tamaraezequiel@hotmail.com



Why Use the Net for Drug Abuse Prevention with Youth?

For many youth the Internet is quick, fun, interactive, and fairly easy to use with a little practice and some patience. For these young people, going online is a common way to access diverse, up-to-date information, while communicating with peers and exploring alternative lifestyles, not to mention following fashion, music, and leisure trends. Having grown up with the technology, youth are not intimidated by the Internet's technical base and ever-increasing capacities of use. Rather, they are drawn into the excitement connected to its constant growth.

Since one of the aims of the global youth network project is to ensure that youth are creatively and effectively engaged with drug abuse prevention initiatives what better way to do that than to reach out to them through a medium that is of interest and relevant to them. The Internet is hip, young and has already captured the attention of youth throughout the world. In short, effective drug abuse prevention that deals largely with creating and sustaining social consensus on overall youth health issues would do well to take advantage of the internet because of its popularity, ubiquity and potential reach.

As one youth put it: *"It certainly beats going to the library."*

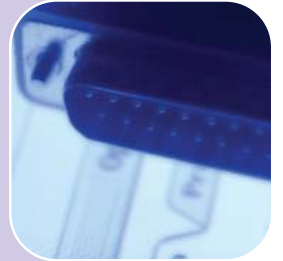
In terms of drug abuse prevention, the Internet's greatest advantage is its ability to reach potentially large groups of youth on local and global levels. As an information tool, it has infinite possibilities for adaptation, it is able, as one of the participants in this meeting put it, to become "anything you want it to be". Furthermore, if effective prevention programming involves working on decreasing the risk factors and strengthening protective factors, then the Internet provides us with an excellent resource. Activities such as enhancing decision making skills, nurturing relationships with caring adults and practising communication skills can all be facilitated by appropriately designed net based programs.

"It provides you with different aspects to the same issue and has infinite worlds to explore."

Igor Zor, Drogart, Slovenia

About *this How-To Guide*

Working with a group of youth who are currently active with online youth prevention projects in Belgium, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Slovenia, we have compiled this "how-to" guide to help you set up a web-based program or add a web component to your existing prevention efforts. This guide will help you with the "do's and don'ts" of creating a prevention website, including ideas for involving youth in the website planning, development, evaluation, upkeep and growth.



❖ *Who is this guide meant for?*

This guide was written by young people for young people or those working with youth based projects. It was developed through an interactive process in parallel sessions where participating youth shared their experiences of using the web for prevention. Together these youth identified key concepts and considerations for other young people who may want to harness the Internet in the fight against drug abuse and addiction.

While the most important readers are youth and youth workers, this guide may also be useful for public health managers and managers of community health projects interested in using the net.

❖ *What can I expect from this guide?*

The main aim of this guide is to clear the confusion and lessen the intimidation that can exist for organizations and groups taking their first steps towards creating a net based prevention initiative.

In this guide you'll find a number of checklists to help you in your work, and links to resources you may find useful throughout your net project. This handbook, however, does not aim to be a comprehensive stand-alone guide. Youth interested in starting a prevention project should use this guide in conjunction with the participatory handbook on needs assessment and programme planning produced by the Global Youth Network project of the UNODC.

What is the Net?

Network's of different computers connected to each other. It's all over the world. There are different kinds of information everywhere! Igor

It's a virtual life. A way to connect with people Sami

Lots of lies, its all about Info! Carina

After reading this guide, you should have an idea of the potential about the Internet for youth prevention work as well as some of its limitations. Remember however, establishing a website is not something to jump into lightly. It is our goal that by the time you have read through this little guide you'll have a clearer picture of what lies ahead if you choose to continue with telematic prevention. This will ensure a greater likelihood of project success and more importantly that the website you create reflects the quality of your overall youth prevention work.

Things to consider

before deciding if you can use a net based approach to prevention.

Many of today's youth, especially in the developed world (and most of the richer kids in developing countries) are comfortable obtaining and exchanging information via the Internet. For them it's an educational tool that has almost become second nature, even for those potentially less eager to learn. For youth online, the Internet provides a way to connect to and access information, ideas and people across the world — uncensored (in most places), 24 hours a day. The Internet also has the capacity to create instant anonymity, making it easier for young people (especially those who are exposed to recreational drug abuse) to step into the prevention arena and get more involved by asking questions, seeking support, presenting one's views on prevention and engaging others in debate.

Using the Internet puts the user more in control of the communications flow that is part of every prevention intervention— one can, for example, write and send responses without getting interrupted with questions in mid-thought. Net based communication is also inherently more flexible in terms of the attention that it requires, users are able to throw out ideas online and see what happens, test them out so to speak. They can take their time to think about responses, possibly coming back to discussions at various stages of the conversation. They can also decide what information they want to see and when they want to see it.

Unfortunately some of the most positive aspects of online prevention also have the potential to hinder your prevention efforts. The potentially negative aspects or side-effects of online prevention should be taken into consideration at the onset of your project.

First off, not every one has Internet connection or is able to get “online” so the reality is you may not be able to connect with those you most need and want to reach. Though the net is theoretically accessible 24 hours a day, this is not a reality in most cases, except for those with their own online services. Schools, internet cafes and libraries do exist within communities for use but are not always open. Some of the more hard to reach target groups are the very people who don't have access to the net due to a lack of education, poor socio-economic status and/or less contact with technology. The Internet has definite reach, but do not overestimate just how far it really goes.



Various methods of communication are applicable to net-based programming though language on the Internet can be dominated by English resources. This could act as a barrier to some of your users (and your content staff) depending on their language skills and the scope of your website. Graphics can be a nice way to lower literacy levels, though not all computers have the same capabilities and a large amount of graphics can delay downloading times.

Another potential concern is that once online it is possible for the user to encounter an "information overload". It is estimated that there are currently over 800 million websites. That's a lot of information at your fingertips, which is great, but it also means sifting through a lot of sites to get to the relevant ones. It takes practice, time, energy and a lot of trial and error to be able to accurately gauge the quality and reliability of a site and navigate around the various systems.

Using a computer poses some potential technical problems depending on the capacities that exist within your country/area. Viewed by many as fast and flexible, the Internet also contains many technical problems such as viruses, insecure data and so forth, that can make it difficult to use. Access to computer use also depends on your area.

From a prevention programming point of view, though potentially cheap to establish, maintaining a site can be quite costly. Grabbing the attention of users is one thing, but then holding it, that's another. A site needs to be constantly updated, modified and changed, which translates into potentially a lot of staff time and money that may not be a reality for some youth groups. It is also a little unclear one's real ability to reach the intended target group. Just because one can clearly target an audience through the internet, the programming and research needed to prove that they are truly being reached can be costly and/or time consuming.

Anonymity...

(It is) Another plane of existence...new roles, new identities, and life alternatives. Igor

Ethics, quality and confidentiality of information are also possible concerns for the user and can be hard to secure within one's website, especially if it has a high interactive content. The use of the Internet as a tool for prevention is a relatively new thing and as of yet little outside monitoring and quality assurance structures have been established. Anyone can make a website promising a gamut of different things while

potentially having no structures for accountability. In the “real world”, client confidentiality and ethical work practices are deeply established within the various helping professions that do prevention work. Incorporating these securities into your website will require some planning and possibly money for technical or professional support.

∴ *How does the net differ from “traditional” approaches?*

Before starting your website it is important to consider how a net based prevention programme compares with the various traditional approaches to prevention work you may be currently undertaking. You need to make sure that going online is worthy of your efforts. You must also consider the fact that some of the advantages to traditional approaches may be lost in a completely net-based programme.

The biggest difference between net-based approaches to prevention and traditional approaches is the lack of face-to-face interaction. The non-verbal forms of communication that help create a sense of fellow feeling and shared understanding are missing. Getting in touch with one’s target group and controlling the message you wish to relay is possibly easier to accomplish with conventional prevention approaches since you are actually out there in the field working with those whom you want to target. Immediate feedback obtained through facial expressions, body language, direct comments and viewed participation efforts are easier to gauge and more open for immediate discussion.

That said however the anonymity found on the internet can also be a great benefit to your programme, attracting populations that wish to remain unseen but still want to learn more about your services. Oftentimes it can lower the threshold of access to services, opening doors and making links to uncommon alliances within communities.

