



Parents Are Heroes

A Newsletter of the Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) Program

Newsletter Date

October 2008

In this issue:

*Reduced AOD Use Leads to Reduced Dangerous Behavior

- Drunk Driving Down 55%
- Unwanted Sex Down 44%
- Fights Down 40%
- Trouble with Police Down 30%

*Who Provides Alcohol to Teens? Where Do Teens Drink?

Did You Know?

Notice: MSA Theatre Troupe forming.
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About half of 12 – 17 year olds leave home to hang out with friends on school nights. 50 percent of those who come home after 10:00 p.m. say that drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana or other drug use occurred.
<http://www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/templates/PressReleases.aspx?articleid=533&zonedid=66>

National Survey --Teen Alcohol Preferences:

- 29 % said liquor mixed with cola or something sweet;
- 16 % said wine
- 16% said beer
- 13% said straight liquor.

www.casacolumbia.org/absolutenm/templates/PressReleases.aspx?articleid=533&zonedid=66

Can MSA Prevention Programs Reduce Dangerous Consequences of Alcohol and Other Drug Use?

The MSA Program at local high schools has proved that it is possible to reduce students' use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs (see the August 2008 Edition at www.alertlabs.org). But what about the *consequences* of AOD use? Do kids who stop using, or reduce their use, find themselves consequence-free? The answer is “Yes” for most of those who stop, and “Maybe” for those who continue but use less or less often.

As a result of reducing the numbers of students who drink and use tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs between 2006 and 2008, the MSA program has recorded significant decreases in the more violent and dangerous consequences of AOD use:

- **Driving under the influence decreased by 55%.**
- **Experiencing unwanted sex or sexual contact decreased by 44%.**
- **Getting into fights or arguments decreased by 40%.**
- **Getting into trouble with the police decreased by 30%.**

However, academic consequences continue or even increase for students who are injuring their brains by heavy consumption. For instance, students reported that as a result of using AOD they experienced the following consequences at about the same or even increased levels between 2006 and 2008:

Academic Consequences reported by students using AOD	2006 Percent of all Drinkers	2008 Percent of all Drinkers	Percent of Heavy Drinkers who experienced the consequence*
1. Performed poorly on a test or project	5.5%	12.1%	44.9%
2. Turned in late papers, missed a test or failed to study	16.4%	15.5%	59.4%
3. Missed school	13.6%	17.0%	62.3%

*Note that the heavy drinkers experienced these consequences at much higher levels than did more moderate drinkers.

Thus, students who drink, especially those who drink heavily, and use other drugs, miss school, experience serious academic problems: 41 percent of all academic problems stem from alcohol abuse and 28 percent of the students who drop out of school. In general, these are not “poor students.” They are victims of addictive drugs and the withdrawal symptoms that attack the user throughout the school day resulting in cravings, irritability, distraction, fatigue, and inability to concentrate or remember new information.

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An AMA poll of teens 12-18 found that one third of girls had already tried *alcopops* (like “hard lemonade”), making it their drink of choice and girls reported drinking all alcohol products more than boys.

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/3557.html>

Risk of Suicide: those who begin drinking in their early teens are three times more likely than non-drinking peers to attempt suicide. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age. Young drinkers also are more likely to be victims of dating and peer violence.

<http://www.pire.org/detail2.asp?core=38160&cms=179>

What/Who is MSA? The MSA Project is Sponsored by the Kent County SA Prevention Leadership Coalition and Implemented by the ALERT Labs (Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training) Group.* MSA is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through SAMHSA's “Drug Free Communities Support Program:” see www.alertlabs.org

To send us Questions, Suggestions, and Comments , click on info@alertlabs.org

They Know Not What They Do

Nationally, only about 25% of kids aged 12 – 20 used alcohol in the last month, but 80% of them did not purchase or pay for alcohol. Of this group, about 37% got it from an unrelated adult, 21% from another teen, and 20% got it from a parent, guardian, or other adult family member; 85% of them drank at their own or a friend’s home (The NSDUH Report: Underage Alcohol Use: Where Do Young People Drink?).

Most parents would not knowingly give lead paint chips or toys coated with lead paint to their young children; they know lead causes brain damage. But too many parents or older friends or siblings are willing to give alcohol to teens, because *they don’t know that alcohol and other addictive drugs also cause brain damage* and that the damage is especially severe for teenagers. In fact, one drink for a child under 21 is equivalent to two drinks for an adult (see *A Parent’s Guide to the Teen Brain* at www.drugfree.org/Parent/ and www.drugfree.org/TeenBrain/science/index.html)

Among the effects of alcohol on the developing brain is a kind of “social retardation.” To put it simply, if you want your child to continue to act like a 14-year old into his/her 20’s and beyond, just give that child alcohol. Teens who begin drinking early find it almost impossible to really grow up – and if they continue to drink or use other drugs, they can remain immature into their 40’s and beyond. This effect, combined with alcohol’s retardation of teens’ ability to learn, to integrate new information with old, often leads to an adult who is a selfish, poorly educated, problem drinker/addict who is unable to achieve his/her potential in life.

Please be sure your liquor and medicine cabinets are locked or locked away where they cannot tempt young children and teens. And make sure older siblings, cousins, family friends, etc. know how strongly you disapprove of giving alcohol or other addictive drugs, including nicotine and “borrowed” prescriptions, to your children.

Did You Know

Alcohol use begins in Middle School: National figures reveal that 17% of kids have tried it *by the start of the 6th grade* and more than twice as many, 41%, *by the end of the 8th grade*. Parents **need to consider their positions as role models** at the crucial time when their middle school children are likely to have their first serious encounters with alcohol. [Study Highlights Important Role of Parents in Underage Drinking Prevention.](#)

SAMHSA's 2006 National Survey on Drug Use & Health reveals that

- Over 75% of Americans aged 12 – 20 did NOT drink alcohol last month.
- 75% of persons aged 18 – 20 did NOT drive under the influence of alcohol in the past 12 months. <http://oas.samhsa.gov/p0000016.htm>

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