

The Exchange

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Kim P. Bowman

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Message from the Director

Underage Drinking

Annual Cost of Underage Drinking in the United States:	\$62 Billion
Annual Cost of Underage Drinking in Pennsylvania:	\$ 2 Billion

Alcohol is the number one drug of choice among our youth and too many are experiencing the consequences at a very early age. Our nation's underage drinking problem is fast reaching epidemic proportions and is considered a leading public health problem in the United States (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism - NIAAA).

What are the Risks?

Approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die annually as a result of underage drinking. This includes:

- ◆ About 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes
- ◆ 1,600 as a result of homicides
- ◆ 300 from suicide
- ◆ Hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns and drownings and,
- ◆ Although rare, alcohol poisoning deaths among youth number approximately one-half dozen per year.

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to engage in risky behaviors that result in numerous short and long-term consequences including: using other drugs, drinking and driving, injury and accidents, and having unprotected

Inside this issue...

Director's Message	1-2
In View: The Link	3
Mark Your Calendar	4
10 Proven Environmental Strategies	4
Family Corner - Why Adolescents Drink	5

sex. Alcohol use places youth at particular risk of

physical and sexual assaults, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. Other problems associated with alcohol use and adolescents include problems in school, at work, and with the legal system (NIAAA, Alcohol Alert, Number 73, October 2007).

Alcohol's Affect on Adolescent Development

In 2005, Chester County 12th graders reported that they tried alcohol for the first time at age 14 years and 1 month – by age 15 years and 5 months they reported drinking alcohol regularly. What impact does this have on their development? Research shows that alcohol use in young people damages two (2) key developing brain areas:

- The hippocampus - the part of the brain that converts information to memory (studies show that youth who report drinking more and for longer periods of time had significantly smaller hippocampus – up to 10% smaller).
- The prefrontal area (behind the forehead) - the part of the brain that plays an important role in forming adult personality and behavior.

Other physical problems associated with youth who drink include:

- Increased risk of stroke
- Verbal and nonverbal information recall is heavily affected, 10% performance decrease in alcohol users and,
- Increased likelihood of developing a lifelong alcohol problem: youth who begin drinking before age 15 are four (4) times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are 2.5 times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21.

Additionally, research with animals suggests that “adolescents may experience alcohol's affects differently from adults, and this may affect their drinking behavior, in particular their tendency to

Continued on Page Two

binge drink. Animal studies suggest that adolescents tend to be more sensitive than adults to the stimulating affects of alcohol and less sensitive to some of its more unpleasant affects, including sedation, hangover, and loss of muscular coordination". (NIAAA, Alcohol Alert, Number 73, October 2007).

Other recent research indicates that the tendency to take risks during adolescence is "in part biologically driven." Sections of the adolescent's brain develops at different times "for example the limbic system, a part of the brain associated with risk taking and novelty- and sensation-seeking, matures earlier than the frontal cortex, which is associated with judgment, self-regulation, and impulse control." (NIAAA, Alcohol Alert, Number 73, October 2007).

These recent studies and scientific findings will help us understand adolescents and addiction, and will assist the field in developing effective and appropriate intervention and treatment protocols.


What Can We Do?

One of the key points in the Acting Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking* Report is that "underage drinking is not inevitable, and schools, parents, and other adults are not powerless to stop it". Community mobilization efforts, such as our Communities That Care coalitions have the right idea: they believe that everyone - parents, schools, communities, hospitals, law enforcement, government, policymakers, etc. - have a role to play in preventing and reducing underage drinking. A comprehensive, communitywide approach to underage drinking is an effective way to combat the problem.

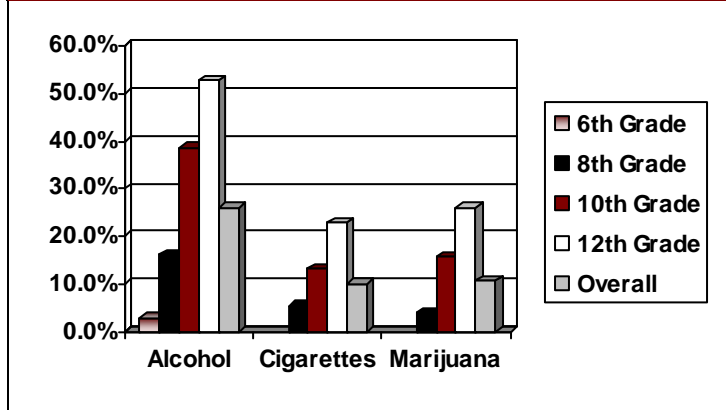
The American Medical Association (www.ama-assn.org) recognizes the following strategies as effective in addressing the problem of underage drinking:

- ◆ Reducing access to alcohol for children and youth
- ◆ Reducing sales and provision of alcohol to children and youth
- ◆ Increasing enforcement of underage drinking laws
- ◆ Providing more education about the harmful effects of alcohol use
- ◆ Reducing the demand for alcohol and the normalization of alcohol use by children and youth (for example, more stringent regulation on alcohol advertising on television programs that air before 10:00 p.m.).

