

# 1998 Monthly Action Kit

Updated Summer 1998

# Binge Drinking On College Campuses

## ***JOIN TOGETHER***

441 Stuart St., 7th floor, Boston, MA 02116  
PHONE: 617-437-1500 FAX: 617-437-9394  
EMAIL: [info@jointogether.org](mailto:info@jointogether.org) WEB: [www.jointogether.org](http://www.jointogether.org)

## BINGE DRINKING ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

As college students head back to school, many of them will be affected by a serious problem: binge drinking. Today, nearly half of all college students binge drink. This drinking leads to a number of problems on campuses, such as violence, rapes, sexually transmitted diseases and suicides. And even though it is illegal for anyone under 21 to consume alcohol, many minors are getting served anyway. This is a pervasive problem not only for college communities but also for our nation's future leadership. We encourage you to raise public awareness about the risks associated with binge drinking. To help you do this, we have provided the following:

- ◆ A **Fact Sheet** that shows the scope of college drinking nationwide, as well as the problems that occur when students binge drink;
  - ◆ A **Resource List** of organizations you can contact for materials, ideas, and technical assistance to support your community's efforts to address the problems associated with binge drinking among college students;
  - ◆ **Finding the Local Angle**, a series of activities that can help you to define the scope of college drinking in your area and take action to help reduce the problem;
  - ◆ **What Students Can Do** and **What Campus Officials Can Do** both offer concrete steps to mobilize students and college officials to take action to alleviate the circumstances and consequences of binge drinking behaviors;
  - ◆ **What Others Have Done** presents a brief description of what other campuses and communities are doing to address binge drinking and its consequences;
  - ◆ A **Sample Op-Ed** your local newspaper can run to create awareness about the effects of heavy drinking and to encourage people to make smart choices.
- 

### THE FACT IS...

- ◆ Nearly half of all college students binge drink. (Binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks at a time for men, four or more drinks for women.) On a national scale, this includes approximately three million students (*Harvard School of Public Health. Binge drinking on American college campuses: A new look at an old problem. Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. August 1995.*
- ◆ In a nationwide survey, nearly half of all students (42 percent) reported binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row) during the last two weeks (*Core Institute, Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Student Health Program, Southern Illinois University. Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Use, Consequences, and Perception of the Campus Environment, Vol.4: 1992-1994, October 1996.*
- ◆ On campuses where binge drinking is rampant (where more than 70 percent of the student body binge drinks) the vast majority of college students (87 percent) have experienced one or more problems as a result of their peers' binge drinking. These problems include physical assault, sexual harassment and impaired sleep and study time (*Wechsler, Henry et al. Health and Behavioral Consequences of Binge Drinking in College. Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 272,(21) (1994): 167 -1677.*

- ◆ A study published in the Journal of American College Health found that 73 percent of assailants and over half (55 percent) of rape victims used alcohol or other drugs prior to the assault (*Philip W. Meilman, Alcohol-Induced Sexual Behavior on Campus. Journal of American College Health 42 (July 1993): 27-31.*
- ◆ Sixty percent of college women who have acquired sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, were under the influence of alcohol at the time they had intercourse (*News Online: Safety on Campus: Sex, Drugs, Alcohol and Violent Crime -- downloaded 4/6/98*) <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/alt/dwsafet2.htm>).
- ◆ Each year, college students spend \$5.5 billion on alcohol (mostly beer). This is more than they spend on books, soda, coffee, juice and milk combined. On a typical campus, the average amount a student spends on alcohol is \$466 a year (*Eigan, Lewis. Alcohol Practices, Policies and Potentials of American Colleges and Universities: An OSAP White Paper. Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, Rockville, MD: February 1991.*
- ◆ Students at schools with high levels of binge drinking are three times more likely to report being hit, pushed, sexually assaulted or experience unwanted sexual advances by other students who had been drinking than their counterparts who reside at schools with less drinking (*Wechsler, Henry et al. Health and Behavioral Consequences of Binge Drinking in College. Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 272(21), (1994). pp. 1672 - 1677.*
- ◆ Alcohol consumption (by quantity) is 26.8 percent greater among students that live on campus than students that live off campus. Students living on campus reported a higher frequency of binge drinking (three or more times in the previous two weeks) than compared to off campus students (*Core Institute, Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Student Health Program, Southern Illinois University. Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Use, Consequences, and Perception of the Campus Environment, Vol.4: 1992-1994, October 1996.*
- ◆ Fraternity and sorority residence or membership was found to be the strongest predictor for high risk drinking behaviors. Eighty percent of women living in sorority houses and 86 percent of men living in fraternity residences qualified as binge drinkers (*Wechsler, H. Alcohol and the American college campus: A report from the Harvard School of Public Health, Change 1996;Jul/Aug: 20-25.*
- ◆ Students tend to overestimate other students' use of alcohol and other drugs. While only 2.0 percent of students perceived the average student as abstaining from alcohol in the last year, in actuality over 16 percent had reported abstaining. Student perception of normative alcohol and other drug use has important implications for strategies that seek to lower use patterns by correcting misperceptions of social norms (*Core Institute, Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Student Health Program, Southern Illinois University. Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Use, Consequences, and Perception of the Campus Environment, Vol.4: 1992-1994, October 1996.*