∴ *More on “Anonymity” in the net*

The new-found freedom that exists online is very much a two-sided coin. While the anonymous world of the Internet is one of its most attractive features, this same anonymity poses some potential ethical challenges for online prevention efforts.

Anonymity gives one the ability to create and experiment with new selves. It diminishes the fear of ridicule, shame or embarrassment if one's ideas do not follow mainstream social norms. It has the ability to enable a sense of equality of power and privacy since one can disclose what one wants, when one wants and how one wants. Disconnecting from the group can be as easy as switching off the computer. The different online environments such as discussion boards, email and chat rooms help youth



connect to other youth with similar music and fashion tastes, political ideologies and ideas about current issues. This aspect of online prevention can help youth open up and talk about their views on, experiences with or concerns about drugs. These exchanges have the potential to enhance prevention efforts by reaching youth that may not connect to an organization through traditional channels.

There are however potential drawbacks that you should also keep in mind, especially throughout the planning stage. It is hard to really know who one is talking to in chat rooms and discussion/message board areas. Sensitive questions may get the wrong information or be handled inappropriately depending on the site the person visits. Detachment from reality in online environments can allow youth to potentially gloss over, sensationalize and/or fabricate exchanges about very real issues related to substance abuse such as overdose cases and personal struggles to resist drugs.

The difficulties, both technical and ethical, in censoring information in discussion areas potentially exposes viewers to information not consistent with the message you, your hosting organization or your funding sources wish to convey. Using trained staff or volunteers as facilitators and/or checking all postings before they are displayed on your discussion board are some ways to combat the technical difficulties but of course, they have financial implications, and will impact the freedom and thus type of online community you can create. Before deciding you want to have an online community, you need to define the values you expect the community to uphold, how you will maintain those values and whether your values and policies will work with your target audience.

Prevention website *features and structures*

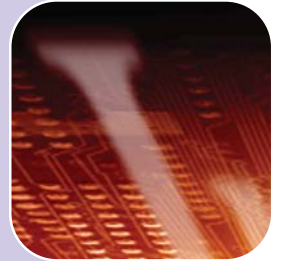
❖ *Possible online features*

So what is possible online? The youth who participated in creating this booklet came up with a list of website features and rated them using a scale of 1 to 5 (☹️) with 5 being the most difficult to implement. Difficulties can be a factor of cost, time and/or expertise required. Other aspects of difficulty can stem more from an organizational or governmental policy level. In particular, legal concerns, confidentiality needs and conflicts over free speech encountered when working with some of the interactive online components increase their difficulty of use.

Basic Features (1-2)

These features/services or information can be easily provided on your website, the financial and technical issues are easy to resolve.

1. Information about your organization, its accomplishments and youth work
2. Basic drug information
2. Tips about the experience, including descriptions of the so-called “high”
3. Information on effects of drug abuse: basic, long term and short term
4. General legal information
5. Links to similar organizations
6. Images of target audience
7. Disclaimers
8. Details on how youth can get involved with your project
9. Contact points for youth interested in getting involved with your project
10. Links to downloads and screen savers (programs people can add to their computer)
11. A link to music/entertainment to listen to when in your website
12. Message board area (place where users can post notes to each other), only reviewed by staff/volunteers
13. References and sources for the information placed on the site
14. Ordering contact points for products, information booklets



Moderately Difficult Features (3-4)

These features/services or information require a bit more planning, research and investment, possibly even training.

1. Detailed pharmacological information (your own content is preferred over links to other websites)
2. Firsthand reports from Target audience (positive experiences, raves (party experiences), bummers (bad experiences)...etc)
3. Up to date information about recreational events in the community
4. Life skills information (ideas to help with day to day life)
5. Rotating images of target audience— constantly changing
6. Your own downloads/screen savers
7. Interactive calendar/agenda listing various recreational/social events
8. FAQ's (frequently asked questions)
9. Online order forms for products, information booklets etc
10. Mailing lists (sign up to receive information about various youth activities via the website)
11. Discussion areas, these can be of two kinds, either
 - Only reviewed by staff
 - with trained moderators/facilitators
12. Message board areas with trained moderators/facilitators



* Figures in parenthesis indicate ease of implementation.

Difficult (5)



These features/services or information require a lot more planning, research and investment, it is best to undertake these after you have had a soft launch of a website with fewer facilities and services.

1. Create your own music/ entertainment for the site
2. Online expert counselling (ask questions to a counsellor and get responses)
3. Email feedback to user queries
4. Free email for users
5. Chat rooms—conversations held online with various participants (4-5) possibly with staff overseeing discussions
6. Online support groups or hobby groups facilitated by peer leaders (4-5)
7. Memory games, self-assessment tests, any interactive learning tool that is self created
8. Courses on the Internet concerning self help skills, self-esteem/decision making skills etc

❖ *Create, copy or link?*

When thinking about the various features you can utilize, it is important to think about how they will be incorporated into your website. There are three ways to add content and/or features to your website:

- ❖ Create the information yourself
- ❖ Copy from another website
- ❖ Link to other information sources

The best part about creating your own website content is that you have control. Which is why it is always preferable to have original information where possible. The information can reflect exactly the goals of your organization and be tailored to the needs of your target group or groups. Having such control also obviously means having some ethical responsibilities but more on that later. Creating your own content can also be costly, both financially and in terms of staff time. Quality control is also a problem. You may not have the staff time, money or expertise to update content and keep it current and accurate.

Copying from other websites can be a viable alternative to developing your own content. Various interactive components can be costly to create from scratch and often need extensive time to ensure usability, cultural sensitivity and so forth. Today many of these features already exist online that have been tested effectively. These tools may require some programming in order to be implemented on your website, but the

cost should be less than developing from scratch. If your organization does not have a research area of expertise, it makes sense to incorporate facts and figures (if needed) from other sources.

Whatever you copy, it is very important that you review all the material closely for quality and check copyright regulations prior to placing the content on your website. You are still responsible for what goes on your site, even if the misinformation comes from another source. It is also important to tell your users where your information is coming from. Techniques for assessing quality are discussed later in the guide.

Linking to other sites requires the least amount of technical skill and bypasses all concerns with copyright regulations. For those working with small budgets, linking is a good way to enhance your site's content. Linking can also be useful if a particular interactive feature cannot be supported by your website and/or you are not able or allowed to copy the program code. However, linking does diminish control over your site's content and causes users to leave your site for another. It is best to have as much information as possible inside your site so users stay with you. Again, it is wise to thoroughly review all links to ensure that the content you are linking to meets your standards of quality.

Three types of websites

Based on our discussions with the youth, we came up with a typology of prevention websites. They can include any number of the features listed above. The three website structures outlined below are intended to give you an idea of the varying degrees of complexity your site can include, as well as, potential outreach capabilities. As with the previous section, the features listed were suggested and ranked for difficulty by our youth team (5 being the most difficult to implement).

❖❖ *One-dimensional websites*

In these kinds of sites the viewer predominantly learns from the contents of the website and is given ways to contact others for more information, to receive help, or to get more involved. In other words, the communications flow is one-way. A one-dimensional website does not usually include the capacity for online interaction. It is an easy method for getting a lot of information out about who you are and what you are doing as a youth group or an organization.



Effectively, the web can be an advertising tool for your group. In order to be entertaining, your message to your prevention target audience can be combined with other sources, not necessarily related to drugs, such as music/entertainment, local events, pop culture or it can be focused on a specific topic or targeted at a group of people.

In terms of costs, one-dimensional websites can be the most cost effective, with little or no programming required. The content of the site is the main attraction for the user so your efforts will focus on ensuring quality content, graphic appeal and usability. One-dimensional websites also throw up fewer confidentiality issues which add to the ease with which they can be established and maintained. From a prevention point of view however one-dimensional websites can be somewhat limited since there is not really any communication with your users.

Here are some ideas of what a one dimensional site could include.

