



Fall 2008 Issue

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**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
FOR
2008/2009 MEETINGS**

NOVEMBER 20

DECEMBER 18

JANUARY 24

**8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.
District 207 Admin. Board
Room
(at Maine South High School)
1131 S. Dec Rd., Park Ridge**

Member of:



Maine Source

Mission: A collaborative community effort to increase overall community capacity for advocacy, education, guidance, and resources for families to promote drug and alcohol-free youth

Research and the Legal Drinking Age: Why a Lower Age Means Higher Risk

In recent months, some college administrators have taken a turn down a dubious path, questioning in the media whether it would really be so bad if drinking-age limits were given a little benign neglect on campus. MCYAF's position is it would be plenty bad, based on an array of reputable research. The fact is that, when many young people drink alcohol, they often drink heavily, putting themselves and those around them at risk. Some well-meaning adults have conjectured that relaxing the drinking age would make it easier for teens to drink moderately when they wanted to, and therefore reduce the "get it while you can" mentality that encourages binge drinking, the most dangerous kind.

"Challenges like this are why MCYAF partners are committed to relying on evidence-based solutions," says Director Margaret Polovchak. "What we think may occur based on how we think things were in the 'good old days,' and what we think is a cause-and-effect relationship, may not be supported by scientific evidence. We certainly sympathize with college administrators in their uphill battle against underage drinking, but the dangers to students are simply too well documented to ignore."

It's important to recall that laws raising the drinking age were not passed as the result of pressure from moralists, but from insurance companies, medical professionals and others who had documented evidence of the role alcohol plays in car accidents and other

dangers to public health and safety.

Research shows how dangerous alcohol can be to college students aged 18 and up makes an even more compelling case for keeping alcohol from younger teens. **Here are some of the most significant research findings on underage drinking and the minimum legal drinking age.**

"Research shows minimum legal drinking age laws have decreased consumption by those under age 21, decreased traffic crashes and fatalities, and decreased suicide."

Despite the popular belief that lowering the drinking age would lead to more responsible alcohol consumption among young people, research indicates that the legal drinking age of 21 has had positive effects on health and safety.

Laws have been enacted in all 50 states to restrict the use of alcohol by those under 21, but underage drinking remains widespread and is associated with a wide range of negative consequences. The number of young people who drink and the way they drink results in harm to self and others.

Cont'd on pg. 2

Survey Shows Teens Trust Parents for the Facts

Parents are still #1! That's the heartening news from our most recent Maine Township Student Survey. In it, teens ranked parents as their #1 most believable source of information.

We surveyed Maine Township youth to gain a clearer picture of underage drinking in our community. A total of 6,827 sixth-, eighth-, tenth- and twelfth-grade students were given the survey during the 2007-2008 school year. We'll be sharing the valuable information with you so you can be part of the campaign to keep Maine Township youth drug free, one family at a time.

With teens of any age, it's important to have regular conversations about your expectations that they refrain from using, along with the consequences for them if they do.

"Parents who send a clear message of 'no drug use' are setting expectations for the kids, and this actually will help their kids stay away from drugs, because most teens don't want to disappoint their families," says Amelie Ramirez, a doctor of public health and a drug-prevention specialist.

Based on data gathered from students in Maine Township last school year, **the majority of students said that they see their parents as the greatest deterrent to their drinking alcohol.**

We know a majority of Maine Township parents have spoken to their teens because students have told us so. **Sixty-five percent (65%) of eighth-graders, 66 percent of tenth-graders, and 61 percent of twelfth-graders said that their parent/guardian had talked to them about not using alcohol.**

While most Maine Township parents are having the conversations, the report indicates that we need to get more parents to do so.

As parents, it is sometimes challenging for us to know **HOW** to have these conversations. Get help on how to start from The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's Behavior Change Expert Panel (www.theantidrug.com). The site also offers these practical tips:

Legal Drinking Age (cont'd from pg. 1)

This harm includes: risky sexual behavior; physical and sexual assaults; potential harmful effects on the developing brain; problems in school, at work, and with the legal system; various types of injury; car crashes; homicide and suicide; and death from alcohol poisoning.

