

Isla Vista Teen Center Neighborhood Park Access Project (Component IV)

Engage Latino families and youth to voice their needs and concerns about their community, and to work with local agencies and organizations, to reduce alcohol and drug related problems through improved management of residences and parks.

Data

Between March and June 2006 in-person interviews were conducted at 99 randomly-selected households around Estero and Children's Parks regarding AOD-related problems in the parks and in the surrounding neighborhoods. The survey followed up previous work by IV AOD Council in 2003 which documented limited use of the parks by residents due to drunkenness and related problems. These findings led to systemwide implementation in 2004 of an alcohol permit requirement for all parks managed by Isla Vista Recreation and Parks Department.

Findings

- In 2003 a survey by the Isla Vista AOD Council documented complaints about excessive drinking and drunkenness in the parks.
- These findings led to the systemwide implementation in June, 2004, of an alcohol permit requirement for all parks managed Isla Vista Recreation and Parks Department. A pre-post study from January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2005, found police calls and complaints have decreased, problematic drinkers no longer drinks in the parks, the public accepts the policy, compliance is high, and the policy is easy to administer.
- A 2006 survey of 99 residents living near Children's and Estero Parks found alcohol and drug concerns did not discourage use of the parks. Forty-four percent of the respondents reported using the parks. The 56 percent who do not use the parks gave personal reasons rather than concerns about the parks. Only four responses cited conditions in the parks.
- Teen Center discussions with Latino families in late 2006 identified concerns about gangs and related activities as major issues for the parks and neighborhood. Sharing these concerns with the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks Department and the Isla Vista Foot Patrol resulted in a one-year trial for dusk-to-dawn closure of Children's Park and other gang-suppression activities (warrant arrests, evictions). After six months these measures appear to be meeting with success.
- Respondents reported great concern about neighborhood-related AOD problems. Specifically, large loud parties; boisterous, late-night activities and noise stemming from alcohol use.
- Respondents noted those involved in neighborhood AOD problems were mostly residents and suggested that contributors to problems from outside the area were visiting friends or acquaintances in the area.
- Overall, residents reported many positive features of living in the neighborhoods surrounding the park, mentioning friendly people, activities, and the social life of the neighborhood.

Implications for Prevention

Sharing Latino family concerns about AOD-related issues regarding public places/events, and with property managers and neighbors regarding rental properties, can result in effective management to reduce AOD-related problems in these neighborhood environments.