



Parents Are Heroes

Preventing Underage Use of Alcohol

A Drug-Free Communities Project. TOGETHER! is grateful to Nancy Harper and ALERT Labs for sharing their information and expertise with Thurston County. *Parents Are Heroes* is part of the Kent County, Michigan, Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) project.

April Edition 2009

In this issue:

- What to do if your kids are using Alcohol
- Restorative Practices in correction and prevention
- Did You Know?
- What's going on around the county and in the nation?

Questions, Suggestions, Comments? click on

info@alertlabs.org or

dhuning@thurstontogether.org

Quick Facts:

0.10 – 0.125 BAC: Significant impairment of motor coordination and loss of good judgment.
<http://www.ou.edu/oupd/bac.htm>

GRADES: Binge drinking causes about a 1/3 decrease in overall grades:
http://www.bhs.umn.edu/healthdata/results/PressRelease_BoyntonOct2008.pdf

Links to web sites about talking to children:

www.talkingwithkids.org/drugs.html
<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/alcohol.html>
www.theantidrug.com/advice/articles_alktokids.html
www.starttalkingnow.org

Know Your Family History. The genetic blueprint inherited from our parents/grandparents accounts for an estimated 40–50% of a one's risk of developing AOD problems. The remaining 50-60% comes from consuming an addictive substance. To become addicted, one in this group has only to “experiment” with smoking or drinking. There is NO FREE TRIAL for descendants of addicts/alcoholics. Abstinence is the only “cure”.

Give/Get Help for Your Children if You Know They Have Been Using Alcohol or Other Drugs

A Real Story: Their 16-year old daughter, Catherine, was a straight-A student and an athlete. On Tuesday night, she told her parents she was going out to study with a friend and would be back in less than two hours. She was back as promised after only 90-minutes. But, her Dad smelled alcohol on her and asked if she had been drinking. She mumbled something like “of course not” and expressed anger at being confronted.

What should her parents do?

Given her apparent impairment and negative attitude, the best next step is to express gratitude that she has come home and not had an accident; tell her you love her, and put/send her to bed. You can then plan a conversation for the next morning that will enable you to find out what happened, to correct her, and to prevent another occurrence.

MSA's Philosophy of Prevention is “Restorative”

Number 1: Do no harm. Preventing/Correcting dangerous behavior through physical punishment or threats is harmful. Ignoring dangerous behavior (danger to self and danger to others) is harmful. Accepting dangerous behavior as inevitable (all teens experiment with alcohol—isn't it a right of passage?) is harmful. Accusing individuals of dangerous behavior because of group affiliation (teenagers) or without definitive evidence is harmful.

Number 2: Repair the harm already done. Restore the individual and her social relationships to a healthy level in order to strengthen them.

Number 3: Prevent future harm. Develop with the individual a plan that will eliminate or reduce occurrences of the dangerous behavior.

Catherine's Case: Conversation about her drinking had to wait until morning –when her hangover (caused by withdrawal from alcohol) will make her more amenable. No one in an altered state can converse or interact rationally, and teens have difficulty with reasoning,

Watch for Symptoms of Poisoning/Overdose: If the child cannot be roused to consciousness after being put to bed, experiences vomiting during sleep, seizures, or slow or irregular breathing (fewer than 8 breaths per minute or 10 seconds or more between breaths), low body temperature, blue skin or lips, and unusual paleness, **CALL 911.**

judgment, memory, empathy, etc., even when sober because of their developing (“unfinished”) brains. However, it is important to monitor a child who goes to sleep while intoxicated or high. **Blood Alcohol Levels can increase while they sleep.** It is crucial to prevent injury from alcohol poisoning, and/or overdose of other drugs, and especially when there's a chance the two may be combined..

What's Going On?...

April is Alcohol Awareness Month.

TOGETHER! is working with local high schools throughout the month, raising awareness about alcohol use among teens.

Have you heard the buzz around "Support 21"? Get the facts from Alcohol News You Can Use: <http://freshstory.org/blog/freshstory.php?p=65&more=1&c=1&tb=1&pb=1#more65>

For more than two decades, car crashes have been the number one killer of teens (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Find out how you can make a difference: SpeakUpOrElse.com

Do you believe that some alcohol is less "potent" than others? Do your kids??? Read here to understand how it's all about size...

<http://www.1whome.cn/index.php/2009/03/07/arsenic-poisoning-doctor-blog-how-much-alcohol-is-in-your-drink/>

Have you ever said "But I'm only a 'social host'?" Read on, be informed, and keep our kids safe...