## RESOURCES

You may want to contact the following groups for more information on binge drinking among college students. You might also ask some of these resources to help you in your own efforts or to suggest other groups you might partner with to address this serious issue.

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)  
Partnerships for Health and Higher Education  
1818 R Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
Website: <http://www.aacu.nche.edu>  
E-mail: [info@aacu.nw.dc.us](mailto:info@aacu.nw.dc.us)

The BACCHUS & GAMMA Peer Education Network  
P.O. Box 100430  
Denver, CO 80250-0430  
(303) 871-0901  
Fax (303) 871-0907  
Website: <http://www.bacchusgamma.org/>  
E-mail: [bacgam@aol.com](mailto:bacgam@aol.com)

Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) Alcohol Policies Project  
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #300  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 332-9110, Ext. 385  
Fax: (202) 265-4954  
Website: <http://www.cspinet.org/booze>  
E-mail: [alcproject@cspinet.org](mailto:alcproject@cspinet.org)

College Parents of America  
2000 North 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 380  
Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 875-2042  
Fax: (703) 875-2199  
Website: <http://www.collegeparents.org>

Core Institute  
c/o Student Health Programs  
Southern Illinois University  
Carbondale, IL 62901  
(618) 453-4366  
Website: <http://www.siu.edu/~coreinst/>  
E-mail: [mailto:coreinst@siu.edu](mailto:mailto:coreinst@siu.edu)

Center for the Advancement of Public Health  
George Mason University  
4400 University Drive, Module G  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
(703) 993-3697  
Website: <http://www.promprac.gmu.edu>  
E-mail: [nholland@gmu.edu](mailto:nholland@gmu.edu)

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention  
Education Development Center, Inc.  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02158-1060  
(800) 676-1730  
Fax (617) 928-1537  
Website: <http://www.edc.org/hec>  
E-mail: [HigherEdCtr@edc.org](mailto:HigherEdCtr@edc.org)

North American Partnership for Responsible Hospitality (NAPRH)  
4113 Scotts Valley Drive  
Scotts Valley, CA 95066  
(408) 438-1404  
Fax: (408) 438-3306  
E-mail: [naphr@aol.com](mailto:naphr@aol.com)

The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)  
P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20847-2345  
(800) 729-6686  
Fax (301) 468-6433  
Website: <http://www.health.org>  
E-mail: [info@health.org](mailto:info@health.org)

National Interfraternity Conference  
3901 West 86th Street, Suite 390  
Indianapolis, IN 46268-1791  
(317) 872-1112/(317) 872-3185  
Website: <http://www.nicindy.org>  
E-mail: [nic@nicindy.org](mailto:nic@nicindy.org)

## FINDING THE LOCAL ANGLE

Binge drinking is a serious problem on college campuses nationwide. As the statistics provided in this kit illustrate, many other social and health problems have their roots in college drinking. Here are some ways you can define binge drinking from a local angle to make this serious issue more pertinent in your own community.

