

# Discussion Guide Module 2: Family Dynamics of Alcohol and Other Drugs

## Discussion Questions

1. Begin by asking participants how they feel about the information provided in this training module. This module may hit an emotional chord with some participants. Make sure to allow for adequate processing time for this module. Keep in mind 1 in 4 people are or have been significantly affected by the chemical use of someone close to them. Make sure to allow for adequate processing time.



2. Next ask participants to consider how the chief enabler might present in the classroom (what do they look like, how do they act), the hero might present in the classroom (what do they look like, how do they act), the mascot (what do they look like, how do they act), the scapegoat (what do they look like, how do they act) and the lost child (what do they look like, how do they act).



- **The Chief Enabler** is caring, compassionate, empathic, good listener, sensitive to others, giving, and has a nice smile.
- In dysfunctional families, **the Family Hero** has a specific role to follow. The classic function of the family hero is to make the family look good. Others may get into trouble with drugs or alcohol. But the family hero decides not to go that route. The family hero gets a college degree, a good job, and makes the decision to stay clean and out of trouble. There are both positive and negative attributes in this situation.
- In alcoholic families, **the Family Mascot** has a well defined function in taking the onus off the serious issue of alcoholism. By providing daily mega doses of humor, the family mascot keeps everyone laughing and enables the family to keep up one happy facade. Everything is alright as long as we're having fun with the family mascot in the front row.
- **The Scapegoat** identified as the "family problem." They are likely to get into various kinds of trouble, including drug and alcohol abuse, as a way of expressing their anger at the family. They also function as a sort of pressure valve. When tension builds in the family, the scapegoat will misbehave as a way of relieving pressure while allowing the family to avoid dealing with the drinking problem. Scapegoats tend to be unaware of feelings other than anger.

- **The Lost Child** copes with the chaos of their families in inappropriate ways. They learn never to expect or to plan anything. They often strive to be invisible and to avoid taking a stand or rocking the boat. As a result, they often come to feel that they are drifting through life and are out of control.
3. Give participants a copy of the handout for this training module found at [www.wishschools.org/resources/](http://www.wishschools.org/resources/). The handout will include information on the continuum of alcohol use, as well as, information about the roles in a dysfunctional family system.
  4. Complete your discussion with guidelines for staff on how to make an appropriate referral for student they have concerns about.



*The Wisconsin Safe & Healthy Schools Center is a collaborative project between the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the CESA Statewide Network (CSN).*

