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## Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota

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COUN 6785: Social Change in Action:  
Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy

**Social Change Portfolio**

Amanda Keech

## Contents

Below are the titles for each section of the Social Change Portfolio. To navigate directly to a particular section, hold down <ctrl> and click on the desired section below.

**Please do not modify the content section, nor remove the hyperlinks.**

[Overview](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Scope and Consequences](#)

[Social-Ecological Model](#)

[Theories of Prevention](#)

[Diversity and Ethical Considerations](#)

[Advocacy](#)

[References](#)

[ScholarWorks Contributor Agreement](#)

## OVERVIEW

**Keywords:** Alcohol, prevention, Itasca County, social-ecological, Minnesota, poverty, community, family, individual, relationships, BASICS, protective factors, risk factors, ecological systems theory, health belief model

### Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota

**Goal Statement:** The purpose and goal of this portfolio is to raise awareness regarding alcohol consumption by highlighting influential factors and prevention techniques in order to decrease excessive drinking rates for adults residing in Itasca County.

**Significant Findings:** Excessive drinking is present in 23% of the population in Itasca County (County Health Ranking & Roadmaps, 2018). Excessive alcohol consumption is a growing public health issue resulting from multiple systemic, cultural, governmental, and individual risk factors that are present within the rural community. Individual risk factors include food insecurity, poverty, housing instability, a family history, trauma, medical issues, and the presence of mental health related conditions (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). Prevention measures are needed to combat risk factors that would otherwise result in the rate of alcohol consumption continuing to rise. Alcohol use can have devastating impacts on individuals, families, communities, society, and the government resulting in millions of dollars in expenditures of state and federal funds (Gloppen et al., 2022). Addressing all levels of the social-ecological model is necessary in order for prevention measures to make an impactful change (CDC, n.d.).

Prevention measures that could be helpful for Itasca County residents include applying the health belief model that focuses on one's perceptions of their medical health and how to

approach any concerns (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Pairing healthy lifestyle practices with educational efforts can elicit positive behavioral changes related to one's health (National Cancer Institute, 2005). A second evidence based prevention option that could be applied is the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) program. BASICS focuses prevention efforts on college students who are drinking heavily with identified risk factors of alcohol-related problems (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). A client centered and motivational interviewing approach is used with BASICS. This helps to provoke changes in behaviors related to drinking by helping students to learn and apply objectives to decrease any inconsistencies that may be occurring between use and one's goals (Griffin & Botvin, 2010).

**Objectives/Strategies/Interventions/Next Steps:** Professionals in the community can begin prevention efforts by (1) Building rapport with community members who have lived experience and are seeking social change surrounding alcohol consumption rates. (2) Engaging deeper with community members in order to elicit feedback, identify barriers for change, discuss influential risk factors, and cultural factors that may result in excessive drinking behaviors. (3) Encouraging community agencies to collaborate, incorporate the feedback obtained, and to develop a widespread action plan in order to disseminate educational materials, resources, and prevention efforts that are available to help rural communities. (4) Eliciting the help of local community colleges and high schools, in order to advocate by offering the BASICS program, the health belief model, prevention information, and educational materials to college students, high school students, and individuals throughout the community. (5) Encouraging those who have participated in the prevention measures to provide feedback on the quality and outcomes of the prevention measures in order to adjust approaches as needed to obtain the best outcomes possible.

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## INTRODUCTION

### [Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]

Addiction has the potential to impact just about any person and family as most individuals are susceptible to this life altering disorder. Addiction is a public health issue that needs to be addressed from multiple systemic, individual, cultural, and governmental directions (CDC, n.d.). Excessive drinking is a growing issue in Grand Rapids, Minnesota where I currently reside. I hope to outline the impactful factors contributing to this issue in our community in hopes of bringing about social change in the form of addiction prevention.

In Minnesota, Itasca County is ranked 81/87 for being among the least healthy counties in the state (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). This lower rating is concerning as the county is looked at in terms of one's average lifespan, in addition to the quality of their life (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). A few risk factors concerning Itasca County residents include food insecurities affecting 11%, poverty affecting 15% of children, severe housing related issues affecting 14%, and high housing costs leaving residents financially burdened at 11% (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). These risk factors are important to consider in relation to alcohol prevention measures.