- ◆ Talk to students on your organization's youth advisory board and find out their perceptions about college drinking.
- ◆ Convene a focus group of college students and share these national statistics with them. Find out their reaction. See how accurate they think these statistics describe what is going on in your area. Invite a reporter to attend this session.
- ◆ Check with the administrators of local colleges to find out how prevalent binge drinking is in your area. Find out what types of alcohol policies are in place. Do they have restrictions on fraternity and sorority parties? Have these rules gotten stricter in the last year or two? If so, why?
- ◆ Even if there are no colleges or universities in your town, you can talk to parents of college students to find out what is happening with their children.
- ◆ Find out if there are server training programs in place in your community, especially in bars and liquor stores that college students frequent. Are sanctions enforced?
- ◆ Call health clinics at colleges and/or in your town and find out what the relationship is between alcohol and rapes, violence and sexually transmitted diseases. Ask what treatment options are available. You can also check with employees at your local hospital and with campus and/or community police to find out the connection between alcohol and other problems.
- ◆ Find out if there are student groups sponsoring alcohol-free activities. If so, suggest that a reporter contact these groups to learn more about them.
- ◆ Convene a focus group of local residents, civic groups, law enforcement, students, college officials and business representatives to discuss the consequences of binge drinking on the quality of community life. What is the nature of alcohol policy, legislation, and enforcement with regard to underage drinking, alcohol advertising, minimum drinking age, and zoning of bar establishments? How have these strategies worked or failed to address the issue of binge drinking and its consequences. This group could present a catalyst for developing or expanding the scope of campus-community partnerships to address the issue.
- ◆ Enlist the support and participation of local college alumni as mentors for current student activities. Local alumni present an important link for community and campus relationships as they have a stake in the quality of community life and in the current and future reputation of their alma mater.
- ◆ Suggest a reporter go visit local campuses (or if there are none, then places where college students home for the summer hang out) and interview students about their drinking habits and those of their peers.
- ◆ Schedule a meeting with the editor or publisher of your local newspaper and explain why he or she should care about this problem. Invite several advertisers to accompany you and offer their support for the newspaper to cover this issue. Suggest the paper do a special supplement focussing on binge drinking and highlighting some solutions.

### **Resource**

For further information on what community groups can do to define and address the problem of binge drinking, check out *Last Call for High-Risk Bar Promotions that Target College Students: A Community Action Guide* published by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) Alcohol Policies Project. A summary of the publication can be found at:

<http://www.cspinet.org/booze/lastcall.htm>.

The full document can be downloaded from The National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at: <http://www.health.org/pubs/lastcall/index.htm>.

## WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO

You might want to share these action steps with students in your community. Post them at recreation centers, grocery stores, houses of worship, and libraries. Send them to college newspapers, student clubs and councils, alumni organizations, fraternities and sororities. Give them to parents of college students and to administrators and health centers staff at local colleges and high schools. Suggest students mobilize to implement some or all of these suggestions.

- ◆ Come together and define alcohol-related problems on campuses. Brainstorm solutions.
- ◆ If there are no alcohol-free dorms on campus, form a committee to implement one.
- ◆ Find out if there is an alcohol-policy on campus. If not, suggest the school start one.
- ◆ Suggest fraternities and sororities sponsor alcohol-free events.
- ◆ Get petitions signed to eliminate advertising of beer specials and happy hours on campus.
- ◆ Start free ride services so students don't drive drunk.
- ◆ Find out if there are any organized groups of students against alcohol abuse like Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD). If not, students may want to start one.
- ◆ Ask the college newspaper to do an exposé about drinking on campus and the problems that result.
- ◆ Suggest that students work to change policies in your community or state. For instance, if your state does not currently have zero tolerance laws, students can work to get laws implemented making it illegal for minors to drive with any alcohol in their bodies; support a ban on alcohol advertising and promotion on college campuses; and propose increased taxes on alcohol products.
- ◆ Connect with college alumni to support alcohol-free celebrations at sporting and alumni events.
- ◆ Bring together college officials and local activists with local owners of liquor stores and bars to find common solutions to underage drinking.
- ◆ Post facts about substance abuse in dorms, bathrooms, common areas and health centers.
- ◆ Sponsor alcohol-free events like dances, bands, speakers, and readings that give students things to do besides drinking.
- ◆ Make sure AA and other treatment options are available to help those already having alcohol problems.