By working together, we can make a difference. Please contact the Community Prevention Department at The Coad Group for more information on how to prevent and reduce underage drinking in your community, call (610) 363-6164.

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

Chester County Adolescents' Alcohol Use Compared to Use of Cigarettes or Marijuana



Past 30-Day Use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Marijuana By Grade. 2005 Chester County Youth Survey

Did you know.....

Many professions that require further licensing or certification beyond a college degree, such as: real estate broker, architect, attorney, teacher and nurse, may be unattainable if you have been convicted of an alcohol-related offense in Pennsylvania. These offenses include:

- Carrying or manufacturing a false I.D.,
- Misrepresentation of your age to purchase liquor or malt or brewed beverages,
- Driving under the influence,
- Disorderly conduct, or
- Purchasing and/or furnishing liquor or malt or brewed beverages to minors.

For more information logon to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board's website @ http://www.lcb.state.pa.us/plcb/lib/edu/item_images/0307.pdf or contact The Coad Group at (610) 363-6164 or 1-800-917-1117.

IN VIEW

The Link: Drugs, Alcohol and Sexual Assault

An educational program offered through The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County

The Link program was developed by The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc. in conjunction with the Honorable Paula Francisco Ott, President Judge, Chester County Court of Common Pleas to address the correlation between drug and alcohol use and the increased risk of sexual assault. Originally designed for adolescent girls, the program has since expanded to include both boys and girls. The program is tailored for presentation to middle and high school age students, but can also be presented to parent groups as a follow up.

The hour long program includes small group brainstorming sessions conducted with the youth, where realistic refusal skills and ways to get out of unsafe situations are discussed among the participants. Drunk Busters Impairment Goggles are also utilized, so that youth can experience how vulnerable they are when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The program teaches youth about *the link* between sexual assault and drug and alcohol use. The program also provides resources for help associated with each.

For more information on this program, as well as other educational programs offered through The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc. please contact Dee Donato, Community Outreach Coordinator at (610) 692-1926 or deed@cvcofcc.org. All programs are conducted by a trained and certified PA Sexual Assault Counselor and may be presented in a school or community setting.

Facts About Alcohol Poisoning

What Happens to Your Body When You Get Alcohol Poisoning?

Alcohol depresses nerves that control involuntary actions such as breathing and the gag reflex (which prevents choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop these functions.

You should also know that a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even while he or she is passed out. Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. It is dangerous to assume the person will be fine by sleeping it off.

Critical Signs for Alcohol Poisoning

- Mental confusion, stupor, coma, or person cannot be roused
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness.

What Should I Do If I Suspect Someone Has Alcohol Poisoning?

- Know the danger signals.
- Do not wait for all symptoms to be present.

- Be aware that a person who has passed out may die.
- If there is any suspicion of an alcohol overdose, call 911 for help. Don't try to guess the level of drunkenness.

What Can Happen to Someone With Alcohol Poisoning That Goes Untreated?

- Victim chokes on his or her own vomit.
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular, or stops.
- Heart beats irregularly or stops.
- Hypothermia (low body temperature).
- Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures.
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage, or death.

Even if the victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage. Rapid binge drinking (which often happens on a bet or a dare) is especially dangerous because the victim can ingest a fatal dose before becoming unconscious.

Don't be afraid to seek medical help for a friend who has had too much to drink. Don't worry that your friend may become angry or embarrassed - remember, you cared enough to help. Always be safe, not sorry.

Common Myths

Common myths about sobering up include drinking black coffee, taking a cold bath or shower, sleeping it off, or walking it off. But these are just myths, and they don't work. The only thing that reverses the effects of alcohol is time - something you may not have if you are suffering from alcohol poisoning.

Mark Your Calendar



NATIONAL OBSERVANCES / LOCAL EVENTS:

April 1-30, 2008: Alcohol Awareness Month - www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

April 19, 2008: Chester County African American Health & Wellness Expo: Child & Career Development Ctr., Coatesville @ 9:30 a.m. - www.ccaahawe.com

May 11-17, 2008: National Alcohol-and Other Drug-Related Birth Defects Week - www.ncadd.org

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:

May 8, 2008: Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Overview; Exton, PA Contact: (610) 344-6620 for more information

June 2, 2008: Principles of Engagement with Individuals with Co-Occurring Disorders and Their Family Members; Exton, PA Contact: (610) 344-6620 for more information

For additional trainings, log onto the following web sites:

PA Dept. of Health, Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Programs - <http://bdap.health.state.pa.us/btms>

Gaudenzia Training Institute - www.gaudenzia.org

Ten Proven Environmental Strategies for the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking:

