

Message from the Director

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Women are abusing alcohol, tobacco and other drugs at an alarming rate. Although this is one area where we do not wish to catch up with our male counterparts, the gap is rapidly closing. While there are similarities in substance abuse issues between males and females, there are also some important differences. One example is that women who abuse alcohol and/or drugs are at particular risk for sexual assault, unprotected sex, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS according to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

Other significant health risks, brought on by substance use, occur at different stages in a woman's life. CSAP notes that in the preteen years, alcohol use by girls can delay the onset of puberty, interfering with adolescent maturation. For women of childbearing years, research is very clear about the damage that can be caused to the fetus by prenatal exposure to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. In fact, maternal alcohol consumption is the leading known cause of mental retardation in the Western World. Infertility and increased risk of spontaneous abortion are also consequences of heavy alcohol use during this timeframe.

In later years, heavy alcohol use affects post-menopausal women by increasing the risk of osteoporosis, and can also damage the heart. Research suggests that it may be more common in women than in men for alcohol problems to develop – or perhaps surface – late in life (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

There are additional health risks as well. A study by the Journal of American Medical Association showed that “women who drink two to five alcoholic drinks each day were 41% more likely to develop breast cancer than nondrinkers”. Finally, in a recent study, researchers at the University of Heidelberg, in Germany, found that female drinkers lose brain volume more quickly than men.

There are biological reasons why women have an increased risk of developing problems from alcohol use than men. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

“When a woman drinks, the alcohol in her bloodstream typically reaches a higher level than a man's, even if both are drinking the same amount. This is because women's bodies generally have less water than men's bodies. Because alcohol mixes with body water, a given amount of alcohol is less diluted in a woman's body than in a man's. Women become more impaired by alcohol's effects and are more susceptible to alcohol-related organ damage. That is, women develop damage at lower levels of consumption over a shorter period of time”.

In addition to physical differences, women face a different set of social and emotional problems than men. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) women's symptoms are usually more “inner-directed” including depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. There is also a strong link between substance abuse and women who have been physically or sexually abused (“70% of female substance abusers in treatment were sexually abused as children; only 12% of men were). Bulimia and anorexia are also more common among female alcoholics than males.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR (cont.)

Intense feelings of guilt and shame associated with substance abuse lead women to hide their drinking and drug use from family, friends and physicians making it much more difficult to identify and diagnose a problem. Therefore, women entering treatment for the first time may be further along in their addiction than men. Stigma surrounding substance abuse is greater for women than it is for men creating yet another barrier to females seeking help for their addiction.

An August 2001 report for the Drug and Alcohol Services Administration (DASIS) found that women enter treatment through very different avenues than men. For men, the most frequent source of treatment referral is through the criminal justice system; whereas, women in the publicly funded treatment system were either self-referred or referred by a family member or friend. Women entering treatment were less likely than men to be employed – this may be due, in part, to issues stemming from childcare. Issues, such as childcare may also present a barrier to women entering and remaining in treatment. The same report also states that “women were more likely than men to be in treatment for heroin and cocaine, and less likely to be in treatment for alcohol abuse or marijuana use”.

The research clearly shows there are distinct differences between men, women and substance abuse issues. Physical, emotional and social differences, between the sexes, add up to the need for separate, gender specific approaches to prevention, intervention and treatment.

The publicly funded treatment system in Chester County recognizes this and meets the needs of our residents by providing a variety of services and programs for adolescent girls and women. Our Nurse-Family Partnership Program works with first time mothers providing them with pre and postnatal alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention education and resources. Outpatient and short-term residential programs address women's issues through gender specific groups. Longer-term residential treatment programs for women and children offer addiction treatment services for women and also addresses ancillary issues of parenting and life skills education. Also in these programs, children reside with their mothers and receive age appropriate prevention and intervention services.

Please contact our toll-free 24/7 Drug and Alcohol Information and Referral Line for a complete list of available services: 1-866-286-3767.

Mark Your Calendar



NATIONAL AWARENESS and OBSERVANCES:

June 27, 2005 - National HIV Testing Day: www.napwa.org (Materials Available)

September 2005 - National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month - www.recoverymonth.gov
(Materials Available)

LOCAL EVENTS:

3rd Annual Recovery Expo – September 24, 2005 - “Healing Lives, Families, and Communities”. Held at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Exton. For more information, you can visit www.umcr.org or call Wendy Beck @ 610-363-6164. Yvonne Kaye, a renowned radio personality, will be the keynote speaker this year and Vince DiPasquale will be returning to do some workshops. Don't miss this informative and fun-filled family event!