Alcohol impacts the body's organs as it is absorbed at a rapid rate through the stomach into the small intestine (Itasca County, Minnesota, 2023). Alcohol is processed through the liver where it breaks down, and will eventually be eliminated from the body (Itasca County, Minnesota, 2023). If someone is drinking in excess, the liver is unable to process the alcohol quickly enough resulting in intoxication (Itasca County, Minnesota, 2023). In looking at Itasca County, excessive drinking is present in 23% of the population (County Health Ranking &

Roadmaps, 2018). This is close to one out of every four residents showing signs of prevention efforts being needed. Prevention can help to decrease escalating further into addiction and to decrease consumption rates from rising.

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## PART 1: SCOPE AND CONSEQUENCES

### [Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]

Social-ecological models draw attention to how an individual is impacted by their relationships, family, community, and society (CDC, n.d.). This model brings awareness to these factors as they influence a person's behaviors, attitudes, well-being, and ultimately mental health (CDC, n.d.). At any moment, there are significant factors directing a person's behaviors.

Awareness of the guiding influences present in relation to protective and risk factors is crucial to understand with the excessive drinking patterns in Itasca County. This information helps to determine the best prevention methods for this area.

Breaking the theory down a step further, involves looking at the societal impacts surrounding a person. Society has the potential to impact an individual related to how they connect to those around them, and how they are influenced by those connections (Guy-Evans, 2020). A person's life is interconnected from an individual level all the way out to the society in which they live. When someone is experiencing difficulties within, it has the potential to result in difficulties that extend far beyond the individual. These impacts can result in cycles of use, poverty, lack of resources, medical issues, lack of education, lack of equity, substance use, and an increased chance of developing a mental health condition (CDC, n.d.). With protective factors such as access to resources, medical care, support, education, housing that is stable, and positive ties within one's family and community, the outcomes for an individual can be improved

significantly (SAMHSA, n.d.). When someone has protective factors and support within their life, the likelihood that better outcomes occur is greater.

When individuals do not have protective factors, they may be more susceptible to developing a substance use disorder (CDC, n.d.). Therefore, the target population proposed for addiction prevention in Itasca County is adults and those struggling with excessive drinking who could benefit from protective factors. Without prevention services and support, 23% of the population in Itasca County may very well move deeper into the grips of drinking becoming more dependent on alcohol leading to addiction (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). This rate is four percent higher than the national average of 19% indicating a need for change and prevention (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018).

There was a collection of data through the Minnesota Survey on Adult Substance Use (MNSASU), and this reported excessive drinking rates at 20% for Itasca County adults in 2010 (Itasca County, 2014). The rate has now increased, and continues to be an area of concern. In 2012, nine percent of all motor vehicle related crashes were alcohol related (Itasca County, 2014). The risk factors identified for moving from excessive use to addiction include drinking over long periods of time, beginning use at an early age, having a family history of alcohol use disorders, a history of trauma, mental health or medical health related conditions, social, and cultural factors (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Therefore, it appears with current trends and risk factors that an upward increase in the percentage of adults living with excessive drinking habits in Itasca County is on the rise (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). Since 2021, each year Itasca County has lowered in the overall state ranking system for health and well-being indicating preventions being needed (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018).



Alcohol abuse can lead to a variety of negative outcomes including depression of the central nervous system, impaired judgement, life threatening comas, decreased coordination, impaired speech, motor vehicle accidents, problems in relationships, increased risk of being a victim of a crime, legal issues, employment related concerns, health complications, an increased risk of developing a mental health condition, or death if the central nervous system depresses too far due to extreme intoxication (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Chronic alcohol use can also lead to liver disease, depression, issues with the digestive system, diabetic complications, heart issues, bone damage, birth defects, interactions with medications and effectiveness, and an increased risk of cancer (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Individuals may also find they spend large amounts of money to feel the effects of alcohol as tolerance continues to build (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Alcohol use can affect short-term memory making educational success and learning more difficult for those who consume often (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Excessive drinking can lead to violent acts and crime due to the lowered inhibitions that are commonly experienced with intoxication (Mayo Clinic, 2022).

For Itasca County, the rates of death due to drinking related crashes is 38% as compared to 27% for the national average (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2018). The impacts of excessive alcohol use are devastating emotionally, financially, vocationally, medically, and socially. Therefore, prevention of alcohol use disorders is absolutely crucial. A prevention strategy for Itasca County is to provide and distribute information to improve knowledge of alcohol related conditions, prevention techniques, and to provide resources for Itasca County residents through advertisements, social media, flyers, and brochures. The purpose and goal of this portfolio is to raise awareness regarding alcohol consumption by highlighting influential factors and prevention techniques in order to decrease excessive drinking rates for adults residing in Itasca County.