1. **Responsible beverage service** is a merchant education program designed to reduce sales to minors and intoxicated adults. It involves media advocacy to promote policy changes, manager training, and server/seller training.
2. **Alcohol compliance checks** are thought to be most effective when they are frequent and well publicized, solicit community support, and involve penalties for the licensed establishment rather than just the server.
3. **Happy hour restrictions** eliminate one of the environments most conducive to over-consumption of alcohol.
4. **Controls on alcohol outlet location and density** reduce the accessibility of alcohol to young people by making it less prevalent in their immediate environment.
5. **Sobriety/traffic-safety checkpoints**, which are very effective in reducing alcohol-related traffic accidents, injuries, and deaths, are even more effective when combined with a vigorous public awareness campaign.
6. **Graduated drivers' licensing laws**, which entail clearly specified learner, intermediate, and full license phases, are effective in reducing crashes among teen drivers, but they need to be adequately enforced.
7. **Social-host liability laws** state that adults providing alcohol to minors or those who are obviously intoxicated are legally liable if the person is killed or injured, or kills or injures another person.
8. **Keg registration** is intended to prevent friends or relatives of legal drinking age from buying beer kegs for teen parties. Registration can be achieved in a number of ways, for example, permanent markings on each keg that identify where and when it was purchased or a requirement that keg delivery requests be made in person at the store.
9. **Restricting sales of alcohol at public events** controls the availability of alcohol at gatherings such as concerts, street fairs, and sporting events.
10. **Increasing taxes on the sale of alcohol** leads to reductions in the levels and frequency of drinking and, especially, heavy drinking among youth, as well as lower traffic accident fatality rates and reduced incidence of some types of crime. Several surveys indicate that most Americans support increased alcohol taxes.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9262/index1.html

FAMILY CORNER

Why Do Some Adolescents Drink?

As children move from adolescence to young adulthood, they encounter dramatic physical, emotional, and lifestyle changes. Developmental transitions, such as puberty and increasing independence, have been associated with alcohol use. So in a sense, just being an adolescent may be a key risk factor not only for starting to drink, but also for drinking dangerously.

Risk-Taking - Research shows the brain keeps developing well into the twenties. Scientists believe that this lengthy developmental period may help explain some of the behavior which is characteristic of adolescence - such as their propensity to seek out new and potentially dangerous situations. For some teens, thrill-seeking might include experimenting with alcohol. Developmental changes also offer a possible physiological explanation for why teens act so impulsively, often not recognizing that their actions - such as drinking - have consequences.

Expectancies - How people view alcohol and its effects also influences their drinking behavior, including whether they begin to drink and how much. An adolescent who expects drinking to be a pleasurable experience is more likely to drink than one who does not. Before age 9, children generally view alcohol negatively and see drinking as bad, with adverse effects. By about age 13, however, their expectancies shift, becoming more positive. As would be expected, adolescents who drink the most also place the greatest emphasis on the positive and arousing effects of alcohol.

Sensitivity and Tolerance to Alcohol - Differences between the adult brain and the brain of the maturing adolescent also may help to explain why many young drinkers are able to consume much larger amounts of alcohol than adults before experiencing the negative consequences of drinking, such as drowsiness, lack of coordination, and withdrawal/hangover effects. This unusual tolerance may help to explain the high rates of binge drinking among young adults. At the same time, adolescents appear to be particularly sensitive to the positive effects of drinking, such as feeling more at ease in social situations, and young people may drink more than adults because of these positive social experiences.

Personality Characteristics and Psychiatric Comorbidity - Children who begin to drink at a very early age (before age 12) often share similar personality characteristics that may make them more likely to start drinking. Young people who are disruptive, hyperactive, and aggressive - often referred to as having conduct problems or being antisocial - as well as those who are depressed, withdrawn, or anxious, may be at greatest risk for alcohol problems. Other behavior problems associated with alcohol use include rebelliousness, difficulty avoiding harm or harmful situations, and a host of other traits seen in young people who act out without regard for rules or the feelings of others (i.e., disinhibition).

Hereditary Factors - Some of the behavioral and physiological factors that converge to increase or decrease a person's risk for alcohol problems, including tolerance to alcohol's effects, may be directly linked to genetics. For example, being a child of an alcoholic or having several alcoholic family members places a person at greater risk for alcohol problems. Children of alcoholics (COAs) are between 4 and 10 times more likely to become alcoholics themselves than are children who have no close relatives with alcoholism. COAs also are more likely to begin drinking at a young age and to progress to drinking problems more quickly. Research shows that COAs may have subtle brain differences which could be markers for developing later alcohol problems.

Environmental Aspects - Environmental factors, such as the influence of parents and peers, also play a role in alcohol use. For example, parents who drink more and who view drinking favorably may have children who drink more, and an adolescent girl with an older or adult boyfriend is more likely to use alcohol and other drugs and to engage in delinquent behaviors. Researchers are examining other environmental influences as well, such as the impact of the media. Today alcohol is widely available and aggressively promoted through television, radio, billboards, and the Internet. Researchers are studying how young people react to these advertisements.

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA67/AA67.htm>

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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 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.