- Basic Information about your organization, its accomplishments and youth work (1)
- Basic drug information (2) Keep in mind your target group and tailor the information to their level!
- Tips about the experience (2) Keep in mind your target group and be sure to screen the experiences
- Detailed pharmacological information (3-4)
- General legal information (1-2)
- Information on effects: basic, long term and short term (2)
- Firsthand reports (positive and negative experiences, raves etc) (3)
- Up to date information about recreational events in the community (3)
- Life skills information (3)
- Links to similar organizations (1)
- Images of target audience, constantly changing (3-4), or permanent, flat (1-2)
- Disclaimer (1)
- FAQ's (4)
- Contact points for youth interested in getting involved with your project (1)
- Details on how youth can get involved with your project (1)
- References and sources for the information placed on the site (2)
- Downloads, screen savers (taken from somewhere 1/2, created yourself 3/4)
- Calendar/agenda, listing various recreational/social events (3)
- A link to music to listen to while in the website (as a link 1-2, if created 5)
- Order forms for products, information booklets, print only (1), or interactive (4-5)

With the one dimensional website format, the Internet can be used more as a traditional communications tool, like a leaflet. Used this way, the Internet can be an effective method to get information out to potentially hard to reach populations, such as those in more underground or marginalized communities. Information available on your site could help link potential clients not only with your organization but also with various community support structures, lowering the threshold of access to services and possibly assisting them in taking steps towards getting help. Your website might also provide a way to connect with youth who might not think they have drug concerns but are interested in non-judgemental information about drugs. This group might not be inclined to go to local treatment facilities to ask questions yet are able to get information in a non-invasive way through your website.

❖❖ *Two-dimensional websites*

Two-dimensional websites involve the users more in the informational exchange process. Here the website supports a dialogue between the users and the prevention specialist/s, as well as a more active learning environment beyond simply reading material on a page. Links can be established between youth and health care professionals or other prevention players within the community such as peer educators, policymakers, police and social workers. The various online services connected with two-dimensional websites can help build connections with those youth who are not comfortable with face-to-face communication around difficult topics such as drug abuse. This type of website has the potential to create bridges that are often (traditionally) hard to facilitate.

The interactivity between the user and prevention specialists as well as the windows for self reflection that are available through the two-dimensional structure conveys information in a stimulating framework. It opens up opportunities for self-evaluation, reflection and questioning in the safety of one's home, desk, cafe and so forth. Various tests and quizzes engage the user, and in a non-invasive, fun way, encourage the user to look deeper into their beliefs and behaviours around drug abuse. Users are able to test their knowledge, maybe compare with others what they think to be true and/or create for themselves "training" programs to become more aware of issues connected to drug abuse and prevention.

Two-dimensional websites can contain all the features mentioned in the one-dimensional format while adding some of the elements listed below.



How each of these elements is incorporated into your site impacts their level of difficulty. The more you want to create your own interactive features, the more expertise, money and time you will require. Staff time is another difficulty you may encounter the more interactive your site grows. Generating a mailing list (depending on how frequent and elaborate it is) requires little manpower compared to emailing direct feedback and online counselling.

Keep in mind also these more interactive features enhance the responsibilities for you or your organization as the site's producer. Confidentiality policies, code of conduct for counselling services and other structured policies need to be clearly established prior to launching your website.

- Self-assessment tests: create yourself (5), copy from other sites: if interactive (5), if non interactive (2), as a link (1)
- Internet based courses such as games for building life skills: self-esteem/decision making /listening /critical thinking: create yourself (5), copy from other sites: if interactive (5), if non interactive (2), as a link (1)
- Memory games: create yourself (5), copy from other sites or create a link (1-2)
- Free email service for users (4)
- Mailing list (2)
- Email feedback (4/5)
- Question/response counselling service (4-5)
- Online expert counselling (5)

REMEMBER, with all copied or linked features make sure to check your sources!

∴ *Three-dimensional websites*

Here the viewer is engaged not only as an information receiver but also as an important source of knowledge for others online. This occurs through dialogue between, and interaction amongst, the target audience in chat rooms, message boards and other online social forums. Three-dimensional sites include tools that enable youth to discuss and share their stories with other youth. In online environments, youth can also connect with each other to discuss their views on drugs, explore alternative lifestyles and give support to each other through personal situations. By getting in touch with and building on their collective experiences, youth become part of the informational exchange process. Communities of common interest can form, providing "safe" places for

youth to talk about potentially confusing and touchy subjects. These online communities can also be a source of establishing new peer leaders for your organization.

Three-dimensional sites can be used to tap deeper into hard to reach populations, providing a window into some of the more fringe or marginalized groups within the various drug scenes. For prevention specialists, online communities serve as tools with which to gauge current drug scenes and understand youth views, providing a glimpse into potentially hard to reach realms. However, as mentioned earlier, this throws up questions about censorship. Usually groups that are most resistant to prevention services are least likely to use a forum that can be censored, that is to say, if you wish to use your site as a research tool, in order to investigate a particular target group, you must allow for free discussion.

In addition to the possibilities included in one and two-dimensional websites, the following features can be included.

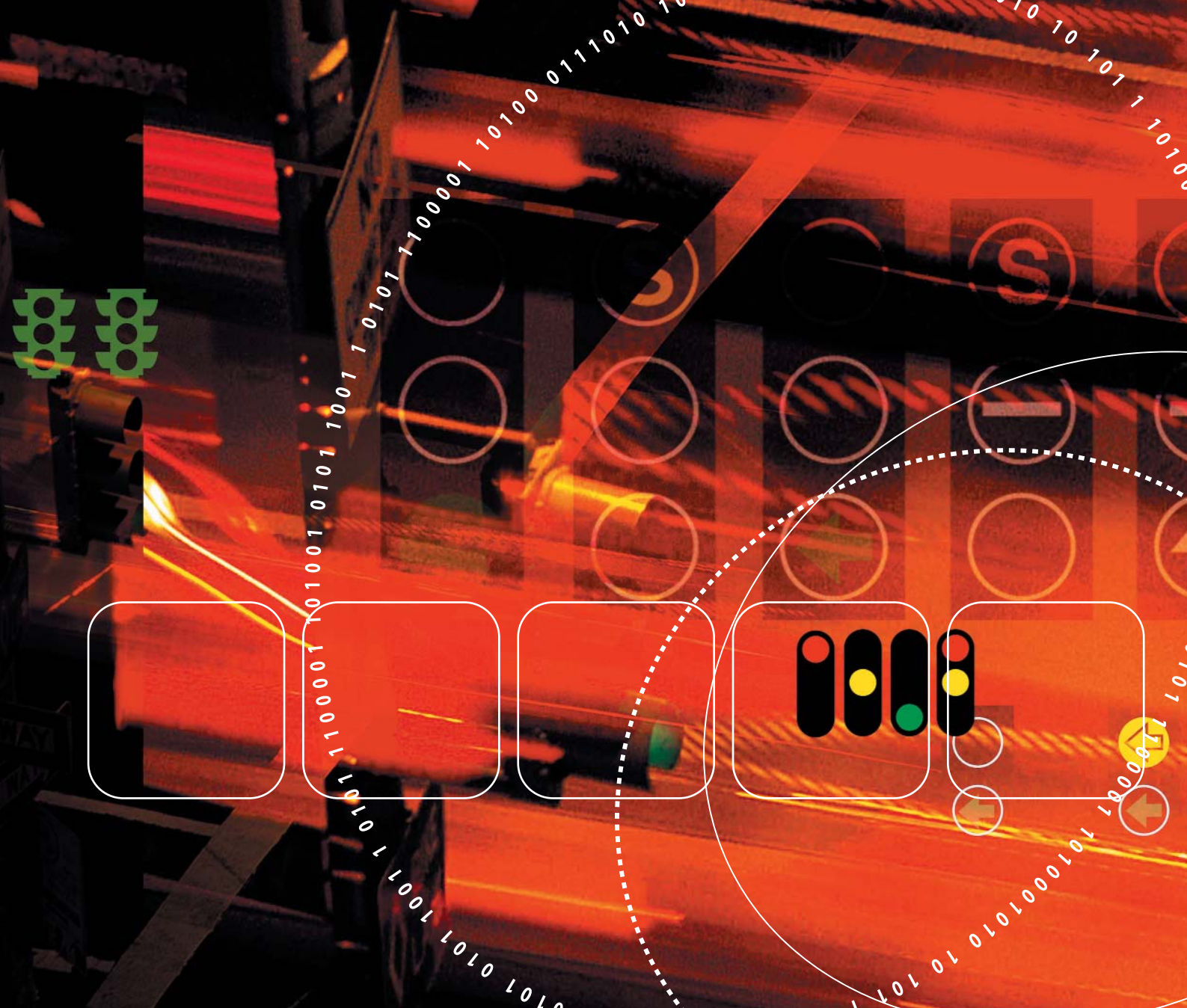
- Online support groups or hobby groups facilitated by peer leaders (4-5)
- Message board areas (1-2)
With trained staff as moderators/facilitators (3-4)
- Chat rooms (4-5)
- Discussion forums (3-4)
- Online moderators/peer support areas with trained staff:
Reviewing the message board areas, discussion forums or chat rooms (1-2)
Moderating the discussions within the various areas (3-4)