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## PART 2: SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

### [Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]

The social-ecological model demonstrates how an individual's choices are influenced by their relationships, family, community, and society as a whole (CDC, n.d.) These factors influence a person at any given time resulting in the outcomes experienced related to alcohol use, and the potential to develop a substance abuse disorder (SAMHSA, n.d.). According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which is similar to the social-ecological model, the structures of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem impact a person's behavior (Guy-Evans, 2020). The microsystem contains a person's family, work, school, neighbors, and friends (Guy-Evans, 2020). A person's mesosystem is comprised of relationships within the microsystem (Guy-Evans, 2020). The exosystem encompasses governmental influences, extended family, media impacts, and parental influences including a person's socio-economic class (Guy-Evans, 2020). The macrosystem extends out one more branch, including political guidance, social norms, and one's culture impacting beliefs and attitudes (Guy-Evans, 2020). The final layer in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model includes the chronosystem, which is the outer most layer of influences comprised of environmental changes that occur over the course of a person's lifetime (Guy-Evans, 2020). Both theories help to explain the connection between the individual, and the guiding influences surrounding them in relation to protective and risk factors that can shape beliefs and patterns of alcohol consumption.

The center of the social-ecological model is the individual. Individuals have risk factors that may contribute to alcohol use disorders including poverty, unstable family relationships, abuse, mental or medical health related conditions, genetics, peer pressure, easy access to alcohol in the community, cultural beliefs, and pre-natal exposure to substances (SAMHSA, n.d.). When

communities promote businesses that serve alcohol, it can result in increased rates of drinking for the individual (Guy-Evans, 2020). When a person's family members consume alcohol and these events are witnessed, it may result in similar behaviors occurring for the person observing this. If a person lives in a violent community and is exposed to traumatic events, this can be a risk factor for alcohol use also (SAMHSA, n.d.).

In society, there may be additional risk factors related to racism, laws, and social norms that are all considered to be factors impacting the development of alcohol use disorders (SAMHSA, n.d.). Consumption of alcohol and the harm associated with use can lead to public health issues that are very complex (McGill et al., 2021). Part of the complexity is the variety of risk factors associated with observing use, and the use itself, which is the seventh leading risk factor for early death, infectious diseases, and disability in the world (McGill et al., 2021). Individuals, their families, and the broader community are impacted by the effects of alcohol through the development of acute and chronic conditions (McGill et al., 2021). In addition to medical related conditions, individuals living in lower socio-economic conditions have a higher likelihood of experiencing alcohol related harms as compared to those living with a higher income (McGill et al., 2021). Individuals who are exposed to crime, violent acts, unhealthy relationships, neglect, abuse, or work-place related issues also have higher risk factors for negative alcohol related outcomes (McGill et al., 2021).

Systemically speaking, when communities are struggling with a large population engaging in drinking such as Itasca County, it may be viewed as the "norm" which can be hard to change without prevention and education measures especially in a rural community. Residing in an environment such as this can lead to poorer outcomes for the individual living with excessive drinking. When there is a greater availability of community places containing alcohol,

an individual's drinking pattern can be impacted according to social-ecological theories (Gruenewald et al., 2014). An example of a community level related impact on drinking could be consuming alcohol at a bar or with peers. A person may be more likely to engage in heavier drinking when in this atmosphere, versus being with family, at church, or in their own home (Gruenewald et al., 2014).

Social-ecological theories show how the surrounding systems impact access, the amount, context, availability, and perceptions of alcohol consumption (Gruenewald et al., 2014). When communities have establishments that serve alcohol, promote events, or compete in sales against other businesses, it may attract individual drinkers (Gruenewald et al., 2014). In a rural county such as Itasca County, the options of places to go are limited, resulting in higher utilization of the establishments present that serve alcohol. An individual's alcohol use can be rewarding in these social environments, thus continuing the cycle of use to occur.

From a macro-level, businesses are dictated by the populations and characteristics of the cities in which they are located (Gruenewald et al., 2014). There is a direct link between the systems at play in the community, and an individual person entering the restaurant, bar, or liquor store available (Gruenewald et al., 2014). Current studies show areas with a greater concentration of bars have higher rates of alcohol use, and utilization of these settings (Gruenewald et al., 2014).

Looking at this from another perspective of the micro-level, families may be impacted by use of the family's financial resources to purchase alcohol, and by seeing the effects this has on the person who is consuming (Gruenewald et al., 2014). Studies have shown higher drinking rates were linked to use at one's home, and less use outside the home (Gruenewald et al., 2014). However, drinking larger volumes of alcohol is connected to use outside the home at bars, with

friends, or at other family member's homes (Gruenewald et al., 2014). This in turn could potentially lead to increased rates of drinking and driving. Therefore, as a whole, widespread community prevention efforts appear to be justified in Itasca County for alcohol use.