### **Resource**

To find out more about what other campus and student organizations are doing to address binge drinking, check out *Promising Practices: Campus Alcohol Strategies*. This compilation highlights practices and recommendations around campus efforts to address alcohol-related problems among college youth. Produced by the George Mason University Center for the Advancement of Public Health, the full document can be downloaded at: <http://www.promprac.gmu.edu>.

## WHAT COLLEGE OFFICIALS CAN DO . . .

- ◆ Develop methods to ensure the routine collection of data that define the scope and range alcohol and other drug problems on campus. Make this information available.
- ◆ Frame discussions about alcohol and other drug prevention in a context that college officials, faculty, trustees, alumni and students care about -- excellence in education.
- ◆ Demonstrate commitment to the problem by allocating sufficient resources to address alcohol and other drug prevention and intervention initiatives.
- ◆ Mobilize a campus-wide task force that includes college administrators, faculty, students, and staff. Enlist the involvement of fraternities, sororities, sports clubs, and other student organizations in supporting change of social norms and perceptions related to alcohol use and abuse.
- ◆ Define alcohol and other drug use as an issue that encompasses both the campus and surrounding community. Play a leadership role in mobilizing community-level action to address the problem of high risk drinking behaviors among college youth.
- ◆ Recognize that substance abuse is a common problem across institutions of higher education. Participate in state, regional, and national associations that encourage change in public policy around circumstances and norms that support alcohol use and abuse.
- ◆ Work to ensure that all elements of the college community avoid providing mixed messages that might encourage alcohol and other drug use and abuse. For example, to avoid mixed messages, develop and enforce policy against alcohol industry sponsorship of sporting and special events.
- ◆ Reinforce alcohol and other drug prevention as a priority concern and push for change by taking every opportunity to communicate publicly about the risks and consequences that impact the campus and entire community.
- ◆ Engage in policy and legislation development at the state and local level in promoting laws and regulations that will affect the community as a whole in relation to the problem of underage and campus-wide alcohol use and abuse.

### **Resource**

These action steps were adapted from the recommendations made by the Presidents Leadership Group. *Be Vocal Be Visible Be Visionary: Recommendations for College and University Presidents on Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention*, presents thirteen specific recommendations to encourage college presidents and administration officials to take ownership and action for high-risk drinking on college campuses. These recommendations include concrete steps to recognize and define the problem of binge drinking and a proposed framework for committed action towards effective environmental management of the problem. It is published by the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention and can be found on-line at: <http://www.edc.org/hec>.

## WHAT OTHERS HAVE DONE

Integrated approaches that address misperceptions in alcohol use and the creation of environments that are not conducive to high risk drinking behaviors and their consequences are being used to change cultural norms around alcohol use and abuse on college campuses and communities. Below are some strategies and practices that community groups, campus officials, students, and business owners are demonstrating around the country to tackle the issue of high risk drinking among college youth.

### ***Partnership for Prevention: Developing a Community and Campus Coalition to Reduce Collegiate Alcohol Abuse***

The Pennsylvania State University and the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board have joined together in a partnership to address use and misuse of alcohol among youth. The partnership will include the development of intervention and prevention programs that focus on promoting responsibility and citizenship regarding the use of alcohol. The alliance began with the sponsoring of a statewide conference that included representatives from Penn State and the local community towards developing community teams to plan and implement strategies that address alcohol misuse and abuse among college and underage youth. For more information contact Dr. Judith Vicary, Professor of Biobehavioral Health at 315 Health and Human Development Building East, University Park, PA 16802, or via e-mail at [jrv@psu.edu](mailto:jrv@psu.edu).