Prevention websites exist at all levels of complexity. Typically, the more interactive a website is with its user, the more complex the website structure. This means that highly interactive websites are more difficult to create and maintain than static, more informational-based sites. However, greater level of difficulty does not necessarily mean better — keep that in mind! You need to structure your site to meet the needs of your program, organization and your intended user. For example, if you simply want to use a website for advertising then a one-dimensional website will suffice. Before deciding what to include on your website, you need a clear understanding of your goals and objectives, along with your organizational capacities in terms of time, money and manpower.



What to include and why

- *Your prevention site should contain no positive suggestions (either given by yourself or as part of first hand accounts that you place on your site) about substance use, such as “do drugs” or “you can only understand the universe if you have had an acid trip”. This counters your overall purpose to prevent drug abuse and would undermine your own work.*
- *Make sure to check your links thoroughly, looking for messages that are consistent with yours.*
- *Have guidelines about using interactive features. For example if you have a chat room or discussion board, you should develop rules for these online communities. A clear statement of what will not be accepted as “appropriate” dialogue should be visible to all users. Rules for online discussions play an important role in ensuring your online communities are supportive and positive. You want to keep the atmosphere good!*
- *The confidentiality policy of your website needs to be stated clearly. For example, “Information in the discussion is not passed along to the police, parents or other potential authority figures unless someone is trying to harm themselves.” Keep it simple and to the point.*
- *Users need to be aware that privacy can’t be guaranteed. There may be situations under law or within your organization where privacy and confidentiality cannot be maintained. One example of this would be in the case of serious harm to one's self or another person. Check your local authorities for the legal aspects that might affect your site. Also review your online policies with the higher authorities in your organization to ensure there are no liability issues to deal with and that people know how to respond if a situation arises.*



LET'S MAKE A SITE !!

Planning

::: What do you want to achieve through your website?

It is important to think about your role as the creator of the site...see yourself as the Creator of a whole World if you like!! Some of the questions you will need to look at are; What level of prevention do you want to achieve as in do you want the net to actually help you with the prevention or do you just want to use it to facilitate your ongoing activities in a secondary manner? Are your goals to connect with youth on primary, secondary and/or tertiary levels of prevention? Do you want to focus on a specific population, region/location, or culture, or is your site to be more for a broader audience? Do you want to provide information, educate your target group, network with professionals, or promote a service? There are lots of possibilities. A clear goal at the onset of your net project and identifying all the ways your website will enhance or

detract from your current programming will help to alleviate possible problems down the road. (For more relevant material on programme planning see A Participatory Guide for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes, published by the Global Youth Network project of the UNODC available http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/youthnet_action.html)

Internet is an info highway, a way to express opinions and get information to use how you want. The net is what you want it to be! Jen

❖ ***Incorporating your target group into the planning process***

A target group, or those you wish to be the main users of your website, can be broad or very specific. You can also have more than one target group and/or primary and secondary target group. There are many ways to define a target group. Here are some possible categories according to which you may define your target group:

- ❖ Age
- ❖ Education level
- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Ethnicity (music, language, religion etc)
- ❖ Lifestyle (party scene, sport etc)
- ❖ Type and/or level of drug abuse
- ❖ Pattern of use (experimental, recreational, chaotic, compulsive)
- ❖ Interests

Once you have defined your target group, you need to understand them and understand how they use the net. Do they just want information or do they want to be able to communicate with others? Regardless of the projected size of your target group, collect as much information as you can from them before you start creating your website. The better you understand your target group, the easier you will find it to organise information within your site to meet their needs. (For details on matching the needs of the community with your own needs as a group see relevant parts of A Participatory Guide for Youth Drug Abuse Prevention Programmes, published by the Global Youth Network project of the UNODC available http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/youthnet_action.html)

There are many ways to connect with your target group in order to find out their needs in terms of Drug Abuse Prevention. You can use

discussion or focus groups at the onset of your project in already structured youth group settings. Surveys can also be useful to determine needs within the targeted community. Check out what information is available to you within your organization. What past efforts have been made with your target group? For example, have any needs assessments already been carried out? External market research can also be used but this might require more finances than are at your disposal. Incorporating target group members into your website development team is a good way to ensure ongoing feedback. Which method works best is up to you, but it is a good idea to use a variety of techniques to ensure you connect with a full range of target group members. Once established, keeping a connection with your target group will help guide future developments.

If you are hoping to target “high risk” groups, consider all of the above from the mind set of someone who is almost marginalized whether due to current state of drug abuse, lacking access to the Internet, low threshold of Internet use, socio-economic status and so forth. Be realistic about your own capabilities as well as those of your target audience.

Once you have identified your target group and understand more about their needs and wants, you need to review the goals you identified for your website. Do they still make sense? Do they meet a real need for this target group? Conducting a situational analysis where information is gathered about your target group in relation to what is actually happening in with drugs in your community can be helpful. Listen to youth from your target group to get ideas of what needs exist and possible tools that can be used to meet those needs. Always ensure that any objective selected is possible within your organization's current mandate.

∴ Your website and your organization: Linking offline and online activities

Keeping your organization in mind when establishing your project goal is important, since your net initiative won't get very far without the support or backing of your umbrella group. When presenting your website idea think of your site as not a separate, lone effort but as a tool to enhance existing activities. Review the current activities your organization is taking part in and think about how your website could enhance these already established services. Is it possible to create a supportive element with your website? This thought process is



important because it can help you to identify a genuine need for your website both on a community and organizational level.

Limited resources, such as personnel time and money often exist within public health organizations so connecting in some vital way to existing services will not only enhance your online product but also ensures its longevity. Not only will you assist activities already established, but you will increase the organizational need for your website. This could be helpful for funding both now and down the road.

Connecting with “real world” activities helps also with one’s personal motivation and drive. Very often people hastily put up a website not really connected to their other work and then neither have the time nor the inclination to maintain what they’ve created. The website basically dies at its onset. If the website is connected to your core activities then you need to maintain it and so it will happen.

Here are some ways to connect your website to your organization’s offline activities:

- Use the website to promote organizational campaigns, incorporating logos, prevention messages and activity dates and locations into the website
- Host online support groups to coexist with support groups that meet at your facility.
- Link online prevention training courses with existing training sessions on a professional or volunteer level.

•• ***Make a realistic budget***

It is wise to get familiar with your budget so you know just how big of a site you can create. Think about what content you’d like to have in your site and review possible costs of converting documents etc., into digital format. Do you want to focus on how information is presented, meaning more concentration on graphics and design, or more on the actual content of your site and level of interactivity? Your financial capability will impact these decisions. Locate any possible funding constraints so that your site won’t be sabotaged midway by lacking financial support. Think about the use of a sponsor but keep in mind this could limit the type of information your site can include. A plus to sponsorship however is that it can increase the credibility of your site. This is something you’ll have to research. Don’t forget to include website maintenance and marketing when you develop your budget!

With a little imagination there are lots of possibilities to explore. Don't be afraid to think big but expect to start small, especially if this is your first experience with online prevention. Walk before you run. The web is designed to be changed —it's an ever evolving process— take advantage of this! Starting small will enable you to get something online sooner with less initial investment. You can then see how you like having a website, get some feedback from others and continue from there. Don't be surprised if your big vision changes once you have your website established. New opportunities will appear and once clear ideas may turn cloudy and/or seem unnecessary or in need of modification. Having a clear plan in the beginning is beneficial, but keep in mind you can adapt your goals as the site evolves and remember to leave room for growth.