There are additional psychological, community, cultural, and familial related risk and protective factors that tend to be linked to varying outcomes associated with alcohol use (SAMHSA, n.d.). Individuals may have protective factors such as self-confidence, good conflict resolution skills, supportive parents, medical and mental health related well-being, and education all of which can help to negate possible negative outcomes (SAMHSA, n.d.). A person's alcohol use experiences can be improved when they have factors that are protective in nature against negative outcomes, and the chances for them to occur (SAMHSA, n.d.). When individuals have strong connections, positive relationships, community ties, financial well-being, educational access, and medical care the chances of developing a substance use disorder are decreased (SAMHSA, n.d.). These items can also be areas for prevention focused efforts that are helpful and effective.

Prevention techniques can be offered on an individual, family, community, and cultural level (CDC, n.d.). In order for the best outcomes, each of these levels should be addressed through prevention measures based on building protective factors and reducing risk factors (SAMHSA, n.d.). Individuals can be impacted over the course of their lifetime by both protective and risk factors, which can either lead to use or protect against alcohol use disorders that may occur as a person ages (SAMHSA, n.d.).

For Itasca County, I would encourage widespread preventative efforts that are based on the whole community as extensive awareness may impact the influencing agents present (SAMHSA, n.d.). Communities that are aware of the concern are more likely to engage in

measures to promote healthier practices in work settings, schools, places of worship, and within the community as a whole enhancing protective influences. Supportive parents, friends, co-workers, and positive relationships are protective factors that can promote well-being. Societal norms help to guide behaviors on an individual level, and through increased awareness this may help to decrease the risk of engaging in binge drinking. The surrounding community culture has the potential to shape beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions for the members residing within it, which ultimately may impact the events that occur in a person's life (Guy-Evans, 2020). Therefore, it is important to address prevention efforts from a holistic approach focusing on all areas of the social-ecological model and Bronfenbrenner's ecological system's model in order to decrease excessive drinking rates in Itasca County (CDC, n.d.).

### **PART 3: THEORIES OF PREVENTION**

#### **[Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]**

Prevention models focus on promoting health through addressing the behaviors of the individual, and how they are shaped by social connectedness, organizational structures, employment, relationships, and the individual characteristics of the person (National Cancer Institute, 2005). By knowing these factors, prevention efforts can better be suited to the specific needs of the individual and the community as a whole. Understanding a person's beliefs, attitudes, culture, personality, strengths, family, society, and peers helps to promote an atmosphere where prevention measures will be more effective for the person (Guy-Evans, 2020).

If communities focus prevention efforts on the governing rules, policies, and structures for the specific area the outcomes associated with the efforts will be improved leading to the behaviors sought (National Cancer Institute, 2005). The guiding local, state, and federal laws that help to regulate behaviors through societal expectations can help to shape prevention strategies

on a larger scale (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Cognitions dictate behavior, therefore, by learning how one thinks, acts, and how they are influenced enhances the outcomes of the prevention efforts selected (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Providing information on a larger scale while identifying motivators, strengths, and environmental cues is crucial as knowledge paired with these items can lead to changes in one's behavior (National Cancer Institute, 2005).

Community-level intervention models focusing on multi-dimensional efforts, provide the frameworks of change needed leading to behaviors that are healthier for the residents of Itasca County (National Cancer Institute, 2005). By promoting an environment of health paired with educational efforts, improvements can occur supporting the positive changes sought in behaviors (National Cancer Institute, 2005). This model can be paired with the health belief model (HBM) that focuses on the perceptions of the individual related to an identified health problem (National Cancer Institute, 2005). By focusing on the threats of the health problem, the positives associated with the removal of the threat, and guiding action factors should be identified along with any barriers present (National Cancer Institute, 2005). As with any prevention model selected, efforts should focus upon a person's attitude towards changing the behavior and the beliefs of why it is important to do so (National Cancer Institute, 2005).

In order for widespread support of prevention measures, the community organization process must occur (National Cancer Institute, 2005). This process involves identifying problems that are common such as alcohol consumption in Itasca County. Once the problems are identified, the participating partners within the community can gather resources, develop a plan, and work towards how to provide strategies to implement the desired changes through creating mutual goals (National Cancer Institute, 2005). The community itself must work towards

identifying the areas of concern to be addressed versus an outside agent or entity (National Cancer Institute, 2005).

