

The Exchange

Autumn
2009

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

Kim P. Bowman

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Myth: Drug addiction is a voluntary behavior.

Fact: A person starts out as an occasional drug user, and that is a voluntary decision. But as time passes, something happens, and that person goes from being a voluntary user to being a compulsive user. *Why?* Because over time, continued use of addictive drugs changes your brain - at times in dramatic, toxic ways, at times in more subtle ways, but virtually always in ways that result in compulsive and even uncontrollable drug use. (www.drugfree.org)

Director's Article

There are numerous myths surrounding the disease of addiction - among them, the notion that addiction is a voluntary behavior, or a character flaw. Many people falsely believe that people don't need treatment - they can stop using drugs if they really wanted to. However, the scientific facts present a different story: addiction is a disease that affects both the brain and behavior, and it can be treated just like any other disease.

Raising community awareness through education is the key to dispelling the myths and stigma surrounding addiction. Each September, Chester County joins the nation in recognizing National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the campaign. The theme for 2009 is "Join the Voices for Recovery: Together We Learn, Together We Heal". The campaign emphasizes the need to educate the communities we live and work in about the disease of addiction and provide help, support and encouragement to individuals living with substance use disorders.

Educating the public and giving people the information they need to understand

addiction has never been easier since the

evolution of the Internet. Web sites, blogs, message boards, forums and social networks all play a role in providing information on substance use disorders, treatment and recovery. The following are some online support forums and message boards included in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2009 Recovery Month Toolkit (www.recoverymonth.gov):

Online Support Forums and Message Boards

- **The Sober Recovery Community** – Offers support forums for people in recovery, as well as family and friends.
- **The Sober Forums** – Provides message boards for people in recovery and also provides recovery coaching from professional counselors.
- **Cyber Recovery Fellowship** – Offers faith-based forums for people in recovery.
- **eGetGoing** – Helps people new to recovery through online support groups led by certified counselors.
- **The Sober Village** – Offers online community forums for people in recovery.

Please note that it is important to exercise caution in obtaining addiction information online. Best practice is to search web sites that are hosted by a government entity such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or those associated with a reputable organization, i.e. the American Medical

Inside this issue...

Director's Message	1-2
The Internet - A Recovery Resource	2
<i>In View:</i> FASD Awareness Day 2009	3
Mark Your Calendar	4
Family Corner - Resource to Help Parents	5

Continued on Page Two

Association. These sites will carry the most current, up-to-date and factual information. In regard to support forums and message boards, their purpose is to guide those in recovery to find **another** support outlet offline. It is imperative to avoid making them a replacement for proper treatment or recovery services (<http://www.recoverymonth.gov>).

For more information on resources related to alcohol and other drug prevention, intervention and treatment issues please contact our 24 hour, toll free, personal and confidential Information and Referral Line at: 1-866-286-3767. Additional information on Internet resources can be found inside this issue of The Exchange.

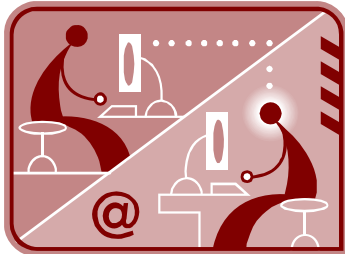


Kim P. Bowman

*Director, Chester County
Department of Drug and Alcohol Services*

How to Use the Internet to Get Help

Ask yourself the following questions before jumping into a particular online community or recommending it to others:



What kind of information is required to join the community? Carefully review a Web site's privacy policy to ensure that information is not distributed to third parties.

Can I see my loved one or myself fitting in? Look at the types of responses and support provided by others in the group.

What kind of oversight does the group have? Check to see if licensed treatment and recovery counselors actively oversee the conversation and participate in it.

Does the Web site offer additional, offline resources? Some sites offer help lines or other resources where you can interact with people offline as well.



The Internet — A Recovery Resource

The Internet is becoming an increasingly effective tool for spreading recovery information. Studies show:

- ◆ About three-quarters of all adults in America use the Internet. Most (75 percent) search for health information online.
- ◆ People of all ethnic and age groups within the United States take advantage of the more than 70 different online recovery programs and services available.

Online forums offer a community for people to share their experiences, challenges, and questions about recovery. Treatment services that are offered online can help people in rural areas and cities who may have problems with transportation to in-person treatment services. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is taking notice of this new trend, and in 2008 devoted one of its *Road to Recovery* Webcast episodes to "Accessing Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Online," which can be viewed at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

Two other important resources are:

- ◆ SAMHSA's National Helpline, **1-800-662-HELP**, for toll-free information and treatment referrals in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day.
- ◆ SAMHSA's "[Find Substance Abuse and Mental Health Treatment](#)" Web site — Lists resources about mental health, substance abuse, and treatment.

FASD AWARENESS DAY 2009



WHAT IS FASD? “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders” (FASD) is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong implications. The term FASD is not a clinical diagnosis. It refers to conditions such as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND), and alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD). In the United States, FASD occurs in about 10 per 1,000 live births, or 40,000 babies per year.

FASD Awareness Day

Every year on September 9, communities throughout the United States and the world observe FASD Awareness Day. Events are held at 9:09, the 9th minute of the 9th hour of the 9th day of the 9th month of the year. This date and time is used to remind women not to drink during the nine months of pregnancy.