(More on budgeting and funding in "Needs Assessment and Programme Planning: A hands on Training Module", available on http://www.unodc.org/youthnet/youthnet_action.html)

Making plans more concrete

∴ *Creating your team*

Once you have identified your target group(s) and the goal(s) for your website, you need to identify who will be involved in the site's production. Here are some people you might want to include on your team: a Web Master/ IT person, Graphic Designer, Editor/Writer, Project Manager or someone to keep the whole thing on track. You will probably be able to fill some of these positions with people from your organization and through volunteers, but you might have to hire or contract outside expertise.

It is important to review your needs, wants and organization requirements with staff capacities and available finances. For example, if you plan to use your own staff or volunteers to create your website this implies you have staff and volunteers with the necessary expertise. Using your own staff and volunteers will generally be less expensive and will give you more ongoing control of the website design. However, your staff and volunteers may not have the expertise you require and other commitments may increase the time it takes them to complete the project. If you hire an outside agency or a freelance website designer



you can select the expertise you need and set the deadlines you want—but it will generally cost you more. Establishing a balance at the onset of your project between the amount of control you want and available in-house expertise and finances will reduce conflict during the production process.

Including youth from your target group in your website team will help ensure that your website will be relevant and reach its intended target group. These youth can make sure that you present information in the right language, use appealing graphics and the appropriate tone. Using appropriate and relevant design and language not only attracts users but also keeps their interest in the site and further precipitates its use. Including youth from your target group also instils a sense of youth ownership that adds to the credibility of your website, helping with its sustainability. These youth can also be active in various components of the website outside of its development such as evaluation, and marketing. For example, the youth can provide a built in advertising system through word of mouth.

Tactics to get youth involved include:

- Give them some immediate rewards or incentives to participate. Providing food at your meetings is a good way to attract youth to attend and an incentive to get them to work.
- Offer free skill building courses for participants such as DJ courses, computer graphics and other IT related skills. The courses offered should be chosen based on their relevance and interest for the intended target group
- Hold art contests to get images for your website and/or writing contests to get articles of interest.
- Use peer leaders to help generate interest in the project at schools, youth centres and other places where your target group hangs out.
- Youth can facilitate discussion groups with other youth from your target group to identify goals for your site and the needs of the target community.
- Build on prior relationships established through other efforts and activities.

•• **Ethical concerns**

It is important when starting out that you establish or define principles that will guide your website. These principles or values should be clearly stated. Those entering your website should be aware of your organizational views concerning drugs, drug abuse, harm reduction policies, and youth prevention efforts.

When creating your website, maintain an awareness of the effects you have on your target group. Information should be dealt with responsibly, with a high level of accountability. The contents of your site should be accurate; information should be checked against various sources for reliability. Anonymity and protecting confidentiality need to be incorporated into all aspects of your website, especially in the interactive features. Pictures should be either used with permission or be slightly blurred to protect identity. Users should be informed of what may be done with any information they add to your site through, for example, discussion boards or registration systems. Having a disclaimer on your site for the protection of you, your organization and your users makes sense. Copyright issues should be stated openly. For example, "Material posted on this board may/may not be used for publications/research without permission from the organization/individuals". That's straight and to the point.

Since the topic of your site is somewhat sensitive, especially in certain political climates, make sure you review the ethical aspects connected to the information and features you want to provide online. For example, are you responsible to help someone even if you have to break anonymity to do so? How you will deal with potentially tough topics, like pro-drug messages appearing in discussion areas? All this and more needs to be determined prior to going online. The guidelines you develop should be made clear to your website users.

That said, however, when creating a website for the first time, you won't be able to know all the rules and guidelines you'll need. For example, while you can anticipate the types of discussions users will hold in your website you won't know exactly what your users will discuss until your website is operational. After developing a set of guiding principles review them once your site has been launched. Thinking through all the possible angles that potentially could confront you might prove beneficial down the road, though new situations will arise as your website ages. Some basic rules however commonly found in discussion areas disallow any forms of sexist or racist comments. One area that will require careful consideration as a prevention website is the extent to which you will allow youth to talk about drugs from a pro-drug point of view.

"It's complicated!" agreed our youth team.



Building the Website

❖ *Technical things*

There are lots of resources available online for those of you who are not so technologically savvy,. These resources will be especially useful if you are planning to take on the actual creation of your site. A list of some of these websites is provided in the index of this guide. Software to help you build your site is easily accessible, some is even available for free, but you'll have to do some research. Finding the software that is right for you will require some trial and error.

Another thing you will need to get is an Internet Service Provider (ISP). This is where your site will be hosted and linked to the Internet. This is also called website hosting. If your organization already has a website then you're probably all set. If your organization has email, you may find that hosting a small website is included in this service or available for an additional charge. If not, you'll have to check around. You can use the resource list in the index of this guide and/or ask organizations in your community who hosts their website. Don't forget to ask them if they are happy with their ISP. Many ISPs host sites for a monthly or annual fee.

❖ *Creating a domain name (web address) for your website*

You want to think about creating a domain name for your website. A domain name is the unique name you give your website. For example, unodc.org/youthnet is the unique domain name for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Youth Network. Finding a name that hasn't already been taken might require a little creative effort on your part. It's best to come up with a list of possibilities, a process that you can involve youth from your target group in creating.

Domain names are purchased. You can either do this through your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or through an accredited registrar. The resource list at the end of this guide provides you with information on how to locate a registrar in your country. You'll have to check within your own country about the rules and standards for registering your domain name since they may vary. A domain name can help you attract and maintain your site's user pool. It should be something short, relevant to your project, and easy to spell. If your users were trying to guess your domain name what would they choose? You want your users to be able to find you easily.

Another plus if you have your own domain name is that your Internet Service Provider (ISP) can create personalized email addresses for you. For example, at www.cyberisle.org you can email the webmaster at yournamehere@cyberisle.org.

✧ Design

Creating the look and feel of your website can be a lot of fun. As part of designing your website, you will need to select a general look, determine the layout of the content and decide on a navigation system. The navigation system is very important because this is how your users will move around your site and find relevant content. You want your navigation system to be clear and easy to use. Movement through your site should be quick and intuitive.

To get some ideas for your website design, check out what's currently happening online. It doesn't hurt to check out your competition and see what messages are currently being targeted at youth and how these messages are being relayed. You might also contact other prevention websites to find out which interactive elements work with which target groups. This can save not only time but also financial resources.

To get a visual image of your plans create a pen and paper mock-up of your site and its various pages. This will help you identify holes and possible trouble spots. By laying out your website as it will appear online you will be able to determine how the different content should be linked. From this you can develop your website's navigation system. Again check out "the competition" and see what's working (or not) for them. This might give you some new ideas to try.



cyberisle
your youth health site

REGISTER NOW CONTACT US ABOUT US PRIVACY POLICY

NEW HOT TALK POSTINGS
I think I need to lose at least 15 more pounds to feel really good again
It hard to believe that racism still exist today
If you want to talk more about this let me know I just had a bad experience coming out to someone
Stereotype of the ignorant drug addict without a brain

Developed with teens for teens
Mis au point par des adolescents et pour les adolescents

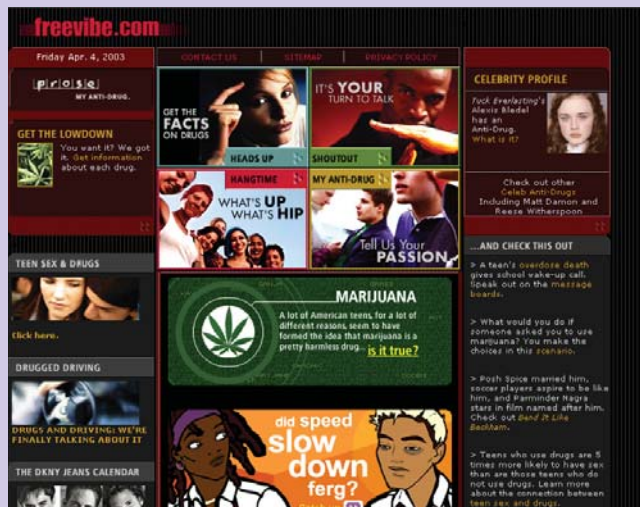
LOGIN - ACCÈS

Username/nom d'utilisateur: _____
Password/mot de passe: _____

Flash 5 Non-Flash **SUBMIT / ENVOI**

First time? Register here.