Those living within the community will have the most knowledge and understanding of the structural factors present in the rural area of Itasca County that would be beneficial to address (National Cancer Institute, 2005). The community development process should focus on building a sense of group identity and cohesion in order to focus on the goals identified by the community (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Experts in the area are beneficial to have as part of the team as their awareness of the presenting issues and prevention techniques can help with the planning process (National Cancer Institute, 2005).

The process of action, steps, goals, and tasks to be completed can help to improve the community's capacity to recognize and solve the presenting problems present (National Cancer Institute, 2005). By focusing on the multiple layers involved, social injustices can be reduced through problem solving efforts, prevention techniques, and collaboration towards behavioral changes (National Cancer Institute, 2005). This in turn, can improve the quality of life for the residents of Itasca County, and those who are currently impacted by excessive drinking. This can lead to a new social norm by addressing the social problems present (National Cancer Institute, 2005). This approach can also lead to identifying some of the root causes of the behaviors present within the residents of Itasca County.

Helping empower residents to take an active role towards social change can elicit protective factors. The use of media and advocating on large scale platforms can reach more individuals within the community resulting in greater change (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Pairing resources, supports, policies, available services, factors that reinforce the new behaviors, and information is key to the success of any prevention efforts after the behavior change has



been encouraged (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Through repetition, repeated information, and pairing of the new behavior with positive reinforcements, the rewards associated with change will become more apparent for the individual, family, and community (National Cancer Institute, 2005). This helps to promote public participation while giving residents of the community a voice.

Another proven concept that prevention efforts could be based upon is called the life skills training model. Even though this was initially intended for middle-school aged individuals, some of the concepts can be applied to adults, and those struggling with excessive drinking habits (Social Programs that Work Review, 2019). This substance abuse prevention program focuses on teaching individuals the social and self-management skills needed, in order to resist pressures from the media, peers, and society through combining information with likely consequences of abusing substances (Social Programs that Work Review, 2019). Training sessions could be held throughout the community to teach and reinforce prevention techniques (Social Programs that Work Review, 2019). Role modeling assertive skills and effective responses of saying no could be practiced, and has shown to be effective in resisting temptations and peer pressure (Social Programs that Work Review, 2019). For those who are already using, this training program was shown to decrease significantly the frequency of consuming alcohol and other substances (Social Programs that Work Review, 2019).

It is crucial to focus on individual, relational, institutional, community, and systemic factors when implementing programs that focus on health as each factor highly influences the health concern present (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Public health issues need public health approaches of prevention to reduce harm in combination with specific intervention strategies for individuals living with high-risk drinking behaviors (McGill et al., 2021). This is needed to help

support change in the behaviors of the impacted population and to determine the upstream causes of the behaviors (McGill et al., 2021).

Understanding the perspectives of causation suggesting that influences are present within, and outside the individual is needed (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Recognizing each casual factor is crucial when promoting prevention. “Interventions based on health behavior theory are not guaranteed to succeed, but they are much more likely to produce desired outcomes” (National Cancer Institute, 2005). Selecting interventions and prevention measures that are proven effective are needed for Itasca County residents in order to achieve the desired outcomes of decreasing excessive alcohol consumption. A theory such as this includes information, consequences, repetition, and prevention measures that would be applicable to the target population pending openness and readiness for change.

The World of Health Organization (WHO), has an evidence-based initiative outlining helpful information for policy makers recommending ten different target areas aimed to decrease the negative outcomes associated with alcohol use (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). The areas include focusing on leadership, community action, public health, drunk driving strategies, reducing the availability of alcohol, alcohol advertising and marketing, alcohol pricing, preventing negative consequences of drunkenness, addressing unregistered alcohol production, and monitoring with reporting as needed (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). Evidence based prevention programs take awareness and commitment from political figures (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). Once the necessary information is generated by policy makers it can then be disseminated where communities can take action through campaigns in local clinics, hospitals, mental health agencies, public arenas, and establishments that serve alcohol (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013).

As awareness increases, public health providers can focus efforts on early diagnosis and provide services to address risky alcohol consumption (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). Another preventative strategy according to the WHO is limiting the availability of alcohol, how it is advertised, increasing the price, and how much can be sold (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). If someone is already intoxicated, preventing further negative outcomes could be focused upon by not selling more alcohol to the person at liquor stores, bars, or restaurants (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). Cracking down on the sales of unregistered alcohol could also be effective (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013). These approaches can be effective in reducing negative consequences and consumption (Hermann & Kiefer, 2013).