LOCAL and REGIONAL TRAININGS/CONFERENCES:

June 23 – 25, 2005: Pennsylvania Regional Drug & Alcohol Training Institute - Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster, PA. For more information visit www.ireta.org. Scholarships are available.

July – September, 2005: Eagleville Hospital - Main Campus, 100 Eagleville Rd., Eagleville, PA 19408. For a list of trainings visit www.eaglevillehospital.org.

IN VIEW

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Chester County is fortunate to be home to one of the states 23 Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) programs. With over 250 sites nationwide, the NFP program is designed to benefit low-income, first time mothers.

The NFP was implemented by the Chester County Health Department in December of 2001 with a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The program is currently supported through grants and funding from community foundations and other county government departments including the Department of Drug and Alcohol Services.

To be eligible for the Chester County NFP, a woman must be less than seven months pregnant at enrollment, must be having her first child and must be a Chester County resident. Median income for the NFP program is approximately \$17,500. The majority of women served are under the age of 19.

Services to pregnant women include home visits by registered nurses during the pregnancy and for two years after the child is born. Nurses work with the families and employ practices that are family centered and directed toward nurturing strengths and competencies. A parent education component focuses on promoting positive parenting skills. One focus of the program is to target risk factors that increase the likelihood of substance use or abuse. The substance abuse risk factors that NFP addresses are: lack of parenting skills and positive attitudes toward substance abuse.

The NFP is recognized by many federal and state agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as an evidence-based program. The NFP has over 20 years of research demonstrating the program's effectiveness.

If you would like more information on the program, please contact Pat Yoder, Supervisor at: pyoder@chesco.org or 610-344-6225. Information about the national NFP program is also available at www.nursefamilypartnership.org.

About Women and Alcohol

Brochure available through the PA Department of Health Research and Information Clearing House, www.padohric.org

Why should we learn about women and alcohol? There are many reasons why this is an important issue for women to know about and be aware of. Millions of American women have alcohol-related problems; and they are women of all ages, social, and economic backgrounds.

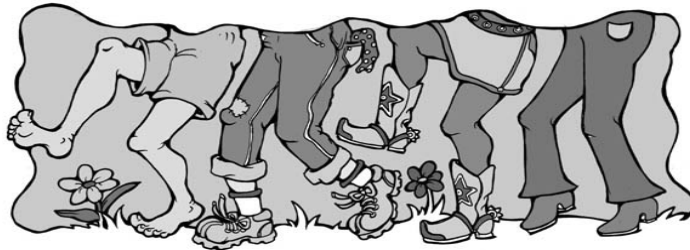
In this brochure you will learn what causes alcohol problems in women, what health problems are associated with alcohol use, what are some warning signs/symptoms that someone you care about may have a problem with alcohol, and where to turn for help.

This brochure is a great resource that can be utilized not only by women, but also families and friends who may be concerned about a woman in their life.

For more information or to obtain a copy of *About Women and Alcohol* please contact the Community Prevention staff at The Coad Group, (610) 363-6164.

PRO-ACT'S RECOVERY WALKS! 2005

4th Annual Walk for
Recovery from Alcohol &
Other Drug Addictions



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2005
1 P.M. to 4 P.M.

FAIRMOUNT PARK, PHILADELPHIA
Lloyd Hall at Boathouse Row
Waterworks & Kelly Drive

Entertainment & Light Refreshments

Registration Begins at 1:00 pm
3 Mile Walk Begins at 2 pm

*Join the Voices of Recovery, Healing Lives,
Families and Community*

www.proact.org

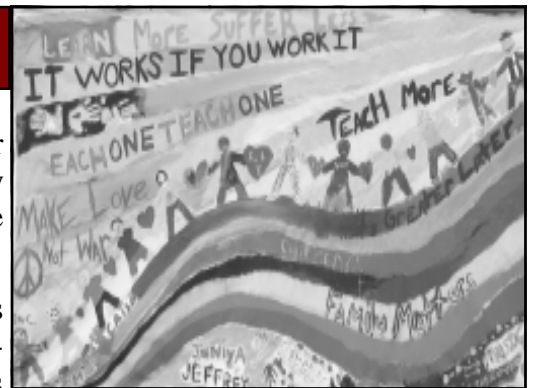
Recovery Expo in Pennsylvania Fosters Exchange

Eureka! In 2003, I realized that I could combine talents from my prior life of addiction with my passion for recovery. With help from my church and the Chester County Council on Addictive Diseases, where I work, the Recovery Expo came to life.

