



# 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

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### Quick Facts:

- Fifty-seven percent of American teenagers ages 12 to 17 fall into the high (14 percent) or moderate (43 percent) substance-abuse risk categories.
- Today's kids are more concerned about drugs, tobacco, and alcohol than crime and violence.
- Drinking among teens that had dinner with the family 5-7 times a week dropped by 15%, compared to those joining in 0-2 family dinners.

*Click here: National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse.*

### 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

### If you need help:

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](#).



Federal, state, and local governments spend **over half a TRILLION dollars on "shoveling up"** the consequences of alcohol and other drug use—and **less than 2% of that on prevention & treatment.**

After three years of research, the first-ever report to assess the costs of alcohol, tobacco, prescription and illegal drug abuse illuminates a skewed picture of spending at all levels of the government. Compiled by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, their report shows that for every dollar spent (nationally), \$0.96 went to cover costs related to the *consequences* of substance abuse and addiction, which include systems involving justice, schools, health, child and family assistance, mental health and developmental disabilities, public safety, salaries, regulation, and compliance. (See JoinTogether's Review and a link to the full CASA report [here](#), or the NIDA InfoFacts report [here](#).)

Those of us working in the field of prevention are forced to ask **"What's wrong with this picture?"**



In Washington state, the numbers, while somewhat better than the national level, aren't anything to crow about. For every \$100.00 spent on substance abuse and addiction, Washington spends \$2.81 on prevention, treatment, and research, (or \$0.04 out of every dollar) on prevention and treatment, ranking 15<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states. Connecticut ranks highest, at \$10.39, while



Wisconsin is lowest at \$0.05. Average federal and state spending amounts to only \$2.35/per capita on prevention, treatment and research. [Click here](#) for the full 176-page CASA report: May, 2009 (available as a free download).

Additionally, Washington spends or receives:

- **Liquor store revenue: up 6.5% in the most recent budget year = \$322 MILLION in state revenue (Jan 27, 2009, The Olympian: Gregoire outlines alcohol revenue effort).**
- **On August 1, 2009, the markup on hard liquor pricing will increase from 39.2 percent to 51.9 percent, adding 12.7% to the Liquor Revolving Fund. A portion of this fund is earmarked for health care. (For more detail on the upcoming markup, [click here](#).)**

We, in prevention, know that investing in treatment alone has a 12 to 1 return, or for every dollar spent, there is a reduction in future 'burden' costs of \$12 (National Institute on Drug Abuse). For the 2005-2007 biennium, **Washington saved \$19.6 MILLION in medical expenses as a result of chemical dependency treatment** (WA State Dept. of Social & Health Services—*2008 Abuse Trends in WA state*).

## What's Going On?...

Stricter laws DO work in reducing fatalities....[click here](#).

A new, first-of-its-kind resource to help parents identify signs and symptoms of drug abuse, including videos, advice on 'getting ready' to talk, and setting enforceable limits. [Time To Act](#)

More than 1 in 10 kids live with a parent's substance abuse. [Reach out. Get help. Be a hero](#) ☺

In Chicago, alcohol advertising and ethnicity are partners. Look around...do you see the same connections in Thurston County? [These results may surprise you...](#) or not.

We know alcohol affects anyone's judgment. The ties between alcohol and teen suicide are frightening. [Click here](#).

Watch for these on a television near you! [Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign](#)

An insightful teenager talks about her personal experience with alcohol. Beware—there are some disturbing pictures on [this video...](#)

[For more information](#) on ALERT Labs Group (*Alcohol Laboratories for Education, Research, and Training*), please visit their website: [www.alertlabs.org](http://www.alertlabs.org) And visit TOGETHER! at [www.thurstontogether.org](http://www.thurstontogether.org)



The good news is that the vast majority of Thurston County youth do not engage in tobacco, alcohol, or other drug abuse ([See the May "Parents are Heroes" newsletter](#)). However, in the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey for Thurston County, 73 students in Grades 8, 10, and 12 reported a problem with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs severe enough they felt they needed counseling or treatment. Almost seven times that many, or **510 students from these same grades stated their school did not provide a counselor, intervention specialist, or other staff member to whom they could go for help.**

Yet, many of our elected officials don't realize how much alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs truly cost taxpayers, and how proportionately little is spent to save problems from exacerbating down the road (prevention, treatment and research). Maybe if they knew, they might do something. **You can tell them.** We ask that you alert your local, state, and federal representatives to the disparity in fund allocation and that prevention works!

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Teen Drinkers Face Greater Alcohol Risks as Adults – Need Prevention Programs

Adults who began drinking at age 16 or younger drove drunk, suffered unintentional injuries, and became dependent on alcohol at about twice the rate as those whose onset of drinking occurred at age 21 years or older. [Click here](#) for the abstract in Pediatrics, 5/2009.

Don't ask them to stop—they *won't*. Ask them to wait—they *might*. [Click here](#) for a decade+ of research on why...

### Higher Beer Taxes & 21 Drinking Age Reduce Traffic Deaths of Young People

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates drinking age laws save more than 900 lives a year in traffic fatalities alone. [Click here](#) for the abstract from Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research-March, 2007. Please make your local and state representatives aware of the significance of raising taxes on beer.

### Parents and Teens Differ in Their Views of Youth Concerns

Parents *underestimated* the importance of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs in the lives of teenagers. Twenty-eight percent of teens reported that *alcohol and other drugs* are the number one problem facing people their age, compared to only 17 percent of parents. For the complete National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse report, [click here](#).



### Depressed Teens at Higher Risk of Committing Suicide When Drinking

A new study finds the risk of suicide rises sharply in teens that drink when they are depressed. Risk also increased among those teens who never contemplated suicide previously...the findings, [here](#), and the results of the 2008 Thurston County Healthy Youth Survey *underscore the need for prevention and treatment*. **Last year, 469 Thurston County youth reportedly contemplated suicide, and 170 youth attempted suicide at least once.**

These numbers reflect what percentages of *youth currently using alcohol* have also thought about or attempted suicide.

Grade	Contemplated Suicide	Attempted Suicide
6	44% (22)	22% (11)
8	39.3% (143)	28.2% (60)
10	26.8% (167)	15.4% (55)
12	20.1 % (137)	12.0% (44)

**Perceptions of risk in drinking shift demographically between Grade 8 and Grade 10 in Thurston County.** Based on the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey, more Native American 8<sup>th</sup> graders than any other ethnic group believed drinking alcohol daily was "possibly NOT risky". By Grade 10, the majority of teens in that group were Caucasian, with Native American youth a close second.

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