Another evidence based prevention option is called the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) program. This program is aimed at prevention efforts for college students who engage in heavy drinking, and are at risk of alcohol-related problems (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). Signs indicating a risk may be present include poor class attendance, incomplete assignments, accidents, assaults, and violent behaviors (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). The main goal of BASICS is to inspire scholars to decrease alcohol consumption in order to lessen negative consequences related to drinking. BASICS is offered during two one-hour interview sessions, and students are asked to complete an online assessment survey between their first and second session (Griffin & Botvin, 2010).

BASICS focuses on a client centered and motivational interviewing type of counseling work, which aids to elicit changes in behaviors by promoting clients to discover, and work through any incongruities that may be present related to use (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). A key underpinning of BASICS is that it is offered in a non-confrontational, nonjudgmental, understanding, and empathetic way that seeks feedback from the student (Griffin & Botvin,

2010). By reviewing goals and discrepancies, the drinking actions are recognized as potential barriers to goal achievement (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). This process and counseling approach takes place after history is obtained from the student related to their use, patterns, beliefs, and a request has been made asking the student to monitor their use (Griffin & Botvin, 2010).

Assessments are completed to show one's use in comparison to the norms of their peers, in attempts to assess for any negative outcomes or risk factors related to drinking (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). Based on the results, the provider will offer feedback that is personalized allowing the student to make an informed decision regarding their use, and any changes sought (Griffin & Botvin, 2010).

Those who conduct the program sessions are successfully trained and practicing within their scope of education, skill, and ability (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). With the BASICS program being peer-reviewed and evidence based, those who offer it must be familiar, and well-trained to do so in order to maintain the standards needed to implement this successfully in college settings (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). Research shows those who received the BASICS program decreased their alcohol consumption and frequency in the follow year after the intervention was completed (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). This in turn helped to reduce potential negative outcomes associated with excessive drinking (Griffin & Botvin, 2010). For our area, this would be important as we do have significant draw to our local college, and offering a program such as this could assist with decreasing some peer related risks in this setting and after.

Alcohol prevention programs may not be effective if solely based on epidemiological systems as there are many risk factors that do not follow a linear pathway causing excessive alcohol consumption (McGill et al., 2021). Therefore, more complex systems work is needed to allow widespread prevention efforts targeting all risk factors needed to decrease harm stemming

from alcohol use and abuse (McGill et al., 2021). Approaches such as these are gaining some backing, therefore, were selected as they are proven in helping to promote change surrounding alcohol use (McGill et al., 2021).

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## PART 4: DIVERSITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### [Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]

Prevention programs need to be tailored to the specific needs of the target population in order to ensure they are culturally relevant (Reese & Vera, 2007). Offering multicultural preventions is more effective as they are based on language, economic status, race, culture, and the ethnicity of those impacted (Reese & Vera, 2007). It is crucial to base prevention measures on the racial and ethical composition of the population being targeted (Reese & Vera, 2007). Through this process, particular protective and risk factors will be differentiated by groups (Reese & Vera, 2007). Ethnic groups may have their own risk factors present that exist based on societal factors, geography, culture, immigration status, socio-economic status, and gender (Reese & Vera, 2007).

It is vital to understand the relevance of the culture present for which interventions will be targeted, as efforts need to align with beliefs, values, and the hopes for the community (Reese & Vera, 2007). Prevention efforts should be reviewed, and cross-validated within different minority populations in order to assess for effectiveness within varying cultural groups (Reese, & Vera, 2007). One's culture will impact the person, and how they may present their symptoms of a mental health issue, substance use, or if they may be willing to seek help from others (SAMHSA, n.d.). Therefore, racism, medical health, mental health well-being, chemical use,

poverty, and all social factors really must be considered in relation to the prevention efforts needed (SAMHSA, n.d.).

In conjunction with ethical, cultural, and personal considerations, those providing the prevention programs must also be within their scope of practice, ability, credentialing, experience, and training according to the American Psychological Association's (APA) Code of Ethics (American Psychological Association, 2014). Multicultural practices are required to be followed in all scopes of counseling making sure to take into consideration knowledge, values, beliefs, skills, awareness, and sensitivity of the target population being served (American Counseling Association, 2014). It is crucial counselors do not discriminate, judge, or harm any client based on differences that may be present in age, ability status, race, gender, socioeconomic status, culture, sexual-orientation, language, or immigration status (American Counseling Association, 2014).

