



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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Parents Empowered to Take Action on Underage Drinking

In September 2006, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released alarming new research on the effect of alcohol on the developing teen brain increasing the likelihood of early addiction and brain impairment. In response to these research findings a number of Utah stakeholders came forward to develop a comprehensive approach to the problem. Those organizations who joined together in an effort to reduce underage drinking and address the increase in binge drinking included, Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Department of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Department of Public Safety, and community stakeholders such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

The collaborative effort was formalized and launched in 2006 in an initiative known as "ParentsEmpowered.org." Parents Empowered became Utah's statewide, state-sponsored educational and community mobilization campaign designed to prevent underage drinking. The campaign continues to use electronic media and other means of mass communication to provide parents with the knowledge and skills to actively keep their children alcohol-free. Parents Empowered encourages parents to be involved in their children's lives and to set clear rules about not tolerating underage drinking, a strategy to increase protective factors, which research indicates are linked to preventing youth alcohol use. Parents Empowered is a collaborative effort between state agencies, private companies, and local community coalitions. The media campaign is funded largely through the Utah's liquor revenues. EUDL coordinator Teri Pectol sits on the committee that reviews and approves the statewide media campaign information, and EUDL funds and coordination have been instrumental in pushing the program materials out to community coalitions and funding the law enforcement efforts to partner with the campaign.

An evaluation conducted in 2011 showed that the Parents Empowered program was able to produce measurable decreases in youth binge drinking rates, 30-day use rates, and lifetime use rates among 8-12th graders since the campaign and support efforts were implemented. In June 2011, results from the Utah Underage Drinking Campaign Survey indicated that adults also reported changes in beliefs and behaviors of the harmful effects of underage drinking. Since 2010, the percentage of parents who feel they need to talk with their

children about underage drinking once a month or more increased 8 points, from 61% to 69%. Furthermore, parents who, within the past three months, reviewed with their children rules about underage drinking increased from 52% to 61% over the past year.

In September 2012 Parents Empowered became one of only two programs nationwide selected to receive an Exemplary Award this year from The National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD). Parents Empowered received the 2012 National Exemplary Award for Innovative Substance Abuse Prevention Programs for their work in reducing underage drinking. Parents Empowered received the opportunity to showcase their work at the 25th Annual National Prevention Network Research Conference held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

A very important part of the program is called "EASY", which stands for Eliminate Alcohol Sales to Youth, a statewide compliance check program that works hand-in hand with the media campaign. The primary goal of the EASY program is to curtail the retail supply of alcohol to minors at off-premise retail locations through two complimentary methods: providing funds to local law enforcement agencies to conduct alcohol compliance checks and requiring standardized and mandatory retail employee training.

This success story highlights the impact that public and private organizations can achieve on underage drinking using strategic media with law enforcement support to engage parents in an understanding of underage drinking when working together. For more information visit ParentsEmpowered.org

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