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=66.44.270>

Are you the parent of a Middle Schooler? This may surprise you...it may not be local, but the message is universal...

<http://3/www.nbc29.com/global/story.asp?s=10105042>

Pay attention to what your kids are wearing suggests a recent study on youth and alcohol-branded merchandise...

<http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/short/163/3/211>

For more information on ALERT Labs Group (Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training), please visit their website:

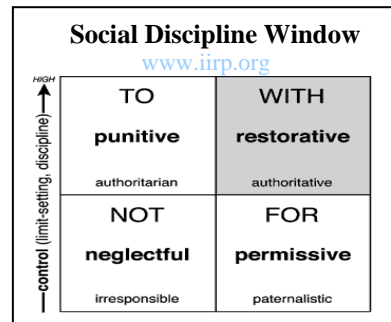
www.alertlabs.org

And visit TOGETHER! at

www.thurstontgether.org

Restore family relationships/ Prevent Reoccurrences:

Whether or not medical intervention is necessary, parental intervention will be necessary. After a child has recovered from intoxication, it is important for parents to talk **WITH** him/her. The **Social Discipline Window** shown below provides a good guide to corrective conversation. Do not take total control by talking **TO** them ("what you did was dangerous, you're grounded") or forfeit control ("I'm sure you'll never do it again") or talk **FOR** them (I know you didn't mean to get drunk").



Talking *with* the child begins with you modeling the restorative behavior you want: "I am so grateful that you were not injured last night. I love you and I want to help you deal with what happened..." Then ask them to **Describe** when, where, how they drank. (Do not allow them to argue about whether or not they drank or whether it was OK for them to drink. You know there was drinking, and you have talked with them about why they must not do so until they are at least

21). **Encourage** your son or daughter to tell you how they feel about their actions. **Demonstrate** your interest in understanding what happened from their perspective and express supportive emotions. Focus on using "I feel..." statements or mirroring: "I hear you saying..."

Let's suppose your daughter admits to drinking four shots of vodka at a friend's house ("binging"). For a 120 pound female, that means her blood alcohol level/concentration (BAL or BAC) was about .13, while the legal intoxication level is .08. That means she is "eligible for an MIP and a DUI if she drives."

Share positive emotions. Try not to express anger-rage, fear-terror, distress-anguish, disgust, or rejection. Above all, try not to **shame*** her or let her take on too much shame ("beat herself up"). Gently remind her that you are concerned she may experience the consequences of alcohol use (be prepared for the inevitable "I'll be fine!").** You will need make clear that she must make amends for her behavior, but make a plan. **Ask her** how she can do so, how she can restore your trust, protect her own health, and avoid harming innocent others (e.g., driving impaired, encouraging her friends to drink through her example), etc. Discuss *with* her.

Seek Professional help: In spite of your best efforts, your child may not take your concern as seriously as is warranted. Also, she may lie about how often/how much she has drank. Therefore, it is important to arrange for her to see a Substance Use Disorders (SUD) professional who focuses on adolescents. Many of the high schools in Thurston County have Prevention Specialists available for any enrolled student to consult. If this is not an option, try calling 211 between 8a.m. and 5p.m., Mon.-Fri. You may tell them what you're looking for and if one is available, they will find a referral source.

Did You Know?

***Shaming** usually leads to one or more of the following reactions:

- *Withdrawal*—isolating oneself, running and hiding
- *Attack self*—self put-down, masochism
- *Avoidance*—denial, using more AOD, distraction through thrill seeking
- *Attack others*—turning the tables, lashing out verbally/physically, blaming others

****A Host of Immediate and Long-Term Adverse Outcomes to Underage Drinking:** obesity and high blood pressure, headaches, and concentration difficulties that leads to trouble learning and remembering. In addition to *poor academic achievement*, binge drinking has led to *fighting with friends and family, unwanted and unprotected sexual activity, traffic crashes, heart disease, cancers, strokes, etc.*

The ALERT Labs Group: *Project Director, Nancy L. Harper, Ph.D., Dean of Social Sciences and Professor Communication(ret.), Director, ALERT Labs Consulting; Project Coordinator, Shannon D. Welsh, M.Ed., Welsh Advertising; Project Evaluator, Donald (Tex) Bryant, M.S. & M.Ed., Director of Bryant Statistical Consulting, STARR Facilitator for screening and intervention, Geoffery L. Stevens, LMSW, Alternative Behavioral Health Services; Project Theatre Coordinator, Carla Jackson, Certified in Secondary Education and Peer Mentoring/Listening*