It is also important to note, excessive alcohol consumption can be a burden financially for the state and local governments (Gloppen et al., 2022). Minnesota collected \$97,716,000 in gross liquor related taxes, and \$93,553,000 from taxes stemming from alcohol related drink sales in 2019 (Gloppen et al., 2022). However, the estimated costs far exceed this amount, as \$190 million covers approximately 10% of the estimated expenditures endured by local and state governments in Minnesota (Gloppen et al., 2022). In 2021, Minnesota had one of the highest rates of binge drinking in the nation at 17.9% of adults (Minnesota Department of Health, 2023). Rates of use continue to rise, are more commonly reported in males, and those living in lower SES (Minnesota Department of Health, 2022). It is important to understand the costs, and the impacts present in order to determine what may be helpful as a state and nation through collaborative prevention efforts.

It is important to have this understanding prior to addressing the multifaceted factors causing the high alcohol consumption rates in Minnesota and Itasca County. In Minnesota, the societal costs of using alcohol for 2019 were almost eight billion dollars, which averages out to be \$1,383 per resident (Gloppen et al., 2022). These estimated costs are based on crime, criminal justice system expenses, health care costs, and loss in productivity (Gloppen et al., 2022). Based on this data, some evidence-based strategies aimed at prevention include prohibiting sales to minors, increased alcohol taxes, screenings, and intervention strategies (Gloppen et al., 2022).

Awareness of the magnitude of this concern present, is heightened upon statistical reporting that more than 95,000 deaths occur annually due to excessive alcohol use in the United States (Gloppen et al., 2022). It is imperative to demonstrate to each group in society that any amount of alcohol consumption can result in items such as death, violence, damage to property, lost productivity, diseases, injury, and possibly death (Gloppen et al., 2022). However, these consequences are greatly heightened with excessive consumption, which continues to rise nationally (Gloppen et al., 2022).

Illnesses, disability, death, and imprisonment leads to a loss in production in society from individuals living with excessive drinking habits (Gloppen et al., 2022). These losses show in productivity being impaired as school, home, absenteeism from work, crime, and more (Gloppen et al., 2022). A subgroup especially impacted by excessive drinking is those living in a lower socioeconomic status (SES) (Gloppen et al., 2022). Research has shown excessive drinking greatly impacts the safety, and health of those residing in lower SES conditions (Gloppen et al., 2022).

Socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals face higher morbidity, and mortality rates compared to other advantaged groups (Katikireddi et al., 2017). Alcohol related, and attributed

harms are strikingly higher in lower SES groups (Katikireddi et al., 2017). This poses the question of what prevention efforts need to be established towards this subgroup to help improve equity.

Deaths related to alcohol as a contributory factor, and deaths where alcohol is the sole factor are more commonly occurring for socioeconomic groups that are disadvantaged (Katikireddi et al., 2017). This more than three-fold disparity must be focused on and highlighted to best understand the prevention efforts needed due to the health inequalities present (Katikireddi et al., 2017). Our area needs to illicit information from those with lived experience, as this can help to shape better outcomes related to health, use, stressors, housing, and poverty (Katikireddi et al., 2017). Those living in poverty need to be a priority, as research has shown poverty can decrease a person's resilience leading to higher rates of use, disease, health risks, and poorer outcomes (Katikireddi et al., 2017).

For Itasca County, approximately one out of ten households may struggle with the ability to afford adequate amounts of food resulting in hunger (Second Harvest North Central Food Bank, 2016). Itasca County's unemployment rate is 8.8% in addition to having a poverty rate of 12.3% (U.S. News and World Report, 2023). Therefore, prevention efforts involving key stakeholders focusing on basic needs, resources, housing, early interventions, access to health care, and treatment services are warranted for those living in poverty as this is tied to poorer outcomes related to excessive drinking (Katikireddi et al., 2017).

By offering basic human needs items for those struggling, the relevance of prevention efforts, and programming can be improved for those living in a lower SES. Having resources, community awareness, and privacy upheld will be a cornerstone of the efforts. Cultural humility and a true intention of helping, not shaming, will be needed throughout the community. Seeking



help carries different meanings for those impacted by struggles. Maintaining dignity, respect, trustworthiness, a caring approach, awareness of ethical, and cultural factors will be key in addition to confidentiality for those needing help (American Counseling Association, 2014).

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## PART 5: ADVOCACY

### [Addiction Prevention in Itasca County, Minnesota]

Advocacy efforts are advantageous to approach from all levels of the social-ecological model. As with any advocacy efforts, knowing the population impacted is crucial in order to promote widespread social change. Therefore, according to Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competency guidelines, it is imperative to identify powerful dynamics, privileges, oppressive acts, and intersections occurring that can impact counseling and preventative efforts (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). In addition to identifying the intersections present, it is of great importance to also note the developmental domains that are impacting social justice and multicultural efforts (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). This also includes the importance of a counselor's own self-awareness, the client's view of the world, building a positive counseling relationship, and pairing this with advocacy interventions and efforts (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Prevention and advocacy programs are more effective when paired with intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and global efforts (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015).

