

ADOPTING AND ADAPTING THE FOURTH R IN ALASKA



What is the Fourth R

The Fourth R is a comprehensive school-based program designed to include students, teachers, parents, and the community in reducing violence and many of today's risk behaviours. The Fourth R provides information and practice opportunities for students to improve decision-making, establish positive relationship models, and explore alternatives to the negative decision-making they frequently see in the world around them.

The core program is based on 21-lessons designed to be implemented in Physical and Health Education. There are three units: Safety and Injury Prevention, Healthy Growth and Sexuality, and Substance Use and Abuse. The curriculum binders include clear, detailed lesson plans, overhead transparencies, and marking templates / rubrics. Comprehensive kits include additional DVDs to assist with skill development in the classrooms.

The Fourth R approach:

- Emphasizes skill development through role plays and practice
- Promotes healthy relationships and draws the links among relationships and risk behaviors
- Provides whole-class, small group, and dyadic discussion opportunities to process the issues with peers and the teacher, as well as opportunities to examine individual values, beliefs, boundaries and limits.

What Evidence is there that the Fourth R is Effective?

A 20 school Randomized Controlled Trial was conducted with more than 1700 students over a three year period in South-western Ontario. Students were assessed at the beginning of grade 9, the end of grade 9, and two years later at the end of grade 11. Assessment included self-report measures of attitudes and behavior, knowledge tests, and skill-based role play scenarios (with 200 students). The role plays were video taped and coded once by trained researchers to identify the skills used by the students in peer pressure scenarios, and once by teachers to rate their overall effectiveness. The strictest RCT methodology was used. Findings demonstrated:

- ***Students in the Fourth R showed higher levels of skills than their counterparts after the program. These differences included being more likely to use negotiation and delay skills in peer pressure scenarios and being less likely to yield to pressure. Teachers rated students who had participated in the Fourth R as having better communication, skills, and more overall effectiveness than their peers. Neither the research coders nor the teachers knew which students on the video had participated in the Fourth R.***
- At the end of grade 11, students in the Fourth R reported less dating violence perpetration and a greater use of condoms.
- ***Students in the Fourth R learned more, enjoyed health class more, and had healthier attitudes about violence at the end of the program.***
- The Fourth R was found to provide a buffering effect in terms of the impact of multiple forms of child abuse experienced and the likelihood of perpetrating violent delinquency in adolescence. That is, the relationship between child abuse and violent delinquency was much weaker in Fourth R schools than in comparison schools.

How does the Fourth R Align with State and Federal Guidelines?

- The Fourth R aligns with the performance indicators of all eight of the U.S. National Health Education Standards for grades 9-12
- The Fourth R provides lessons that meet the requirements of the Skills for a Healthy Life document developed by the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

How was the Aboriginal Perspectives Fourth R Developed?

The Aboriginal Perspectives version was developed to create a program that was both more relevant for Aboriginal Canadian youth, and would also help non-Aboriginal Canadian youth gain an understanding of Aboriginal cultures and worldviews. The Aboriginal Perspectives Fourth R includes all of the basic components of the original Fourth R. There are adaptations and enhancements in terms of both content and process.

Content enhancements include:

- Traditional teachings and a more culturally relevant worldview is integrated into the curriculum
- Suicide prevention is addressed specifically
- An appropriate historical context for understanding the elevated rates of problem behaviours and health disparities observed among Aboriginal people in Canada
- Additional scenarios were added to the role play options based on consultation with Aboriginal youth about issues particularly relevant to them
- A skills for healthy relationships video was developed with a group of 25 local First Nations youth
- Additional commercial videos from Aboriginal filmmakers were incorporated as optional exercises

Process adaptations include:

- The use of sharing circles
- Opportunities to invite Elders and other community members into the community
- An emphasis on mapping strengths in the community
- The use of a first person narrative story that addresses issues of identity – this story is available both in written form and as an audio version narrated by a young First Nation woman

As of 2009, the Aboriginal Perspectives Fourth R has been piloted in both Alternative Education and mainstream programs and with Aboriginal-only classrooms as well as general classrooms. It was designed to be adapted for different communities based on input from local cultural advisors and educators.

The Fourth R Aboriginal Perspectives is consistent with United States National Health Education Standards and can be adapted for use in Alaska in a manner that is consistent with the educator recommendations in the document, *Guidelines for Nurturing Culturally-Healthy Youth* (e.g., Adopt curricular and instructional strategies that connect to the cultural and physical world in which the students are situated); as well as the document, *Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge* (e.g., Make effective use of local expertise, especially Elders, as co-teachers whenever local cultural knowledge is being addressed in the curriculum). There are current adaptations being made to this curricula to develop an Alaska Perspectives Curriculum.

Additional Resources Available:

Mentoring Program Manuals : Over the past 5 years we have developed and implemented a peer mentoring program for Aboriginal high school students. It has components similar to all mentoring programs (i.e., formal training, structured meetings, clear roles and responsibilities) as well as more culturally relevant enhancements (i.e., the inclusion of an Adult Community Member who comes in to meet with students several times per semester, activities based on talking about identity). We have written two manuals for this program; a Mentoring Manual to be used for training and supporting the mentors, and an Implementation Manual to be used by educators wishing to implement the program

Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A Toolkit for Service Providers: We have also developed a 125 page toolkit of strategies, guidelines and case studies on successful programs for engaging and empowering Aboriginal youth. The toolkit includes strategies on understanding and integrating cultural identity, increasing youth engagement, fostering youth empowerment, and developing and maintaining effective partnerships. There are also specific sections on working with schools and also on research.