

College Alcohol Profile (CAP)

What is the CAP?

The College Alcohol Profile (CAP) is a web-based brief intervention program designed to reduce high-risk drinking and alcohol related problems among college students in Nebraska. The CAP can also reinforce low-risk behaviors and reaffirm those who choose to abstain from alcohol. The CAP was developed by researchers and practitioners at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL) with the help of national brief intervention experts and UNL students in 2005. UNL has provided brief intervention programs to students for over 15 years, including the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) program, ASTP (or Choices), mailed and on-line brief interventions.

The CAP is a Tier 1 (Evidence of Effectiveness Among College Students) program as defined by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA) Task Force on College Drinking. Tier 1 is the highest rating that programs can receive and consists of strategies that can be supported by strong research evidence. Tier 1 includes strategies that combine cognitive-behavioral skills training with norms clarification and motivational enhancement interventions, brief motivational enhancement interventions and interventions challenging alcohol expectancies.

The CAP is most effective when used as one component of a comprehensive campus/community environmental effort. Individual CAP components can be used as the information content for campus-wide education efforts, providing consistent messages to all students. Although individual components of the CAP can be used for campus wide education efforts, the on-line CAP program is not intended to be used as a prevention strategy with all students nor can CAP serve as a survey instrument for colleges.

CAP Flexibility

The CAP can be used in many ways, depending on your campus needs, existing programs and high risk groups. You may find that CAP can be used for programming in residence halls, your Greek community and athletic department and by peer educators in their alcohol education programs. In addition to providing school specific data, the language in the CAP can also be customized to your school as well as specific subgroups of students such as athletes and Greeks. Students' perceptions about their peers drinking patterns are often inaccurate and can greatly influence their own drinking behavior. CAP is one tool to challenge these perceptions amongst students and educate them about the actual campus norms. The flexibility of the CAP and the ability to easily localize the data and messaging presented through the CAP are what make it more effective than similar web-based programs. We are also able to customize the CAP to include your institution's color(s) and logo(s).

The CAP can be used as a standalone intervention for students that have an alcohol violation, reserving BASICS or Choices, for students who are repeat violators or students with more serious first offenses. Because the CAP uses similar assessment instruments and feedback measures as BASICS and Choices, CAP can replace the pencil and paper assessment package done by students completing these intervention programs. Using CAP in this way will eliminate the staff time required to compose student feedback letters and manually enter data into a database. CAP can also be used as a self-assessment tool for any student who is interested in learning more about their drinking behavior and is easily accessible from any school webpage.

How does CAP work?

Students go to your school's customized CAP website and complete a 5 to 10 minute questionnaire that includes questions on personal alcohol use (drinks per week, drinks per occasion and drinks per month), problems experienced, drinking and driving behaviors, family history, and perceptions of other students alcohol use. When students submit their survey responses they immediately receive a personalized feedback letter based on their questionnaire responses. The entire CAP process takes about 30 minutes and students are requested to make a copy of their letter for later review. CAP is designed to be anonymous and students are assured that their responses do not include any individual identifiers.

Feedback Letter Content

The personal feedback to the student includes:

- His/her typical weekly and past month peak BACs, drinks per week, average drinks per occasion and how the student compares to his/her same gender peers on the same measures.
- Feedback measures also include drinking and driving and riding with a drinking driver frequency, family history risk score, metabolism rate, tolerance level, alcohol calories consumed, percent of income spent on alcohol, and. the number of alcohol related problems experienced in the past 6 months.
- The feedback information that students receive is based on their gender, year in school and can include differences based on whether they identify as a specific subgroup such as students by major, Greeks, athletes when relevant for a college.
- Information on each of the measures and its importance to the student is included, as are links to relevant websites, practical moderation” tips” and campus and community resources.

Features of the CAP

The CAP is similar to e-CHUG, another on-line brief intervention program, in terms of theoretical foundation, length, and mechanics. CAP differs from e-CHUG and other brief interventions in several ways:

1. Each CAP is gender specific, and provides different feedback letters for men and for women.
2. CAP provides a separate feedback letter for non-drinking students. The feedback letter reinforces the student’s choice, describes the immediate and long term advantages of not drinking and provides information and encouragement to intervene when friends or others drinking concerns them.
3. CAP uses closest peers for normative comparisons. For example, a female CAP student’s drinking measures are compared to those of other females on the same campus, rather than to college students nationally.
4. CAP language is student friendly and relevant to Nebraska. UNL undergraduates provided input on the CAP’s language, length and look. For example, students helped choose and word the moderation strategies included in CAP, based on the importance and likelihood of use of the strategy by their peers.
5. CAP is BASICS, Choices and ASTP compatible. Both programs are based on the same theoretical foundation and have similar feedback measures. As such, the CAP can be used as the BASIC feedback letter, saving time while automatically inputting the student’s data into the CAP data base.
6. CAP can be tailored to any target group, including athletes, sorority members, fraternity members, first-year students and the general campus population.
7. CAP components can be used for campus wide education. For example, the CAP moderation strategies piece can be used in presentations or posted around campus. Other campus-wide education topics include gender differences, family history information, resources and drinking norms.

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