Advocacy efforts on the intrapersonal level demonstrate influential factors including a person's attitudes, actions, concept of self, knowledge, and developmental history (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Advocacy efforts must focus on giving

information, context, and provide understanding to how one's identity is attached to living within privileged or marginalized communities (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). This is accomplished through showing current concerns, events of history leading to the present time, and how oppressive acts contribute to problems continuing for the groups of individuals affected (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Through awareness efforts beliefs, biases, personal attitudes, and the further development of multicultural and equity based considerations can occur, which is important when addressing excessive alcohol use (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015).

For the interpersonal level, it is important to focus on groups that individuals identify with in order to understand the deeply held beliefs surrounding one's support system of their family, peers, and friends (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). These connections have the ability to shape, and ultimately change oppressive and marginalizing behaviors occurring within one's surrounding groups (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Identifying the groups that are supportive can aid in advocacy efforts, and the prevention of excessive drinking. Understanding how beliefs are influenced by relationships is key to advocacy efforts as this creates interest and meaning behind the importance of changing risky behaviors (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015).

By reaching out within the groups present, collaborative efforts can take place, and be sources of change related to privileged and marginalized groups and their behaviors (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Interventions and advocacy efforts are better received when they align with the worldview and cultural background for the

group of individuals being focused upon (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). This concept is important in all levels of the social-ecological model.

Institutional levels also need to be focused upon with advocacy efforts, as churches, schools, and organizations within the community are highly influential on marginalized and privileged groups of individuals (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). If inequities are present within this level, it has the influencing power to shape those living within the social institutions present (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). In order to offer protective factors, it is crucial to connect groups of individuals to the supportive social institutions within their community as this can help to change acts of inequality for marginalized individuals (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Through changing beliefs, some of the barriers that are systemic in nature related to drinking can begin to be broken down in order to promote privileges for all (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015).

To create social change, advocacy efforts must focus on each of the systems present in order to create growth and development within all levels of the social-ecological model (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). The whole community collectively demonstrates societal norms, values, beliefs, and how one behaves based on these influences (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). These behaviors can either oppress or empower those living within the community (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Interventions and advocacy efforts on the community level must address these norms as they govern the actions of those residing within the community (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). To gain the best understanding possible, it is crucial to gather qualitative and quantitative data to have

information showing how the norms, values, and regulating factors are experienced for those living in the community related to drinking (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Once this is understood, advocacy efforts can be better tailored to meet the needs of the specific community targeted.

Policies present that govern federal, state, and local laws also need to be considered and changed to help ensure equity for all those residing within the country struggling with excessive drinking (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Privilege and the marginalization of each person is greatly impacted by the policies and laws present. Therefore, having understanding of this final layer helps to show the path of how laws govern each layer of the social-ecological model. Identifying governing laws and policies that hinder equity is crucial in order to conduct the most impactful advocacy changes that are sought (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Change has the potential to re-write societal norms, values, beliefs, and ultimately actions leading to healthier communities (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). This has the potential to shape attitudes decreasing marginalization in order to create more equitable access to medical care, benefits, employment, food, shelter, and to ensure each person has their basic human needs met promoting a better life for all with protective factors (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). This is important to understand as this will help to decrease excessive drinking rates as increased rates are tied to poverty, mental health issues, societal factors, medical issues, and deeply held beliefs within one's culture (Gruenewald et al., 2014).

In order to fully understand the magnitude of the governing laws and international affairs affecting those residing within the United States, it is best to focus on collaborative efforts gathering as much data as possible from those living within the privileged and marginalized

communities (Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, 2015). Having individuals going around the community gathering information on use, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, areas of needed societal change, cultural practices, and governing entities is invaluable when conducting advocacy efforts. This knowledge will best shape the rationale, efforts, and advocacy work to follow.

The barriers for the important work noted comes down to certain factors such as recognition, time, financial backing, desire, improved awareness, biases, and commitment to widespread social change. If each level does not have the resources needed to conduct research and dissemination of the results, it can make change difficult to obtain. Advocacy efforts must be conducted on all layers of the social-ecological model, as it takes all of us coming together to have the most influential impact on all levels within society in order to shape healthier behaviors and attitudes related to drinking alcohol (CDC, n.d.).

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