Welcome to CyberISLe! **cyberisle**
your youth health site
A creative research project of TeenNet (University of Toronto)



Graphics are a big element of your site and potentially the first thing your user will connect with. Remember to keep it fun! Images of drugs are of interest to youth as well as images connected with youth culture, but be careful with their use. Showing what a drug looks like is one thing but showing people taking it is quite another! Websites with lots of images and/or large images take longer to download and your user may not have the patience. Sound and movement on a site is a good way to attract people but harmful if it interferes with overall use. It may also be helpful to consider doing two or three versions of your site for audiences with different technical capacities, e.g. you may want to do a text version, a non-frames version, a flash or html version.

Logos are a great way to express your image, while providing users with an easy way to remember your website. Logos should be simple, not trying to express too many ideas at once. If the logo doesn't include any words, use your organization's name with the logo to ensure your users know who you are. Another idea to explore is having a mascot. This can work especially well with younger target groups. The key is to make sure your logo or mascot reflects your activities.

❖ *Some more comments about the layout*

Simplicity of movement is the key to a useful site. It should be easy to navigate and understand by your target group. Here are some main points to keep in mind, along with ideas of how to incorporate them into action:

- ❖ **Use a navigation bar**
Should be clearly visible on each page, it should use key words/images pertaining to the site.
- ❖ **Include a table of contents in the different subsections**
As “pop-ups” coming from key navigation words
- ❖ **Use a uniform look on all the pages**
Similar type-face, connected art work/graphics, uniform colours throughout.
- ❖ **Show users where they are in the site at all times**
Colour code the pages/topics, incorporate movement within the navigation bar showing the various levels within the site
- ❖ **Let users know from the very start what options are available in the site**
Clearly displayed through the navigation bar
- ❖ **Include a link back to the top of text at the bottom of each page or throughout text if it is very long**
- ❖ **Include a link to home on all pages**
Similar image or text throughout so easy to find

Keep expansion plans in mind when you start. Don't create a website design that you cannot expand upon by, for example, adding new sections and topics. Also do not spend so much money on your site design that you can't afford to update the look in a couple of years. Current information and a fresh look will keep your website appealing to its users. If you can't afford to refresh the look of your entire website, consider focusing on select portions of your site. The pages that are the most useful to change will stand out once your site is launched.



Design tips for success!

Keep it simple, be concise, organize your content, know your audience, be user-friendly, interactive and visually appealing, provide incentive to return, be timely, relevant, accessible and consistent

Key elements to consider

Use consistent graphic elements, repeat key features, consider accessibility, use colour wisely, create balance, insure smooth informational flow, always ask: does this appeal to my target group/s?

❖ *Simple checklist for design quality*

- | | |
|--|--------|
| ❖ I can easily tell who owns the site. | Yes/no |
| ❖ Site owner can be contacted. | Yes/no |
| ❖ I can access the entire site without getting errors. | Yes/no |
| ❖ Site has a consistent look or "house style". | Yes/no |
| ❖ I can easily find what I am looking for on the site. | Yes/no |
| ❖ Graphics and pictures are helpful. | Yes/no |
| ❖ Site loads quickly. | Yes/no |
| ❖ I can easily tell where I am in the site at all times. | Yes/no |

Information Content

❖ *Where to look*

Information can come from a variety of sources, points of view and methods of expression. In regards to your goal, think of gathering content to express yourself standing out from the multitude of other prevention websites. Can you think of information that currently is hard to find online in your community? This could be a great place to start and create an instant need for your online services.

Here are some possible places to look for content:

- ❖ Other web sites, especially those belonging to other drug related organizations
- ❖ Books, academic journals and other published material
- ❖ People within your organization, Prevention professionals, Researchers
- ❖ Youth magazines, newspapers, current articles of interest
- ❖ Youth, peers, members of the scene
- ❖ Youth volunteers, people working with youth
- ❖ Police, members of the justice system
- ❖ Government officials
- ❖ Health workers, doctors, social workers
- ❖ Other website bulletin boards
- ❖ Other website FAQ's (frequently asked questions)
- ❖ Commercial organizations

∴ Content from your users

One of the best ways you can ensure your website connects to its intended target group is to incorporate information and content directly from them. Users can contribute artwork, commentaries and/or stories about their own experiences that will probably resonate more with your target audience than a second hand description. Youth are potentially more likely to believe other youth is one of the basic assumptions behind peer to peer work. Use this to your website's advantage!

Another way to involve users is through some of the interactive features, like discussion areas and message boards. Here your users can effectively add content to your website on an ongoing basis. New postings and vibrant discussions can be wonderful for keeping users engaged and encouraging return visits. However, what you do if a discussion provides misinformation and/or conflicts with the viewpoint or goals of your website needs to be arranged prior to opening up the areas. One possible tactic to avoid unwanted postings is to train peer leaders and youth from your target group to deal with misleading or wrong information and to help facilitate discussions. Opening a discussion area, which has the potential to be the central part of your online prevention efforts, brings with it additional responsibilities, and requires a little more long-term planning compared to other interactive elements.

A Global electronic network making it possible to share and communicate all kinds of information. Bart

∴ Reaching out for a larger audience

Information on your site does not have to be limited to only drugs and youth. Incorporating information for parents, teachers and others within your community has many benefits, possibly helping to create bridges between social groups. Information about concerts, happenings, social events and other topics of interest to youth may increase the time users spend on your site. This in turn may enhance the potential for them to take in the prevention content and pass the site's location on to their peers/friends. If language isn't a hindrance, you can also try to connect youth in your area with youth and youth events around the world for a more global outlook.



❖ *Some tips for writing on the web*

Remember reading a website is not like reading something on paper like a book or brochure. Eyes get tired and patience can be limited. Break up larger documents, trying to keep messages short and to the point. Bullet points can be useful for emphasis. Envision your users “scanning” the information. What are the main points you want to relay to them? These should be your focal points or key words. Short headlines are easier for user to follow while inside your site, as well as, making information more memorable after they have left. Keep information easy for the users to access if they have questions or want to read more. This also adds to your site's credibility.

❖ *Review all content closely*

It's important to keep in mind that not all information is good information. You should review content carefully before publishing it on your site. All information that goes on your site should be evaluated by members of your team.

Utilising a checklist to evaluate documents and other websites that you are thinking to incorporate into your website can help ensure information used matches your site's aims and its content quality. When some new piece of information is being considered for addition to your site, creating a systematic format to review information can be helpful. If certain content is rejected, save the assessments possibly for later use, or at least to keep track of what already has been considered. In the beginning with a small site this might not seem so important but as your site grows, keeping tabs on content possibilities is smart, time efficient and can help create a valuable pool of contact persons.

Here is a basic checklist of some things to keep track of when assessing content (both links and documents) for your site.

- ❖ Author
- ❖ Goal of site/information
- ❖ Scope of site/information
- ❖ Content
- ❖ Presentation
- ❖ Recommendation
- ❖ Why to use or not?

Utilize your checklist keeping these things in mind: Review the source. How close is the source to you? From inside your team, from an outside

organization, from local media, or from someone in the community? How reliable is this source? How does the information compare with other information on the topic? When was the information written? Is it current and timely? Is the information backed by qualitative or quantitative data? Does the style and language work with the theme of your other pages? The closer the source is to you, the greater your ability to ensure reliability since it is easier to get answers to your questions. However, we can't be experts in all things; utilize your resources in the community and get professional opinions. These things are a lot to think about but in the end will save you time and money with site editing.

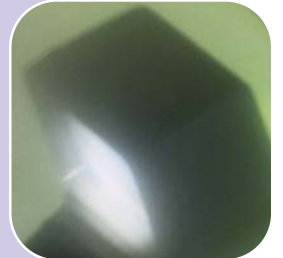
Ensuring Overall Quality

When reviewing your website as a whole keep these questions in mind to ensure that material used and its presentation match your standards and criteria.

- Is information on the site useful?
- Is information easy to understand?
- Is the purpose of the website clear?
- Does the information look trustworthy and accurate?
- Is information written by qualified people? Can I identify their qualifications?
- Does the site provide useful links to other good, quality sites?
- Is the site's confidentiality procedure and process clearly identified?

