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Alcohol use and abuse continues to be Alaska's #1 health issue creating a seemingly endless stream of preventable injuries, illnesses, crimes, unwanted pregnancies, crippling addictions, and deaths. In Alaska a staggering percentage of youth begin to consume alcohol--years before they can even begin to comprehend the potential risks involved. The kinds of prevention activities that delay and reduce alcohol use by youth are better understood now than ever before, and parents, educators, and involved community members are empowered to efficiently work together to curb alcohol use by youth.

This issue of Healthy Alaska focuses on underage drinking and how you can become involved as well as highlights available resources that you can access and share with educators, parents, and community members.



Underage drinking has historically been underemphasized as a genuine threat to our children's health and well being despite overwhelming statistical evidence that *underage alcohol use is more likely to kill young people than all other illegal drugs combined*. US Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Richard H. Carmona, has summoned a call for action for the entire nation to address underage drinking in an effort to curb underage consumption and to change long held notions that underage drinking is unavoidable and a relatively harmless behavior most youth engage in.



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According to the **2003 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey**,

- 34% of Alaskan high school students reported binge drinking in the last 30 days
- 23.3 % of Alaskan high school students reported having had their first drink of alcohol before age 13
- 1 in 4 Alaskan high school students reported driving in a car with a driver who had been drinking alcohol within the 30 days prior to the survey being conducted
- 3 out of 4 Alaskan high school students reported having consumed alcohol



Join the Underage Drinking Prevention Town Hall Meeting Closest To You!

What is the purpose?

Thanks to new research, we know more now than ever about the risks associated with underage drinking. The Town Hall Meetings are part of a national effort to increase understanding and awareness of underage drinking and its consequences, and to encourage individuals, families, and communities to address the problem. These local Town Hall Meetings will give local communities the opportunity to come together to learn more about the new research on underage drinking and its impact on both individuals and the community, and to discuss how their community can best prevent underage alcohol use. These Town Hall Meetings are designed to alert and empower the community as well as generate interest from the media.

Who can participate?

Anyone can! Since underage drinking is a critical health and safety issue, it is important to involve representatives from the entire community, including parents, youth, education, substance abuse prevention, other health entities, justice/law enforcement, highway safety, alcohol control, local government, and business. Communities are being encouraged to host their Town Hall Meetings on, or as close as possible to, March 28, 2006.

See the attached document for a list of communities that have committed to holding a town hall meeting in Alaska. For further information, please contact MaShelle Hess at (907) 465-4984 <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhall/>

REACH OUT NOW NATIONAL TEACH-IN

What is a Teach-In?

Teach-Ins are an opportunity for prominent national, youth, State, and local leaders-using a research-based curriculum and other helpful materials provided by SAMHSA-to teach fifth and sixth graders, parents, teachers, and the community about the dangers of underage alcohol use and encourage young people to make healthy decisions.

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- Describe some of the effects of alcohol on the brain and body
- Identify effective alternatives to using alcohol
- Work in groups to develop an effective alcohol prevention message.

How can I hold a Teach-In?

Teach-Ins will be conducted nationwide during the week of April 3-7, 2006, the first week of Alcohol Awareness Month. If you would like to hold a Teach-In, please [sign up](#) using our online form. We will help you plan a local Teach-In event by providing the lesson plan, a media kit and technical assistance package, and any technical assistance you may need. Already signed up?

Why is it important?

According to SAMHSA's 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, about 10.8 million youth ages 12-20 (nearly 30 percent) reported using alcohol at least once in the month prior to the survey. A survey of sixth-grade students found that over half said it would be easy for someone their age to get alcohol at a party.

Research shows that more than 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 15 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. For all these reasons, fifth and sixth grade are not too early to begin sending clear messages about underage drinking. Teach-ins are meant to further alert children, parents, and teachers about the dangers of underage alcohol use, and to reinforce the messages in these school-based materials.

<http://www.teachin.samhsa.gov/>

RESOURCES

Project Northland – recommended as an exemplary Safe, Disciplined, and Drug-Free Schools program

Project Northland is a research-based, multilevel, multiyear alcohol use prevention program for students in grades six through eighth. Its goals are to delay the age when young people begin drinking, to reduce alcohol use among those who have already tried drinking, and to limit the number of alcohol-related problems among youths. The program addresses both individual behavioral change and environmental change through student participation and experiential learning at home and in peer-led classroom activities.