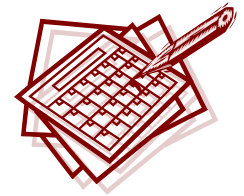
The first FAS Awareness Day was held on 9/9/99. Since then, the Federal government and many State and local governments have officially recognized FASD Awareness Day. Individuals, organizations, and communities have been active every year in putting together events and special ceremonies to promote awareness and increase compassion for individuals with an FASD.

Locally, on September 11, 2009, the PA Department of Health is hosting a free training entitled *FASD: Optimizing Outcomes for Individuals and Families by Recognizing Underlying Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and Tailoring Interventions for Success*. This training includes an overview of FASD, including terminology, diagnostic criteria, brain research, prevention, and the importance of recognizing an FASD. The session examines behavioral “red flags” that may indicate a possible FASD in an individual in varied settings. Specific interventions to improve outcomes are highlighted. To register, log onto the BDAP training web site at: <https://bdap.health.state.pa.us/btms/Home.aspx>



Chester County visualizes a unified system of care that maximizes all resources around an individual or family. This system of care includes child and adult serving agencies and community partners that join with an individual or family to meet their goals.

Mark Your Calendar



NATIONAL OBSERVANCES / LOCAL EVENTS:

September 2009: National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month - www.recoverymonth.gov

September 9, 2009: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) Awareness Day - www.fasday.com

September 12, 2009: Recovery Walk 2009 - www.recoverywalks.org Location: Penn's Landing, Delaware Ave., Philadelphia, PA - walk start time is 10:00 a.m.

September 30, 2009: Recovery Works! Phillies Baseball Game - Citizens Bank Park, N. Pattison Avenue, Philadelphia, PA, 6:00 pm Gathering and 7:05 pm Game Time - www.proact.org

October 2009: Talk About Prescription Month - www.talkaboutrx.org

October 19-25, 2009: National Drug-Free Work Week - www.dol.gov/drugfreeworkweek

October 23-31, 2009: National Red Ribbon Campaign - www.nfp.org

November 2009: Great American Smokeout Month - www.cancer.org/docroot/subsite/greatamericans/smokeout.asp

November 19, 2009: Great American Smokeout Day

December 2009: National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month - www.nhtsa.dot.gov

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY:

Training is available from the PA Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs (<https://bdap.health.state.pa.us/btms/>) on a variety of topics. Select 'Course Search', 'Region', 'SouthEast' to search for available courses in your area.



• Recovery Walks 2009! •



FAMILY CORNER

"Stop and think. If you're pregnant, don't drink."

Alcohol Use and Pregnancy

A mother's alcohol use during pregnancy is one of the top preventable causes of birth defects and developmental disabilities. There is no known amount of alcohol that is safe to drink while pregnant. There is no time during pregnancy when it is safe to drink. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, her baby does too.

- ◆ Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause many birth defects and developmental disabilities. These are known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), and include fetal alcohol syndrome.
- ◆ FASDs can cause problems in how a person looks, grows, thinks, and acts. FASDs can also cause birth defects of the heart, brain, and other major organs.
- ◆ About 1 in 12 pregnant women in the United States reports alcohol use. And about 1 in 30 pregnant women in the United States reports binge drinking (having five or more drinks at one time).
- ◆ Alcohol can harm a baby at any time during pregnancy. It can cause problems in the early weeks of pregnancy, before a woman even knows she is pregnant.
- ◆ The good news is that **FASDs are 100% preventable** — if a woman does not drink alcohol while she is pregnant.
- ◆ Health professionals should ask all of their female patients of childbearing age about alcohol use. They should tell women about the risks of using alcohol during pregnancy and advise them not to drink alcohol during pregnancy.

The U.S. Surgeon General wants women to know they should not drink alcohol during pregnancy. In a 2005 advisory on alcohol use in pregnancy, he stated:

- ◆ A pregnant woman should not drink alcohol.
- ◆ A pregnant woman who has already used alcohol during her pregnancy should stop right away.
- ◆ A woman who is thinking about getting pregnant should stop using alcohol.
- ◆ Nearly half of all births in the United States are unplanned. Therefore, any woman who could become pregnant should talk to her doctor and take steps to lower the chance of exposing her baby to alcohol.

For more information on FASD contact your physician or log onto one of the following web sites: <http://www.nofas.org/>, <http://www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov>, <http://www.ninezero.org/>, www.niaaa.nih.gov

Each year as many as 40,000 babies are born with a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) costing the nation about \$4 billion. (www.samhsa.gov)

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 Autumn 2009



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.

Resources

Looking for Help in Chester County?

AA Web Site

www.aachesco.org

Al-Anon/Ala-Teen

1-888-4AL-ANON

Al-Anon/Ala-Teen Web Site

www.al-anon-alateen.org

Alcohol and Drug Information

– Personal & Confidential

1-866-286-3767

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

215-923-7900

Crisis Intervention

1-877-918-2100

Domestic Violence

1-888-711-6270

Health and Human Service Agencies

www.referweb.net/chesco

Narcotics Anonymous (NA)

215-629-6757

NA Web Site

www.na.org

Welfare Office

610-466-1000

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.