

## Theatre for Development: Making Policy Creative

***Do you work in a youth organisation?***

***Would you find it useful to manage alcohol and other drug use at your events or facility?***

***If so, this is for you.***

The benefits of an alcohol and other drug (AoD) policy are many. Here are two<sup>1</sup>:

- Clear expectations – all staff and youth will have a clear understanding of behavioural expectations and the likely consequences
- Consistency – with a policy in place, incidents can be responded to in a calm, planned and consistent manner

In this workshop, I will outline one aspect of creating a policy – involving young people in decision making. For information about the whole process of creating an alcohol and other drug policy go to <http://www.healthaction.org.nz/cayad-nelson/more-than-just-a-policy-guidelines-and-workbook-2/>

I will use theatre as the tool to encourage the participation of youth in creating a policy. Theatre is useful in engaging youth in a creative and spontaneous way.

My training is in “Theatre for Development”, which is similar to applied theatre and sociodrama. The purpose of these methods is to inspire creative, collective learning and self expression.

I will be taking you through an example of a workshop to create an alcohol and other drug policy, so that you have the tools to do this within your own organisation.

Here are the tools that I will use in this workshop:

### **Continuum**

*(a fun way to find out the understanding, beliefs and values of your participants)*

Here's how...

1. Ask the young people to get up and come and stand in a clear space in the room. (make sure there is enough space for them to move around)
2. Explain the rules...

“This side of the room represents AGREE (as in I agree with this statement), that side of the room represents DISAGREE (as in I disagree with this statement, and the centre of the room is I DON'T AGREE OR DISAGREE)”. *You may like to make up cards with these words so that people remember which side of the room represents agree/disagree*

“When I read out a statement you move to the place in the room that best represents your response on the statement i.e. agree/disagree/don't agree or disagree

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<sup>1</sup> From “More Than Just a Policy: Best Practice Alcohol and Other Drug Policy for Youth Organisations Guidelines (Rosey Duncan, Health Action Trust 2011)

3. Check whether everyone understands the rules (*you might want to ask someone to explain them back to you to check for understanding*)
4. Make the first statement – something that is light-hearted such as “I like Bruno Mars’ songs” (*if you do include a singer in your questions play one of their songs as participants are arriving and at the start of this activity so that everyone will know who you are talking about*)
5. Once everyone has moved to the agree/disagree/don’t agree or disagree positions, ask them to talk together in their clusters for 1-2 minutes about why they have taken that position and ask someone from each cluster to remember the comments so they can feed them back to the whole group.
6. Ask the representative from each cluster to feed back the responses from their cluster to the whole group.
7. Now you can move to statements (2-3) which
  - check participants’ understanding of the workshop e.g. “I don’t have a clue what this workshop is about”
  - Gain insight into participants’ beliefs, values and attitudes e.g. “Too many teenagers are getting messed up from using alcohol and other drugs”.
 Follow the process above at points 5. and 6. after each question

### **Small Group Discussion**

*In this context small group discussion is a tool to get people talking about potential situations involving alcohol and other drugs in their organisation.*

Here’s how

1. Ask people to move into groups of 3-5 people. Give each group a number or a name (*they could come up with it themselves*)
2. Give each group a sheet of paper with an example (scenario) of an incident occurring at an event/youth centre (see example in the appendix)
3. Explain to everyone that each group needs to:
  - Decide on one person to read scenario out loud
  - Decide on one person to note-take
  - Decide on two other people to feedback to group
4. Tell everyone that they have 5 minutes to complete this activity
5. After 5 minutes check how each group is doing and if they need more time to complete the activity
6. Ask everyone to bring their attention back to the room
7. Display the first scenario on a data screen and read it out to the whole group
8. Ask the representative from Group 1 to read out the group’s responses

9. Check to see if anyone in that group wishes to add anything. Then check if anyone from other groups wish to add anything
10. Repeat steps 4-6 for the other scenarios

### **Role Play**

*Role play can be used following the small group discussion to try out the scenarios discussed in small groups. This will help to make clear whether the responses to the scenarios decided on in the small group discussion feel right in action.*

Here's how...

1. Tell participants to stay in the same small group and that they have 10 minutes to role-play the same scenario.
2. Ask each group to decide amongst themselves who will play each character in the scene (*it is preferable if everyone has a part*).
3. Tell them to rehearse the scene firstly amongst themselves (*ensure there is enough space for each group to do this without being disturbed by another group*). Explain that they will be performing this back to the whole group later on.
4. Check in after 10 minutes to see if any groups need more time.
5. Once each group has rehearsed their scene, bring everyone back together .
6. Your role is now director as well as facilitator – so set the scene. Describe the space you are using as a theatre or movie set i.e. where the stage is, where the audience needs to sit, what is expected of the audience (full attention) and remind them of any other ground rules that you set at the start of the workshop.
7. If there is a participant who hasn't taken part in the groups, ask them to be the assistant director and that their role is to say "LIGHTS, CAMERA, and ACTION!" Give them a chance to try this out first and coach them if necessary.
8. From here there are a number of approaches that can be taken. Two are listed below.

### **Approach 1**

Allow the play to finish, thank the actors and ask for applause. Now ask the audience if they noticed any "choice"<sup>2</sup> moments. If a choice moment is identified, ask the participant who identified a choice moment to explain a different choice that the character could make. If there is time, this participant (and other participants) could then be invited to try out this different choice in the play by either running the play through from the start of from the a few moments before the choice moment.

### **Approach 2**

Prior to performing the plays, ask the audience members to indicate in a loud voice when they see a choice moment (the whole group can choose a word and gesture to stop the action, such as standing up and saying "CUT" or "CHOICE"). Start the play. If someone stops the action, ask them what different choice the character could make. Invite them to take the place of the actor and try out the different choice (if this person doesn't wish to

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<sup>2</sup> A choice moment is a moment where there is a choice of what to say or how to act in a situation. For example, when a youth worker sees young person smoking cannabis they can chose to respond in one way or another.

you can invite other participants to do this). Start the play again from just prior to the choice moment.

9. In the event that no-one stops the action to identify a choice moment you could run the play through again and ask participants to be extra observant and/or you could stop the action at choice moments yourself as director and ask the audience what they think might be other choices for that moment.
10. At the end of each play, summarise the choice moments that were identified and what the choices are. These choices will help form the basis for further discussion and decisions about which approach(es) should become part of the alcohol and other drug policy.

To conclude, I hope that this overview of my workshop has been useful and that you will consider the need of an alcohol drug policy for your organisation.

Please refer to <http://www.healthaction.org.nz/cayad-nelson/more-than-just-a-policy-guidelines-and-workbook-2/> for user-friendly and practical guidance on creating your own alcohol and other drug policy

You will find the theatre tools above can be adapted and used for a range of purposes and I encourage you to be brave and try them with groups of children, young people or adults that you work with. They will help you to engage people so that they can express their views and also will help your participants to understand others' attitudes, beliefs and values too!

For specific information please email me [caitlin.bush@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:caitlin.bush@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

Kia kaha,

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