

# The Exchange

Summer  
2006

A Publication of the  
Chester County  
Department of  
Drug and Alcohol  
Services

## Message from the Director

### **SCREENING AND BRIEF INTERVENTION**

#### *Cost-Effective Help for Problem Drinkers*

Chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes do not happen overnight, often there are early signs and symptoms indicating a problem may exist or be developing. Routine screenings by a health care professional can detect these and, through early intervention and treatment, prevent the disease from progressing any further. Alcoholism, another chronic illness, is no different. If detected early, alcohol problems can be effectively treated. Left untreated, alcohol related problems will progress and can also create other serious health issues such as liver and heart disease, certain forms of cancer, and pancreatitis.

The federal government recommends that screenings for alcohol problems be conducted at the following times: during annual routine physicals, before being prescribed any medications that interact with alcohol, and when individuals are diagnosed with illnesses that are commonly associated with alcohol use such as hypertension, depression, and sleep disorders. Studies also show that emergency rooms and trauma centers are appropriate venues for alcohol screenings.

Nearly everyone who drinks alcohol could benefit from an alcohol screening. Alcohol screenings are a

quick, cost effective means to determine whether an individual's drinking patterns are risky and pose a potential health problem. They can also identify possible signs of alcohol abuse. One commonly used screening instrument, developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) is the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test). Questions included in the AUDIT ask about the amount, frequency, and context of a person's alcohol use.

The purpose of alcohol screening is not diagnosis according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Screening instruments are designed to indicate whether key elements or features of alcohol dependence or abuse are present. If screening identifies that a person is at-risk, brief intervention may occur. A trained physician or other healthcare provider can conduct a brief intervention within the context of the medical visit or refer for a series of brief counseling sessions (often referred to as brief interventions). It is important to note that brief interventions are not designed to treat alcoholism. Treatment for alcoholism requires specialized knowledge and training and is historically treated for longer periods of time.

Do brief interventions work? Yes, according to a report by the George Washington University Medical Center. One study showed that "over a period of six to twelve months, drinkers who receive a brief intervention are twice as likely to reduce drinking as others". Another study showed that individuals involved in brief intervention (compared to the control group) "had significantly fewer accidents, hospital visits and other events related to problem drinking". Additionally, brief intervention "generated nearly \$56,300 in savings for every \$10,000 invested".

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Kim P. Bowman

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The George Washington Medical Center further reports that “one in five men and one in ten women seen by primary care physicians drink at levels that put them at risk for alcohol-related problems, including alcoholism”. These statistics reinforce the need for people to be routinely screened for alcohol problems.

If you, or someone you care about, would like to learn more about their drinking patterns you can contact your physician and request assistance. If your physician does not conduct alcohol screenings, free, anonymous screens are available on-line at [www.alcoholscreening.org](http://www.alcoholscreening.org).

*Kim P. Bowman*  
Director, Chester County  
Department of Drug and Alcohol  
Services



## ***Problem Drinking Behaviors***

*(Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)*

Problem drinking also known as alcohol abuse, is a pattern of drinking in which one or more of the following situations occur within a 12-month period:

- Failure to fulfill major work, school or home responsibilities;
- Drinking in situations that are physically dangerous, such as while driving a car or operating machinery;
- Having recurring alcohol-related legal problems such as being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or for physically hurting someone while drunk; and
- Continued drinking despite having ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by the drinking.

## **NATIONAL ALCOHOL SCREENING DAY**

*(Reprinted in part from: <http://www.nationalalcoholcreeningday.org>)*

Chester County joined numerous other communities across the United States on April 6, 2006 to observe National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD). NASD is an annual event that provides information about alcohol and health as well as free, anonymous screening for alcohol-use disorders. The program is designed to provide outreach, screening, and education about alcohol's effects on health for the general public.

Sixteen screening and information sites were set up throughout the county at local churches, libraries, and YMCAs. Screening and information sites distributed a variety of alcohol educational materials to Chester County residents, as well as offering alcohol screenings for interested individuals.