### ***Committee on University and Community Relations***

This task force, developed by University of Albany and the City of Albany, has been a successful forum for bringing open and honest discussions around both common and controversial quality of life issues to the table. Initiatives address personal, property, and fire safety issues; rights, responsibilities, and behavioral expectations of off-campus student housing relations; and cooperative identification and tracking of neighborhood disturbances in conjunction with the Albany Police Department and Neighborhood Associations. One program distributes door tags that inform students living off-campus of laws and ordinances that come into play in hosting a party in their apartment. The Cooperating Tavern program brings local hospitality businesses, enforcement agencies, and university students and officials together to support responsible and lawful consumption of alcoholic beverages, appropriate civil behavior of patrons, and responsible promotions and advertisement of non-alcoholic beverages and food specials. For more information contact Thomas L. Gebhardt, Director of Personal Safety and Off-campus Affairs, Campus Center 110, SUNY at Albany, 1400 Washington Ave, Albany, NY 12222 or via e-mail at [camtlg@safnet.albany.edu](mailto:camtlg@safnet.albany.edu). (Source: Gebhardt, Thomas, L. Town and Gown Cooperation. Prevention File, Volume 13(2), Spring 1998: pp.2-5.)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

*The broad scope of factors that contribute to binge drinking behaviors on college campuses offers opportunities for action and change on a variety of issues and circumstances. Examples of demonstrated strategies for change include:*

- ◆ Policy, legislation, and enforcement in the community around blood alcohol content (BAC) levels, drinking and driving, and drinking age restrictions;
- ◆ Development and enforcement of campus alcohol and safety policies;
- ◆ Alcohol-restricted residence dorms;
- ◆ Server training programs and materials;
- ◆ Peer Education programs sponsored and led by fraternity and sororities, student leadership groups, and campus wellness departments;
- ◆ Leadership and responsibility for alleviating under age and binge drinking behaviors on behalf of the bar and restaurant industry in the community.

### ***Resource***

*The Catalyst*, a quarterly newsletter from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, can help keep you up on the latest strategies regarding alcohol and other drug prevention on college campuses. Current and back issues can be found at <http://www.edc.org/hec>.

## **SAMPLE OP-ED**

*Tailor the following Op-Ed with some local statistics and send it to your college or local newspaper.*

### **COLLEGE DRINKING LEADS TO MANY OTHER PROBLEMS**

Some college traditions are ageless: Eating pizza at midnight. Pulling all-nighters before a big test. But recent national reports about other "traditions" - guzzling cold beers with friends or getting so drunk you can barely find your dorm room - are being seriously examined for the long-term damage they cause to drinkers and non-drinkers alike.

Excessive drinking remains a major problem on college campuses nationwide. Despite increased public awareness about the strong relationship between substance abuse and other social problems like fatal car crashes, increased risk of HIV infection and date rape, students continue to binge drink.

In fact, today nearly half of all college students drink at least four or five drinks at one time, according to the results of a landmark study on binge drinking published by Henry Wechsler in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

While many students do not see the harm in having "a few" beers, the truth is that risks of excessive alcohol consumption involve more than just a hangover the next day. Studies show that alcohol is a factor in 66 percent of student suicides and 60 percent of all sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. In addition, one out of four student deaths are related to alcohol use.

Many students who drink heavily have problems keeping up with their schoolwork and often skip class. Studies show that 41 percent of all academic problems stem from alcohol abuse and 28 percent of the students who drop out of school may do so because of alcohol.

In addition, students who do not drink are affected by their classmates who do. Students at schools with high levels of binge drinking are three times more likely to be pushed, hit or sexually assaulted by drunk peers than are students at schools with less drinking. Are we graduating many young people who are compromising their health and effectiveness in the prime of their lives?

But college students do not have to remain the victims of beer manufacturers, who spend about \$15 to \$20 million each year to get them to drink, despite the fact that drinking alcohol is illegal for anyone under 21.

At campuses across the country, there is a growing movement of students who are taking charge by deciding to stay sober. Many colleges and universities have responded by implementing strong alcohol policies to keep drinking to a minimum. Some have also designated alcohol-free dorms and made alcohol-free social events a high priority.

While this is a good start, it is also crucial that college administrators work with local communities to come up with solid solutions such as alcohol beverage server training and enforcing underage drinking laws to keep students safe and healthy. If college officials, police, businesses, the media and students all work together to deglamorize college drinking and provide alternative activities, we can make each school year safer than the one before.