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For a general audience

Developing safer and healthier communities: the Good Sports program

Introduction

Historically, alcohol and sport are closely linked in Australia. Most major sporting competitions and teams promote and advertise alcohol consumption and many sports clubs have a tradition of heavy drinking. A large number of clubs depend on revenue from alcohol to finance club activities.

There is evidence that community-based sports clubs may contribute to alcohol problems by accepting and promoting excessive drinking and providing inappropriate role models for young people. This fact sheet provides an overview and case study of a program that is working to change this culture in sporting clubs—the Good Sports program.

What is the Good Sports program?

The Good Sports program is a national initiative of the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) to develop safer and healthier communities.

It is a free program that helps sporting clubs change their culture to become more focused on young people and families, and less on the consumption of alcohol at high risk levels.

Good Sports works to create sustainable change by enabling sporting clubs to change their systems and practices around the responsible serving of alcohol.

The program has been developed to:

- › reduce general alcohol consumption and risky drinking
- › reduce alcohol-related problems, particularly drink driving
- › increase club viability and influence within the community.

The Good Sports program is currently operating in most states and territories across Australia, with over 2900 community sports clubs participating.

Benefits of the Good Sports program

Displaying the Good Sports logo sends an important message to club members and the community. It confirms that the club promotes a responsible attitude towards alcohol and that it provides a safe environment for players, members, families and supporters.

An evaluation by La Trobe University revealed a range of benefits for the club and community.¹

Benefits to the club

- › A “new” club culture that is welcoming to families and juniors.
- › More attractive to sponsors.
- › New and diverse revenue streams.
- › Increase in membership, volunteers and teams.
- › Improved relationships with community organisations (e.g. local government and police)
- › Improved public image.
- › Reduced risk of liability.
- › Reduced alcohol-related problems (e.g. binge and underage drinking).
- › Applications for funding and grants strengthened.

Benefits to the community

- › Residents more connected and satisfied with their community.
- › Reduced violence, noise, injury and damage to facilities.
- › Reduced road trauma and drink driving incidents.
- › More young people protected from the misuse of legal and illegal drugs.
- › Improved health and fitness of community members.
- › More viable and family focused sporting clubs.

How does the program work?

The key strategy of Good Sports is the accreditation program. The three level accreditation criteria consist of a set of alcohol management standards for clubs that serve and consume alcohol.

Clubs are required to move through the levels in a set amount of time (maximum 5 years), maintaining all the criteria from previous levels as they do so. A Good Sports Project Officer assists the club through the entire process.

At each level, the club must promote its involvement in the program to members.

Level 1

- › Liquor license.
- › Bar management (Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA) training).
- › Smoke free.

Level 2

- › Maintenance of level 1 criteria.
- › Enhanced bar management.
- › Food and low- and non-alcoholic drink options.
- › Safe transport policy.
- › Diverse revenue generation.

Level 3

- › Maintenance of level 1 and 2 criteria.
- › Alcohol management policy.

Level 0

- › Maintenance of level 1, 2 and 3 criteria.
- › Alcohol-free facilities (the club does not serve or consume alcohol at the club).

A case study: the Murrabit Football Netball Club

In 2001, Murrabit, Victoria had an urban population of less than 100 people. The Football Netball Club comprised of four football teams and four grades of netball and the club was a major resource for community use.

The club had independently taken a responsible approach to managing alcohol; however, they were also aware of a stereotyped public image of football clubs as sponsors of underage drinking. In 2001, the club registered with the Good Sports program to formalise its pre-existing attitude to alcohol management and to promote its credibility within its community.

With the support of the Northern District Community Health Service, the ADF's community partner for the rural North West Victorian region, the club undertook a range of activities, including:

- › **RSA training:** Over 70 members, including 17 committee members, are trained in RSA.
- › **Provided mental health information and support:** In 2004 they hosted the "Positive Choices" program which focused on mental health issues, including depression and its relationship with alcohol use.
- › **Hosted the "Looking After Our Mates" program:** In 2005 to help educate players about responsible drinking, driving and looking after their mates.
- › **Provided information about nutrition, alcohol and sports performance:** In 2005 they held a program focusing on healthy nutrition, including a discussion of alcohol and sporting performance.
- › **Promotion of Good Sports program participation:** The club uses the Good Sports logo on letterhead, its members' tickets, player's drink bottles and other advertising.

The long-term actions of the club, including the reaching of level 3 in the Good Sports program, have resulted in changes to members' behaviour with respect to alcohol use and management. Some examples of these changes within the club include:

- › Alcohol and smoking policies have been formalised.
- › Players are provided with bottled water and sports drinks after matches rather than the customary beers.
- › There were no problems with alcohol immediately after winning the 2005 and 2007 grand finals.
- › The club has diverse revenue sources, including the Goods and Services Auction, a player Calcutta and the annual netball club dinner dance or masquerade ball.
- › The club's alcohol revenue has remained unchanged since it joined the Good Sports program.
- › The regular Thursday night training sees a crowd of around 70 people enjoying a meal.

In 2005, the Murrabit Football Netball Club was named the Victorian Good Sports Club of the Year.

More information

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Reference

1. Silburn K & Swerrisen H 2003 *Evaluation of the Good Sports accreditation program* Melbourne: La Trobe University.

More information

For more information on drugs and drug prevention contact the DrugInfo Clearinghouse on tel. 1300 8585 84, email druginfo@adf.org.au, or see our website www.druginfo.adf.org.au