Individuals participating in the event had the following comments:

**“I was most amazed at how lightly people take the subject of alcohol and how much a part of the fabric of our lives that alcohol is/plays”.**

**“NASD is not just aimed at your typical ‘problem drinker’ but having anybody examine their alcohol use for early detection of possible negative health effects due to the amount and/or frequency of use as well as possible medication interactions”.**

Comments and observations such as these heard in Chester County reinforce the need for continued alcohol awareness campaigns and education in our communities.

The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services would like to thank everyone that made this event possible. For more information log onto: [www.nationalalcoholcreeningday.org](http://www.nationalalcoholcreeningday.org).

## *IN VIEW*

### *Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment (SBIRT)*

*(Source: reprinted in part from [http://www.samsha.gov/SAMSHA\\_News/VolumeXIV](http://www.samsha.gov/SAMSHA_News/VolumeXIV))*

A federal initiative out of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) known as Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment (SBIRT) assumes that “regardless of current level of alcohol or drug consumption, everyone can benefit from learning the facts about safe alcohol consumption and knowing how their usage compares to accepted limits”. This initiative is based on the premise that many people do not know and understand the risks they are taking by their alcohol use, but once they have this information they can and will change their behaviors before they become alcohol dependent or addicted.

A hospital stay, visit to the emergency room or primary care setting can provide health care professionals with what they refer to as a “teachable moment”. In these medical settings, patients are focused on their health and receptive to hearing about health related issues including their alcohol and/or drug use. SBIRT generally begins with patients being asked to complete a standardized alcohol-screening instrument. Depending on results, the following options are made available to the patient: 1.) a brief intervention, which is typically a short-duration counseling session delivered within the context of the medical visit to raise awareness and motivate change; 2.) brief treatment of approximately two to nine sessions focusing on rapid implementation of strategies for change; or 3.) referral to more intensive treatment.

Not all medical settings and their personnel are equipped or trained to conduct alcohol screenings on their patients. Additionally, they may not have the resources available for brief interventions. Since research has shown that a patient’s receptivity to education and intervention for their alcohol use - when identified within the medical setting - is very strong, SAMSHA has granted six (6) states and one (1) tribal council \$108 million to address the issue. Pennsylvania was one of the grantees.

In 2003, Pennsylvania was awarded a total of \$17 million dollars, over a 5-year period, to develop model SBIRT programs to be delivered within the healthcare system. At this time, the Pennsylvania SBIRT grant targets three (3) geographic areas: Allegheny, Philadelphia and the Huntingdon-Mifflin-Juniata area. By targeting these areas, Pennsylvania will learn how to most effectively adapt SBIRT to both urban and suburban locations throughout the state. Focus of the SBIRT grant in Pennsylvania is on the following: a continuum of screening, intervention, and facilitated referral to treatment in medical and community settings, identification of systems barriers and initiatives to improve policies that promote the identification of individuals with risky substance use in general medical and community settings, improve access to care for individuals with substance abuse disorders, and provide specialized training ([www.state.health.pa.us](http://www.state.health.pa.us)).

For more information on SBIRT, log onto the following web sites: [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov), [www.ireta.org/sbirt](http://www.ireta.org/sbirt), [www.ed.bmc.org/sbirt/index.htm](http://www.ed.bmc.org/sbirt/index.htm).

## Mark Your Calendar



### NATIONAL OBSERVANCES:

**June 17, 2006:** Pennsylvania Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Association's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual DUI Victims Memorial 10K Run & 1 Mile Walk, 2413 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110. Call (717) 238-4354 for more details.

**June 27, 2006:** National HIV Testing Day – free, confidential testing is available through the Chester County Health Department, contact (610) 344-6252 for clinic hours or log onto [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org) for more information.

**September 1-30, 2006:** National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov)

**September 10, 2006:** World Suicide Prevention Day [www.stopasuicide.org](http://www.stopasuicide.org)








**September 30, 2006:** 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Recovery Expo, 9am-3pm, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Exton, PA. For more information: [wendy.beck@unmcr.org](mailto:wendy.beck@unmcr.org)

### TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

**PA Department of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs:** For complete list of courses offered visit <http://bdap.health.state.pa.us/mrtr/Welcome.aspx>

## What Is a Standard Drink?

Any drink that contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol (about 0.6 fluid ounces or 1.2 tablespoons).