Of course you or the site administrator must keep asking yourself these questions all the time while you review your work but it is also important to consult other stakeholders. For example, you should probably get comments from any organization that has supported the site financially, you should also try and get reactions from government officials if you need to work with them at some level. Getting professional from within and outside the prevention field will also be useful in providing a different perspective.

Government officials and professionals sometimes have time constraints that make it difficult to get information from them so you'll need to do some preparatory planning. Last minute inquiries might not get many results. You also should question the reliability of the person you're



asking for feedback. Are they reputable? Do they share your philosophy? Before sending out reviews look for credible professionals who share your point of view. However, even if you disagree with the opinions you receive you may find they enable you to offer alternative viewpoints thus providing a more balanced perspective to your users.

Possible questions to ask from professionals include:

- Is the information correct and verifiable?
- Does the information support the main message of the site?
- Is it a complete picture or is it one-sided?
- What do they anticipate will be the reaction/effect of the information?
- Is the site appropriate to the age of your target group?

Needless to say, it is of the utmost importance that you get feedback about your work from your target group. Types of things you can learn from them include:

- Is the purpose of the website clear ?
- Does information look trustworthy and accurate?
- Does the information make sense?
- What kind of impact comes from the information?
- Does the site clearly state where its content comes from?
- Does the site provide the detailed information wanted from the user?
- Are the links useful?
- Does the site support the users health needs?
- Does the site treat users with respect (not too preachy)?
- Does the site present options rather than tell what to do?
- Does the site provide "tools" to help with decision making?
- Does using the site encourage one to think about their values and beliefs?
- Does the site support one in making their own decisions and choices?
- Does the site offer one chances to connect to other teens?

Of course all the above issues need to be phrased according to the target audience that you have and must be asked using the appropriate techniques, e.g. for younger target audiences you may want to use face to face interviews. The above checklists have been adapted from The TeenNet Research Project Website Evaluation Form (www.teennetproject.org).

✧ *Building quality into your website*

Building quality into your website at its onset helps to set standards that can then guide the growth of your site. This can be facilitated, as mentioned above, by establishing protocols for how content is to be incorporated into your site. It is important, for example, to state clearly who created the site and provide clear access to all statements concerning privacy and confidentiality. Material should be dated in connection with its creation and/or its last update. Make sure your links work. It's one of the easiest things to do, but if not accurately done really detracts from the credibility of your site.

Decide what types of feedback tools will be incorporated into your site. Email contacts, phone numbers and organizational addresses should be clearly presented so users can provide feedback and make contact if needed. Establish a protocol or guidelines for responding to feedback from users. Answer emails received in a timely manner. Use this as an opportunity to relay the message to users that you're active within the site and there for them.

Discuss incorporating various safety measures to counter against hacking and firewall capacities with your programmers and your ISP. This is especially important if you are providing online counselling services or other client confidential interactions. Realizing after establishing these types of services that your system is not up to confidentiality standards, not only has credibility implications but legal ones for both you and your acting organization.



Evaluation

Evaluation of your website can take place at many levels and should occur both during the development of your website and after its launch. Evaluation will help you determine how effectively your website is reaching your target group, whether you have met your stated goals and objectives and where to go next. If you would like to observe your website on a community level incorporate parents, teachers and other professionals from the community into your process as well.

❖ *Evaluation methods*

There are two aspects of a sustainable website that need to be tested and reviewed in order to ensure success. The first is utility— is the site actually being used, if yes, is it the way you were hoping for and does it contain information wanted by the user.

A variety of online and face-to-face methods can be used to evaluate these and other aspects of your website, including discussion groups, structured paper and online surveys directed towards your target group, and/or internal web statistics. Some suggested possibilities for your evaluations regarding utility are:

- ❖ Request feedback through email or online surveys
- ❖ Survey target group/s about relevance, construction, accessibility etc., of website
- ❖ Survey target group/s about their knowledge and view of website
- ❖ Check out the number of visits to the website
- ❖ Check out the number of postings in discussion areas or other interactive rooms
- ❖ Check out the number of return visits
- ❖ Consider the time spent by users within the website
- ❖ Check out which areas of website are most and/or least used by users
- ❖ Check level of knowledge on discussion boards
- ❖ Analyse content of postings in message board and other interactive areas
- ❖ Review referral process, are people getting information on services from your website
- ❖ Review number of requests for networking from other organizations
- ❖ Review requests by youth to join your programme

Often, useful surveys, discussion questions and other feedback approaches can be picked up from other organizations and websites. This can save you a lot of time and money, but keep in mind copyright issues when using another organization's evaluation tools. Your ISP should be able to provide you with information about the use of your site, including the number of visits, number of files downloaded, use of interactive features and effective navigational pathways. Fancier statistical programs or outside monitoring systems are available for analysing web statistics but they can be costly.

⚡ *Usability testing and why*

The second aspect is usability— is the site design and content meeting the needs and expectations of the users. Is the user able to effectively operate the various functions of your site to their fullest? Usability testing should be conducted at several points during the website development process. You will not want to wait until your website is complete before you learn that your target user(s) don't understand the navigation system or can't operate the interactive features. Correcting problems is usually less expensive and less time consuming if done during development than when a website is complete.

Usability can be tested on five different characteristics:

1. **Ease of learning:** How quickly can a user that has never entered your site learn the basic tasks to effectively navigate the various pages and tools?
2. **Efficiency of use:** How long does it take to use the features (for example the self help tests) in your site?
3. **Memorability:** Does the user remember how to use the site effectively on return visits?
4. **Error frequency and severity:** How often do users make errors within the site and is it easy for them to recover from these errors?
5. **User satisfaction:** How much does the user like your site?

These can be tested through controlled groups of your target audience utilizing many of the formats mentioned in the previous section. Bring them in, show them the website and see what they can do with it without any instructions. How quickly do they pick up the flow of the pages? Do they have patience for the self-help tests, surveys etc? How often do the users get "stuck" within the pages? Where are the trouble spots? These tests groups can and should happen more than once. Does the website get easier for users the more they return to it? Do they seem happy being inside the website? Does it hold their interest? Depending on the amount of interactivity in your site, some of these criteria might not be necessary but it's important to keep them all in mind to some extent. Regardless of your site's content, they will provide valuable information concerning the design and structure of your pages.

⚡ *Other sources of feedback to add to your overall evaluation*

There are many other avenues to obtain feedback that is useful for your evaluation process. Conduct reviews, surveys or face-to-face interviews with community members outside of your target group(s). Government officials and professionals can provide you with information about the



image of your website in the community and if there are any misconceptions of your services. Review the website with internal staff and volunteers to help ensure your site has maintained connection with organizational guidelines, while promoting the website to the broader organization. Review success stories you receive from your target group/s to help gauge the impact your website is having on its users. These can be facilitated by similar questionnaire structures as in the “Quality” section.

Keep track and record the publicity received by your website in the media, but watch out for sensationalism. This can provide you with more feedback of how your website is publicly perceived or impacting issues within your community. It can also generate marketing ideas and possible new topics to add to the site's content.

If possible involve youth from your target group in running your website evaluations. For example, they can collect feedback online by reviewing email correspondence and online surveys, or go out in the field and interview their peers about your site's use and value. Involving youth not only offers you a chance to develop peer leaders but also enhances the educational aspects of your site for its targeted community. The more youth get involved the more they have the opportunity to learn about drug abuse prevention.

∴ *Ongoing feedback*

Website evaluation is an ongoing process — it does not stop when you launch your website. At certain points over the life of your site (for example, when planning a redesign or when adding new sections), you will want to do structured evaluations using the methods discussed above. Between these points it is useful to collect ongoing feedback from your users. Analysis of this data will help you identify problem areas and development ideas for future growth.

Mechanisms for ongoing evaluation do not have to be complex. For example, you can collect ongoing feedback by adding a feedback form to your website, by providing a feedback email address, by asking new volunteers and clients if their heard about your organization through your website, and by keeping tabs on the interactions happening within the site (discussion areas, counselling services, etc). Statistics on site visits should also be analysed on a regular basis. For example, if your statistics show one area of your site is particularly popular, you might start to use that area to promote less popular features.