We recruit help from those who are *interested* in recovery, as well as those who are *in* recovery. Chester County's Drug and Alcohol Department, community coalitions, nonprofit organizations and schools are great places to connect. The presence of most of the 12-step groups, as well as local treatment providers sparks lively interaction. A well known speaker and child care draw participants.

The lessons: plan early, bring passionate people to the table, listen to the needs of individuals and families, use the planning tools, try not to reinvent the wheel, delegate, organize and leave the outcome up to the Higher Power.

The Third Annual Recovery Expo will be held on September 24, 2005. More information is posted at www.recoverymonth.gov. Reprinted from Recovery in Action RISING! Spring 2005 www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org



ADOLESCENT FEMALES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

National surveys show that adolescent females are beginning to drink at younger ages than ever before:

- In the 1960's, 7% of new female users of alcohol were ages 10 to 14, but by the early 1990's, that figure had risen to 31% (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention)

Locally, we see adolescent female substance use rates at or above males of the same age group. The 2003 Chester County Youth Survey shows the following:

- 12th grade students report that the average age of onset for drinking alcohol regularly is 15.5 for males and 15.4 for females.
- 10th grade students report Past 30-Day Use of Alcohol is 33.6% for males and 39.0% for females
- 12th grade students report Past 30-Day Use of Alcohol is 53.0% for males and 54.0% for females
- Past 30-Day Use of Cigarettes for Females is slightly higher than males in grades 8, 10 and 12.

The American Medical Association (AMA) has said that drinking is increasing among teenage girls and believes that it is a result of the alcohol industry's "aggressive promotion of sweet, fruity drinks". In a related study, conducted by Georgetown University, researchers found that "young girls are increasingly exposed to advertising for low-alcohol products such as wine coolers and alcoholic ice teas. Teenage girls' exposure to such ads increased 216% compared to 46% for boys".

Heroin has found a new set of users in teenage girls reports Join Together Online (www.jointogether.org), "particularly those from suburban and rural areas". Although data from our 2003 Youth Survey shows no significant gender differences for the Past 30-Day Use of Heroin, with the exception of 8th grade (.2 for males and .6 for females), we have seen a definite increase in heroin use between school years 1999/00 and 2003/04. This increase is particularly alarming in that heroin is available in a purer form that can be sniffed rather than injected - making it more popular among middle class teens.

There are, of course, numerous and varied reasons why adolescent girls begin using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. "Adolescence is a time of dramatic changes in hormone levels and patterns writes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) with "gender differences in the body's hormonal response to stress also beginning to emerge". DHHS found that "girls may be at particular risk for emotional difficulties, depression and problems with self-image, as well as an increase in risk-taking behaviors. During early adolescence, girls may be especially vulnerable to stress (9-11). Levels of perceived stress have been found to be the most powerful predictor of alcohol and other drug use, after peer substance use".

A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development found that "peer pressure was positively associated with drinking for girls and not for boys". Addition studies found that girls are more concerned than boys with body image and their weight placing them at a higher risk to become daily smokers by the time they are in their late teens according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI).

Today, more than any other time in our history, adolescent females in the United States face different and more complex societal, peer and cultural issues than females a mere ten years ago. These variables can, and often do, play a contributing role in adolescent female substance abuse. Not only is it important for us to recognize gender differences it is also important to understand the cultural, class, and ethnicity issues we develop and implement prevention, intervention and treatment programs for adolescent females. By acknowledging and working with diversity we can provide effective services for this population.



The Exchange is sponsored by: The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box 2747, 601 Westtown Road Suite 325, West Chester, PA 19380-0990.

For more information or to be on the mailing list for this newsletter, contact the Community Prevention staff at: The Coad Group, 930 East Lancaster Avenue Exton, PA 19341. 610.363.6164 or 1.800.917.1117

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The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services, P.O. Box 2747, 601 Westtown Road Suite 325, West Chester, PA 19380-0990

The Exchange Summer 2005

For More Information...

Join Together (617) 437-1500

www.jointogether.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.nida.nih.gov or clubdrugs.org

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information

1-800-729-6686 www.health.org

Partnership for a Drug-Free America

(212) 922-1560 www.drugfreeamerica.org

PA Dept. of Health, Research & Info. Clearinghouse www.padohric.org

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters.

(800) 344-2666 or (800) 356-9996.

www.al-anon.alateen.org

The Coad Group

www.coadgroup.com

You can view or print this newsletter by visiting Chester County's Website: www.chesco.org and following the links for Human Services to Drug & Alcohol Services.