

# Binational Policy Council

*The Border Project • December 2004*

The Binational Policy Council (BPC) is a coalition of agencies and advocates that evolved from a regional interconnectedness in order to find policy-based solutions to public health and safety concerns in the Mexico-U.S. Border region. Throughout its existence, the BPC produced creative, substantive and effective change in the perception of alcohol and its negative affect on the border region as well as on the variety of public health and safety issues that impact the binational community.

## *Background*

In the late 1990s, an initiative called the San Diego-Tijuana Border Project aimed to generate collaborative solutions to cross-border alcohol and drug (AOD) related problems, and laid the foundation for the BPC. Operated by the Institute for Public Strategies, the Border Project enhanced the binational capacity to prevent those problems. The Border Project's Environmental Prevention based approach combines data, community organizing, policy recommendations, well-coordinated enforcement and a strategic media advocacy campaign to change the conditions that sustain alcohol and drug related problems around the world's busiest border crossing. In 2001 the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration formally acknowledged the Border Project's accomplishments, granting it the coveted Model Program status.

Based on the ongoing success of the Border Project, the BPC applies an environmental prevention approach along the U.S.-Mexico border to establish complementary policy solutions to AOD problems. With members from both sides of the international border, BPC participants collaborate with agencies representing a variety of disciplines and community sectors. Though some are not directly associated with alcohol and drug

prevention or border affairs, this highly skilled group understands the value of the environmental prevention model to improve the quality of life in their communities.

## *Applied Environmental Prevention*

The intent of the BPC is to provide an effective method to create changes in the conditions that produce a safer and healthier society. The approach is



multilayered and uses the environmental prevention methodology. The application of the prevention model provides a forum to activate resources to address a

multitude of issues ranging from HIV/AIDS and TB to the impact of public health and safety problems on regional economies.

Through the use of applied data and community building, a strong and ever-expanding network of partners from different community sectors supports policy recommendations. The BPC works with elected and other government officials to promote and support policy change through advocacy and enforcement. Governments on both sides of the border, and at all levels, have consistently worked with the Council to create and assure the optimum efficacy of policies. In addition, the BPC and both governments have worked extensively with agencies and entities in the enforcement community to effectively enact these policies. Fed by the fore-mentioned elements, media advocacy is a vital element in the environmental change process to advance solution-based policies on the public agenda.



*This fact sheet was produced by the Institute for Public Strategies, a nonprofit organization advancing public health through changes in policy and community norms.*

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## **BPC COMMITTEES**

Currently the BPC works through three groups: the Policy and Enforcement Subcommittees and the Media Action Team. Each provides structure and momentum for the BPC's work.

### **Policy Subcommittee**

Charged with developing policy recommendations to be implemented at the federal, state and local level of government, this subcommittee also promotes self regulation within organizations and businesses in the binational community. Efforts require both creating new regulations that promote healthy and safe communities and making changes to strengthen existing regulations. The policy subcommittee will work with City and County Councils and other regional government entities on both sides of the border to create a variety of policy approaches addressing alcohol and its effect on the public's health. Backed by the BPC, committee members research and develop suggestions as well as pursue these policy proposals before government bodies.

### **Enforcement Subcommittee**

Not only does this group work with law enforcement officers and other key partners, it also assures existing regulations, codes and laws are implemented and evaluated for effectiveness. Existing regulations are monitored through work with law enforcement agencies, community members and other groups. Members work with the California Highway Patrol, the San Diego Police Department, Tijuana Police Department, California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) and Reglamentos, which is the Mexican equivalent of ABC.

### **Media Action Team**

This group develops solution and policy-focused news stories for media outlets in the binational region. Also, the media action team prepares speakers for media interviews for both English and Spanish-language television, print and radio outlets. The team is called upon, sometimes at a moment's notice, to write letters to the editor, be interviewed in the news and participate in media events that facilitate a consistent, solution and policy-focused message.

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