12 oz. of beer or cooler	8-9 oz. of malt liquor 8.5 oz. shown in a 12-oz. glass that, if full, would hold about 1.5 standard drinks of malt liquor	5 oz. of table wine	3-4 oz. of fortified wine (such as sherry or port) 3.5 oz. shown	2-3 oz. of cordial, liqueur, or aperitif 2.5 oz. shown	1.5 oz. of brandy (a single jigger)	1.5 oz. of spirits (a single jigger of 80-proof gin, vodka, whiskey, etc.) Shown straight and in a highball glass with ice to show level before adding mixer*
						
12 oz.	8.5 oz.	5 oz.	3.5 oz.	2.5 oz.	1.5 oz.	1.5 oz.

## FAMILY CORNER

*News you can use*

### **FINANCIAL AID VICTORY!**

*(Reprinted in part from Faces and Voices of Recovery - Press Release 2.9.06)*

Thousands of students with drug convictions, many of whom are in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, will be eligible for federal financial aid to students. A provision in the budget bill signed into law by President Bush on February 9, 2006 will help people with drug convictions regain eligibility for federal student financial aid, which has been denied since 1998.

Under the new law, which goes into effect on July 1, 2006, people can receive aid unless they are convicted of a drug felony or misdemeanor while in school. Students convicted while receiving financial aid will remain ineligible – for one year for a first possession offense, two years for a second, and indefinitely for a third, with harsher penalties for selling. People can participate in treatment programs in order to qualify for their aid to be restored.

Repeal of the ban on federal financial aid to students with drug convictions is one element of Faces and Voices Of Recovery's *Right to Addiction Recovery Platform*. Faces and Voices of Recovery is a non-profit advocacy organization working with family, friends, and people in recovery to: end discrimination; broaden social understanding; and achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis. For more information please visit: [www.faceandvoicesofrecovery.org](http://www.faceandvoicesofrecovery.org).



### **POST-PROM PARTIES A SUCCESS!**

The Chester County Department of Drug and Alcohol Services awarded 12 high schools throughout Chester County with mini grants to support post-prom activities. Each school received \$500. Over 3,000 students are expected to attend post-prom parties this season and enjoy a safe, alcohol, tobacco, and drug-free evening following their prom. Activities scheduled include laser tag, karaoke, miniature golf, raffles, magicians, recording booths, hypnotist, and much, much more.

Although adolescents are at-risk throughout the entire school year for the problems associated with alcohol and other drug use, peer pressure seems to increase during prom and graduation season. Volunteer groups' work tirelessly throughout the school year to help ensure that their students have a tragedy-free prom and graduation season.

Our Department, through a contract with The Coad Group, provides year-round assistance to post-prom committees working to provide them with a general knowledge regarding adolescents and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Additionally, information-sharing meetings are held during the school year, which provides post-prom committees a great way to exchange ideas.

If you are interested in joining or starting a post-prom committee at your high school or wish to work within your community to address alcohol, tobacco, and other drug issues, please contact the Community Prevention Department at The Coad Group: 610-363-6164 or 1-866-286-3767.

The Chester County  
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P.O. Box 2747  
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## *The Exchange Summer 2006*



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

*This newsletter is made possible by funding from the Department of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Chester County Commissioners.*

*The Department of Health and Chester County Commissioners specifically disclaim responsibility for any analyses, interpretations, or conclusions herein.*

## *For More Information...*

Join Together (617) 437-1500  
[www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)

National Institute on Drug Abuse  
[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov) or [clubdrugs.org](http://clubdrugs.org)

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco)

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information  
1-800-729-6686 [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

Partnership for a Drug-Free America  
(212) 922-1560 [www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org)

PA Dept. of Health, Research & Info. Clearinghouse [www.padohric.org](http://www.padohric.org)

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters  
(800) 344-2666 or (800) 356-9996  
[www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)

The Coad Group  
[www.coadgroup.com](http://www.coadgroup.com)

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