Despite uneven enforcement and a culture that remains relatively tolerant of teen drinking, minimum legal drinking age laws *have* had positive effects on health and safety. Research shows minimum legal drinking age laws have decreased consumption by those under age 21, decreased traffic crashes and fatalities, and decreased suicide.

Minimum legal drinking ages vary by country but underage drinking is a problem around the world. While it has been suggested that lower legal drinking ages and different cultural norms in other countries (e.g. France and Italy) may lead to better outcomes, survey data indicate this is generally not the case.

Data from the 2003 European School Survey Project

Survey Shows Teens Trust Parents (cont'd from pg. 1)

Be absolutely clear with your kids that you don't want them using drugs. Ever. Anywhere. Don't leave room for interpretation. And talk often -- not just a couple of times a year -- about the dangers and results of drug and alcohol abuse.

Be a better listener. Ask questions - and encourage teens to ask you questions, too. Paraphrase what your teen says back to be sure you are hearing what he said. Ask for her input about family decisions. Showing your willingness to listen will make your teen feel more comfortable about opening up to you.

Give honest answers. Don't make up what you don't know; offer to find out. If asked whether you've ever taken drugs, let them know what's important: That you don't want them using drugs. Visit www.theantidrug.com for an easy-to-use guide to drugs and their effects.

Use TV reports, anti-drug commercials, or school discussions about drugs to help you introduce the subject in a natural, unforced way. Get more specifics from www.theantidrug.com on making the best use of teachable moments with your teen.

Don't react in a way that will cut off further discussion. If your teen makes statements that challenge or

on Alcohol and Drugs (ESPAD) show that rates of binge drinking (five drinks or more in a row) and drunkenness among 15-16 year old students in the United States, France, and Italy are similar, with the United States lower on some measures and France and Italy lower on others.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and other Federal agencies continue to conduct and support research on how best to address underage drinking. In addition, adults in communities across the country are wrestling with how to change the culture around underage drinking.

If you would like the resources referenced in this article that can provide you with additional information and lots of statistics, please contact MCYAF at mcyafkim@yahoo.com. Then, when people suggest that lower drinking ages in Europe mean fewer teen drinking problems...or that the risks to health and safety aren't that significant...or that it's not worth the trouble to enforce the laws...you can direct them to the facts!

shock you, turn them into a calm discussion of why your teen thinks people use drugs, or whether the effect is worth the risk.

Role-play with your teen and practice ways to refuse drugs in different situations. Acknowledge how tough these moments can be, and find tips and scripts for role-playing at www.theantidrug.com.

Just as important, be a good role model, says Dr. Amelie Ramirez, a doctor of public health and a drug-prevention specialist. Be a day-to-day example of your value system, and know there is no such thing as "do as I say, not as I do" when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. If you use these substances to cope with crises or everyday stress as an adult, you can't expect your child to take your advice on finding better ways to live. Seek professional help for yourself if necessary, so you can be there for your child. Even if you yourself don't set the wrong example, watch how you react to those who do. If you laugh at a drunk or stoned person in a movie, what does that tell your child?

Bottom line: Keep talking with your teen about why you don't want him or her to use alcohol and other drugs. Teens may not tell you, but they've told us the truth: They are listening to you!



Here's to a Healthy School Start

Students at Maine East, Maine South and Maine West were welcomed back to school this fall with a message from MCYAF. A large banner was displayed at each school sharing our high school students' top three preferred ways to stay healthy. These ways are exercising, eating healthfully, and playing sports. Not coincidentally, these are also three good ways to fight stress.

This information was obtained from students in April 2008 during a lunchroom survey in which more than 450 students participated. Students at all three high schools responded with the same top three answers.

This message is part of the social norms marketing project which promotes the positive healthy choices most Maine Township High School students are making.

We appreciate your interest in the fight to protect our youth and provide them the quality of life they deserve. If you are interested in making a financial or in-kind donation or supporting our efforts by volunteering your time and talent, please contact us. You can visit us at www.mcyaf.com

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