



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.

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TOGETHER!

Youth Violence, Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug Prevention

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Questions, Suggestions, Comments? click on

info@alertlabs.org or

dhuning@thurstontogether.org

Quick Facts:

One of the fastest, most effective ways to Reduce Underage Drinking and Relieve Taxpayers of Health Costs Caused by Heavy Alcohol Use

Research shows raising taxes and price of alcohol leads to decrease in consumption by youth, and reduces alcohol-related deaths and illness. Find out how Washington ranks against the rest of the US, and what you can do to get involved!

Click here: [WA Alcohol taxes](#)

Social Norms:

“With repeated exposure to a variety of positive, data based messages, the misperceptions that help to sustain problem behavior are corrected, and the population begins to adhere to a more accurately perceived norm of health and safety.” Find out more:

Click here: [Social Norms Institute](#)

Links to web sites about talking to children:

[Children NOW](#)

[Time to Talk](#)

[Kid's Health: Kids and Alcohol](#)

[Parents: The AntiDrug](#)

[WA-RUaD: Start Talking Now](#)

NOTICE: You may have noticed in last month's issue of *Parents are Heroes*, the story about “Catherine’s Case”, wherein it was stated in a paragraph highlighted in blue “*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 0.13, while the legal intoxication level is .08. That means she is “eligible for an MIP and a DUI if she drives.”*”

We would like to point out that this story originated from Michigan. Washington State has a zero tolerance policy, and the legal intoxication level for anyone under the age of 21 is a BAC of 0.02. For more information, please refer to this website:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=46.61.503> Thanks to one of our readers at DASA (Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse) for highlighting this!

The Most Effective Way to Prevent Kids from Using Marijuana (and Other Illicit Drugs) is to Prevent Them from Starting to Use Alcohol and Cigarettes

MOST students in the Thurston County schools surveyed on the Fall, 2008 Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) do NOT use alcohol (77%), tobacco (88%), marijuana (86%), prescription, inhalant, and illegal drugs (excluding marijuana) (95%)**

****8, 10, 12 only. 30-day use questions in these areas are not asked of Grd 6)**

If your teens are a part of the majority who do not use alcohol or tobacco, take the opportunity to tell them how proud you are of their wise decisions.

However, IF you know that your son or daughter has begun to smoke cigarettes or has used alcohol, you should also know that the next likely step is use of marijuana. And, about half of teens who use marijuana are likely to start using other illicit drugs.

IF you do not know whether your teen uses alcohol, cigarettes or marijuana, you may find the “9 warning signs of early marijuana use” helpful in identifying your child’s risk level. Those are: *Cigarette and/or Alcohol use before 15, 20 or more unexcused absences, arrests for drugs/alcohol, the opinions that smoking marijuana and/or cigarettes is safe, and the belief that a parent thinks smoking cigarettes and/or marijuana is okay.* **NOTE:** *The Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) does not ask specific questions about arrest as a result of drugs or alcohol and uses ‘11 or more’ as a benchmark for absenteeism. The results below are those that come as close as possible to matching the nine warning signs, as well as including other behaviors that are, at the least, red flags that a problem may exist. Those factors included in the 9 warning signs are highlighted in blue.*

Thurston County HYS research, for **Grade 6 and 8**, shows that at a minimum, **54 students** in the high schools surveyed exhibit **one** or more of the signs. Grade 10 is used as a benchmark because most kids turn 15 by or in Grade 10. Research shows that kids who start drinking before the age of 15 are more likely to begin using other drugs, and are five times more likely to become alcohol dependent later in life.

Parents-How Often are You Talking

to Your Kids? The latest research available suggests less and less...
Click here: Talk!

EVEN THOUGH, research also says when you DO talk, they listen!
Click here: They Listen!

What's Going On?....

In the foothills of Mt. Rainier, as a part of April's *Alcohol Awareness Month*, seniors at Rainier High School are making a positive footprint for their peers to learn from and remember that their choices have consequences with the "Every 15 Minutes" program. Find out more:

Click here: Every 15 Minutes

Police arrest 59 in weekend underage drinking patrol in Tacoma. It's only 6 degrees of separation... Read more~

Click here: Tacoma

Prom and Grad Nights are fast approaching. The Liquor Control Board has some great advice on the best things to say and do:s
Click here: Avoid Prom/Grad nightmares...

Talk to your kids early. Surgeon General warns... Don't wait until middle school to talk to your kids about drinking...

Click here: SurgeonGeneral

One million people have tested themselves... See how you measure up! (Your drinking, that is...)

Click here: JoinTogether-MeasureUp

Want an educational and FUN website to learn from with and about your kids and ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs)? Cool!

Click here: NIDA for Teens

Behaviors

(Before Grade 10, e.g. Grds 6&8)

- Alcohol use = **36%**
- Cigarette use = **10%**
- Drug arrests = not available
- Alcohol arrests = not available
- Two or more physical fights in the last 12 months = **20%**
- Considered suicide in the last 12 months (**Grd 8 only**) = **16.1%**
- Attempted suicide one or more times in the last 12 months (**Grd 8 only**) = **9.9%**
- **20 or more unexcused absences = not available**
- 11 or more unexcused school absences (skipping or 'cutting') in last 4 weeks = **0.7%**
- One or more unexcused absences (skipping or 'cutting') in the last 4 weeks = **18%**
- Teachers never or rarely praise me when I work hard in school = **43.1%**

Misperceptions/Attitudes/Opinions

(Before Grade 10, e.g. Grds 6&8)

- No risk to marijuana use once or twice a week = **6%**
- No risk to smoking 1 or more pks/day = **2.8%**
- Adults in my neighborhood think it's not wrong at all to smoke marijuana = **2%**
- Adults in my neighborhood think it's not wrong at all to smoke cigarettes = **3.4%**
- Use of drugs (no distinction) is not risky = **32.5%**

These students, at a minimum, are at risk

517 students share the risk factors of cigarette AND alcohol use.