Results of Northland students – Research has found that 3 years later drinking is 50% lower among baseline non-drinkers, lower rates of cigarette and marijuana use and monthly and weekly drinking is 20-30% lower among the entire sample.

For further information contact: Kay Provine, Project Northland at 1-800-328-9000, ext. 4009 or kprovine@hazelden.org

Underage drinking can have serious consequences. You can protect your children from the risks associated with drinking by maintaining open communication and expressing a clear, consistent message about alcohol. Building a close relationship with your kids will make it easier for them to come to you for help in making decisions that impact their health and well-being. For downloadable resources about “what to know, what to say, and what to do” visit the website at:

<http://www.family.samhsa.gov/stop/default.aspx>

Though many parents consider underage drinking inevitable, it is not an issue that should be dismissed so easily. Research shows that parents of teens generally underestimate the extent of underage drinking and its possible short and long-term consequences. Creating a sense of urgency in parents to discuss the subject with their children early is one way to help curb the use of alcohol among underage youth. For more information on prevention visit the Ad Council’s website at:

http://www.adcouncil.org/issues/underage_drinking/

To get more information of how to prevent underage drinking please visit www.stopalcoholabuse.gov

Visit www.foryourchild.org for more information about how to identify underage drinking and how to discuss it with your children.

For more information about preventing underage drinking, drunk driving, and alcohol abuse visit [Mothers Against Drunk Driving \(MADD\)](http://www.mothersagainstdrunkdriving.org).

Reach Out Now – Teach In Materials

Click here for Lesson Plans, Activities, Media Kits and more!

<http://www.teachin.samhsa.gov/materials/>

PREVENTION CURRICULUM Early Decisions: Addressing Alcohol and its Effects on the Unborn Child This FASD prevention curriculum integrates science, health, and social studies into five teaching units. These teaching units include lesson plans, worksheets, supplemental activities, PowerPoint presentations, additional resources, optional overheads, and a 14-minute video. They are available to middle schools, high schools, and other educational and health care settings. Price: FREE for AK residents, \$75/\$125 for non-AK resident

For more information about RurAL CAP’s Early Decisions Project or to request materials, contact Gail Schiemann (gschiemann@ruralcap.com). Phone (907) 279-2511x344 or toll free in Alaska 1-800-478-7227



Compelling Statistics

Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21. (The NSDUH Report 2004)

Alaska ranks #1 in the nation in alcohol related mortality rates. (State of Alaska Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Annual Report, 2000)

Enough alcohol was sold in the fiscal year 1999 to provide every man, woman, and child with over 500 alcohol drinks (30% of Alaskans don't drink at all) (Alaska Dept. of Revenue)

Alaska has the highest known prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in the nation. (MMWR May 2002)

The earlier children begin drinking and more they drink, the greater the risk of developing health issues or alcohol dependency. With each year delay in the start of alcohol consumption, an adolescent is 14% less likely to become alcohol dependant. Parents and other caregivers need to be able to identify the signs of a drinking problem, and learn how to talk to kids about alcohol. (Grant and Dawson, J. Substance Abuse 1998)

The Department of Education & Early Development has a Lending Library for FASD related materials. Our lending library consists of several videos, books, and curriculum that are available for the public to borrow. See our website for a list of resources:

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/fasd/lendinglibrary.html>

Please contact Sarah Lampert to check out materials, sarah_lampert@eed.state.ak.us

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder E-Learning Module

The Department of Education & Early Development has developed web-based, interactive FASD e-learning module to support Alaska’s paraprofessionals, teachers, and parents. The learner will fulfill the requirements of the Binkley Law mandating drug and alcohol related disabilities training for new educators, learn what fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are, learn the commonly associated physical and mental characteristics, understand how FASD affects learning and behavior, and learn how to develop successful interventions and accommodations. To register for this free e-learning module please contact: Cynthia Scott (907) 465-2304; cynthia_scott@eed.state.ak.us