



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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University Policies Reduce Student Off-Campus Behavior Problems

Salve Regina University in Newport Rhode Island is home to approximately 2,500 students. It also is a "dry" campus known for its strict alcohol policy. Yet in spite of its policy that prohibits alcoholic beverages on campus, university administrators were concerned about student drinking. The university is located in a resort town, so easy access to alcohol at local establishments and house parties has not been uncommon for students. Fortunately, the administrators' concern turned to action.

Four years ago local law enforcement partnered with community members (including local retailers) and representatives from Salve Regina University to address underage drinking off campus. During summer 2001, the Newport Police Department implemented an Operation Identification Seizure during which downtown alcohol establishments agreed to collect identifications suspected of being fraudulent and give them to the police. Salve Regina supported this effort by making it clear to students that use of false IDs would not be tolerated and that further disciplinary action at the campus level would occur if students were caught using them in the community. The policy operation is still in effect today as retailers continue to forward to police suspected false IDs. To date, more than 3,000 false IDs have been removed from circulation.

As a result of Operation Identification Seizure, Salve Regina students have found it harder to use false identifications at local establishments; however, the enforcement practice did result in an unanticipated side effect: a surge in student house parties off campus. Related noise violations more than tripled, with the number of citations in the summer of 2001 reaching 47 (compared to 14 citations the previous year). Many thought the fines did not seem to concern violators as only one individual affiliated with

the house was cited; thus, money could be easily pooled from among partygoers to pay the fine.

Consequently, the City of Newport changed the penalty structure for nuisance violations so that every person listed on a property's lease agreement would be subject to a fine of \$1,000. In addition, local law enforcement officers and the Associate Dean of Students from the university began conducting joint visits to off-campus student residences that received nuisance violations that involved the presence of alcohol and, potentially, underage drinking.

All visits include education about State and local laws, as well as about university policies. For some cases, campus adjudication follows nuisance citations and can result in sanctions that can range from warnings to students, suspensions or even dismissals, depending on a student's record of violations. According to Gerry Willis, Associate Dean of Students, "students are expected to adhere to behavioral norms expected by the institution not only on campus, but off campus as well."

Since implementation of the policy affecting off-campus students, the police department reports that noise violation recidivism rates have dropped, and very few residences (between 3 and 5 percent) require repeat visits.

With support from OJDP's Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program, community organizations, enforcement agencies, youth, and other concerned citizens are working collaboratively to change local ordinances and enforcement practices.

For further information, contact Officer Kevin Parsonage, Newport PD at 401-847-0686; or Gerry Willis, Associate Dean of Students, Salve Regina University at 401-341-2207.



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