



Using Social Norms Approach to Prevent Drug Use

The recent Monitoring the Future Survey showed that national drug use among teens is actually on the decline, but you wouldn't know it by talking to teens. In fact, experts say most teens overestimate how popular alcohol and other drugs are among youth, leading them to falsely believe that "everyone is doing it." Research also shows that teens are largely influenced by peer norms and so when the peer norm is exaggerated and alcohol or drug use is overestimated, use increases. That's why the a Community Coalition in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. decided to implement a social norms campaign as one of their primary substance abuse prevention strategies.

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Why High School Seniors Drink: It's Not Just About Partying, Study Shows

When high school seniors drink, partying isn't their only purpose, a new teen drinking study shows. The study, published in *Prevention Science*, included more than 1,800 U.S. high school seniors in the class of 2004 who admitted underage drinking. The seniors completed a survey about their drinking. The survey included a list of reasons for drinking; the students chose all of the reasons that applied to them. The top reason for their drinking was to have a good time. But there were other motivators. The students fell into four groups, based on their motivation to drink: Experimenters, Thrill Seekers, Relaxers, and Multi-Reasoners.

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FOCUS ON ALCOHOL AND FAMILY LIFE

When looking at prevention strategies in a community it is important to focus on family life. Families are the number one influence over a youth's decision about whether or not to use alcohol or other drugs. Unfortunately many parents don't realize the influence they can have over their children's or may not know the basic facts about alcohol or how to communicate or may not know the local resources that exist to help focus on the importance of family in prevention.

FACTS

- Research suggests that children are less likely to drink when their parents are involved in their lives and when both parents and children report feeling close to each other (Hawkins, David. et al. 1997)
- Adolescents drink less and have fewer alcohol-related problems when their parents discipline them consistently and set clear expectations about drinking (Ibid)
- Parents' drinking behaviors and favorable attitudes about drinking have been associated with adolescents' initiating and continuing alcohol use (Andrews, J., et al. 1993)

What to do:

Hold a *Family Guide to Preventing Substance Use* Workshop and/or Parent Networking Forums on what parents can do to prevent substance use. The workshop can include:

- Local Data on Youth Alcohol and Drug Use
- Warning signs and Symptoms of substance use
- Useful tips for parents
- How to create a community network of parents to ensure safe homes and safe parties
- Handouts and other resources for parents
- Include *Parent Empowerment Brain Science* lessons/materials to guide parents in talking with their children about the effects drugs/alcohol has on the brain