69 students (Grd 8 only) share the risk factors of tolerant parental attitudes toward alcohol AND tobacco use.

258 students share the opinion that drinking at least 'once or twice a month' AND smoking a pack or more a day is 'possibly not risky'.

ALSO, 1,428 students are AT RISK for serious alcohol or other drug problems/addiction because they began to drink prior to age 15.

The more warning signs exhibited by a student, the greater the likelihood the student has used marijuana before the age of 15, and the more likely that the student has recently used marijuana (cesar.umd.edu/). *These warning signs, and other symptoms and behaviors apply to many other youth issues. Please don't assume--the only way to know for sure is to talk to your child!*

If your teen(s) are using alcohol or cigarettes, it is well worth it for you to make sure that they get professional help to stop before they take the next steps. Help for families and teens is available from a variety of resources, including school counselors and local counseling centers.

- **TWO CRISIS LINES** for immediate assistance, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Crisis Clinic of Thurston-Mason County, **586-2800**
Teen Crisis Line, **586-2777**
- *Parent Resource Guide of Thurston County* published by TOGETHER!
[click here for English](#), and [click here for Spanish version](#).
- [Click here](#) for additional resources that you may find helpful, both in and out of a crisis (the list does include more than Mason County, even though that is the heading).

Public Health Epidemic

Underage drinking has been labeled an "epidemic," for the past 10+ years, but neither FEMA nor HHS has called a press conference to warn about the situation. Like the current H1N1 Flu epidemic, **underage drinking is communicable and can be deadly**. Alcohol is the underlying cause of the four most common causes of death to American teens. Nearly 1/3 of Americans report that alcohol use has created serious problems in their lives, and nearly 2/3 report that their family life has been disrupted by someone's alcohol use (www.nih.gov/news/pr/jul2007/niaaa-02.htm). If your kids hang out with others who drink or smoke, or who have progressed to the third stage, use of marijuana, they are in danger of becoming infected. ALERT Lab's research through their Making Sobriety Attractive (MSA) school program reveals that the main reason teens use alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs is because *they think all their peers use*.

Find more valuable tools and information, helping you as parents to help your kids make positive choices. A Parent's Guide to the Teen Brain, the Parent's Toolkit, understand teen culture with the Decoder, and more!!!
Click here: Parent Resource Center

Social Norms Campaign. At MSA schools, posters are placed in classrooms to tell the students that NOT USING is the norm---that if they don't drink, smoke, or drug they are IN THE MAJORITY. When run properly, social norms campaigns have astounding results at colleges and high schools. For example, heavy episodic alcohol consumption went down by 20% over three years at *Western Washington University*. (Click here for study details.) ALERT Labs Social Norms campaigns in *high schools* show reductions of 19% to 36% in consequences because of drinking (driving under the influence, being punished by a parent or guardian, getting in trouble with the police, and getting into a fight or argument) **after only one year of the campaign.** Percentages go up even further after 2 years of a campaign.

Parents can help their kids by rewarding them for doing the right thing. Please do your part to make sure your kids know that you are grateful that they are doing the right thing, and help them resist the "phantom peer pressure" resulting from misperceptions about widespread teen use created by advertising and entertainment programming. See more about this *Social Norms Campaign* and posters at www.alertlabs.org/media.



Extend a Hand...

If your teens' friends are drinking or smoking, do them, your child, and yourself a favor, and let their parents know about the risk. **Being offered marijuana is the 2nd major predictor of early use (after cigarettes and alcohol use) and of eventual major drug problems.**

Did You Know?

Regular marijuana smokers who abstain from marijuana use often experience symptoms of **withdrawal**, including *insomnia, depression, nightmares or strange dreams, anger, headaches.* ... **56% of Youths Who First Started Using Drugs** [other than alcohol and nicotine] in the past year began with marijuana; around 1/4 started with nonmedical use of prescription drugs. cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol18/18-15.pdf

MRI Brain Scans showed that patients given the active cannabis compound THC had **reduced function** in the inferior frontal cortex brain region. This area is associated with *controlling inappropriate emotional and behavioral responses to situations.*
cannabisnews.com/news/22/thread22932.shtml

Marijuana and Brain Damage – see www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPITs82wP2U

Marijuana causes the heart rate to increase, the mouth to become dry (commonly referred to as "cotton-mouth"), blood vessels in the eyes to expand (producing bloodshot eyes), damage to math and verbal skills, increased blood pressure and risk of heart attack, and increased risk of cancer and lung damage. The amount of carbon monoxide and tar inhaled by marijuana smokers is *three to five times greater than that inhaled by tobacco smokers.*

<http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/drugs/marijuana.asp#top>

ShotPaks Meant for Kids' Pockets? At Proms and Other Events? The maker of a line of alcoholic drinks in pocket-sized pouches continues to come under fire after making changes to websites that violated alcohol industry advertising standards. To express your displeasure at this project, go to <http://www.shotpakinc.com/home.html> and once 'inside' the website, click on "contacts" at the top right..

Academic Performance and Youth Substance Use. Youths who received grades of D or below last semester were more likely than those with higher grades to have used cigarettes, alcohol, or illicit drugs during the past month (oas.samhsa.gov).

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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