Key benefits of evaluating your site

- Pinpoints content and navigation shortcomings
- Signals changes that need to be made
- Identifies new development ideas
- Signals what's working with your marketing strategy
- Provides you with information about your target group
- Helps identify future directions for your site
- Provides details for funding reports and/or for funding proposals

Marketing Your Website

Once you have created your website, you need some type of marketing plan. A marketing plan doesn't necessarily mean spending a lot of money. Your goal should be to see an increase in visitors and an increase in activity over time.

•• *Marketing Online*

Some easy tips for increasing traffic to your site include registering with search engines and directories, creating an online newsletter to bring users back at regular intervals, promoting your website through discussion boards and chat room on other websites, and exploring the possibilities of banner advertising. When registering with search engines make use of a variety of key words or phrases that connect with the theme of your website to enhance the chances of getting a hit from targeted users. Request other sites similar to yours to link to you. Fun, interactive elements of your site such as online postcards can also work as marketing tools. Some resources to help you with online marketing are provided in the index of this guide.

•• *Marketing Offline*

When marketing offline the goal is to get your website address (your URL) in the public eye as much as possible. Place your URL on all your printed material, and on your letterhead, faxes sheets, business cards, as well as in all outgoing email. If you work within a larger organization make sure information about your website is on the material they distribute. If users can't find your URL, you're not going to have much luck getting them to visit your website!



Another technique is to identify how your website can be part of any upcoming and/or planned events or activities being run by your organization. For example, stickers, postcards and other promotional material about your website can be distributed at workshops run by your organization.

More traditional types of marketing include writing press releases, advertising on TV, radio and other forms of media. Even if you don't feel you have the funds for these tactics they are worth investigating because sometimes a company will provide you with media at a reduced cost or for free. Keep in mind online prevention is still a relatively new thing so the media might be more interested than you think. Try to target media venues which appeal to your target group, such as youth magazines, TV shows or current hit radio programmes.

Writing an article for a professional journal or presenting the website at a prevention conference is useful for marketing your site to a more professional community, perhaps opening doors for future collaboration.

Don't forget to talk to staff and volunteers at your organization and youth from your target group about their ideas for marketing your website. There are a lot of great possibilities that do not necessarily mean spending a lot of money.

The bus is a great place to advertise since you have a very captive audience. I always read the stickers on the backs of the seats. Outi

Maintenance

Maintenance is the part of website development that is most often overlooked. Plan for maintenance when you are developing your website by considering how much money, staff and/or volunteer time it will take to keep your website current and functioning. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do with the funds available.

As you return to your site periodically here's a few points to keep in mind regarding its maintenance.

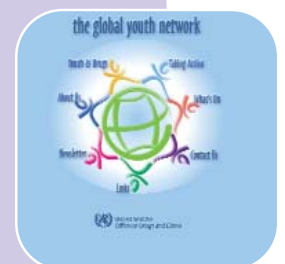
Check List:

- The site works as it was designed to.
- All links still connect.
- Content is update, still accurate and fits with the overall site image.
- Past edits have been completed.
- The site still fits the needs of your target group/s.
- The quality of the site still meets all necessary criteria.
- Agreements with purchased aspects of the site (such as domain names etc.,) are up-to-date
- Maintenance costs have been recalculated into the ongoing budget

Don't necessarily throw out old information (such as from message boards and discussion areas) but incorporate it into an archive feature. An archive can provide valuable information about the growth of your site, its contents and the dialogue of drug prevention efforts within your target community.

Websites that last

It has been made pretty clear throughout this manual, the web world is a constantly changing, evolving place. Nothing is static. What this means to you is that you need to implement some forward thinking to ensure the longevity of your site, this comes in terms of available staff, funding, informational content and graphics for updates and room for new interactive features if needed. Anyone can toss out a website, it's making it last that is the tricky part. By establishing a long-term plan incorporating the various aspects covered here can help create an established online project. This plan can and should be flexible since some changes are not going to present themselves until you've actually gone online, but having a clear goal, site expectations, staff needs and financial capacities will be helpful.



✧ *A final thought*

So hopefully this hasn't scared you off and you're excited about the new potentials available to you through online prevention. Though possibly challenging due to new technology and unfamiliar territory— there are a lot of fun potentials awaiting you! Remember this is a new tool within the field of drug prevention with lots possibilities, room for imagination and exploration. Have fun with it!



Quick Resources for Online Prevention

Your website needs CHECK LIST

- ❖ Establish a goal/s for your website
- ❖ Identify your target group/s
- ❖ Create a budget
- ❖ Establish a deadline or target date for each phase of the process: planning, design, building, evaluation and up keep
- ❖ Determine what information is to be presented
- ❖ Determine how/what type of information will be requested from the user
- ❖ Determine the technical level of your site in relation to your target group
- ❖ How will you measure site results
- ❖ Create link list
- ❖ Select navigation type
- ❖ Create the main features of your site
- ❖ Create a domain name
- ❖ Determine which parts of your site will need updating
- ❖ Determine how feedback will be used from your site
- ❖ Create plan for marketing your site

Resource LIST

General web information:

- ❖ The Race to Web Readiness. A Canadian based net support site
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/get-web-ready/
- ❖ Technical tools directed to nonprofits
www.techsoup.org
- ❖ Free technical stuff through CharityVillage
www.charityvillage.com/charityvillage/club.asp
- ❖ Government publishing web standards
www.go.tas.gov.au/infoman/gips/homepage.htm
- ❖ How to build your own website
www.allaboutyourownwebsite.com
- ❖ Tips from the experts
www.addto.com/article/webdevelopment
www.tips-tricks.com

Free Stuff

- www.blueearthouse.com
- www.websitegarage.netscape.com
- www.freefever.com

Funding Sources

- www.volnet.org
- www.npower.org

Domain Names

- www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/get-web-ready/factsheets/domain_names.html
- www.netnation.ca/products/domain_ca.cfm
- www.internic.net

Writing for the Web

- www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/get-web-ready/factsheets/webwriting.html
- www.useit.com

Accessibility and Usability

- www.usableweb.com
- www.usability.gov/methods/index.html
- www.websitetips.com/design/usability.html
- www.arealvalidator.com

Design

- www.killersites.com
- www.info.med.yale.edu/caim/manual/index.html
- www.useit.com
- www.dsiegel.com

Evaluation and Quality

- www.desire.org/detective/
- www.quick.org.uk
- www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm
- www.vuw.ac.nz
- www.biome.ac.uk/guidelines/eval/factors.html

Information Sources

- www.elisad.org
- www.kidshealth.org/kid/grow/know_drugs.html
- www.sosig.org

Search Features

- www.searchtools.com
- www.google.com/services/free.html

Submitting your website to search engines

- www.webdeveloper.com/management/management_search_engine_tips.html
- www.crunchers.bc.ba

Potential programming languages

- HTML (Hyper Text Mark-up Language)
- JavaScript
- DHTML
- XML
- XHTML
- Active Server Pages (ASP)
- PHP

Examples of good practice

- University of Toronto, TeenNet Project: www.teennetproject.org
CANADA
- University of Toronto, Cyberisle: www.cyberisle.org
CANADA
- A-Clinic Foundation, Paihdelinkki, (in English): www.paihdelinkki.fi
FINLAND
- Norwegian Agency for Health & Social Welfare, "Dopinfo":
www.dopinfo.no
NORWAY
- Centre of Abuse in Vest Zeland County, www.netstof.dk (in Danish)
DENMARK
- CAN, www.drugsmart.com (in Swedish)
SWEDEN
- <http://www.freevibe.com/>
UNITED STATES



Given the widespread interest in the Internet amongst youth and in order to tap into this exciting interface between young people, youth culture and technology, the Global Youth Network has produced this easy to use guide for those youth and youth workers who want to start using the internet as part of their ongoing programmes or want to set up a totally net based initiative.

INTERNET

كيفية الحصول على منشورات الأمم المتحدة
يمكن الحصول على منشورات الأمم المتحدة من المكتبات ودور التوزيع في جميع أنحاء العالم. استعلم عنها من المكتبة التي تتعامل معها أو اكتب إلى: الأمم المتحدة، قسم البيع في نيويورك أو في جنيف.

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