



# Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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## Parental Notification Policy at Work to Curb Alcohol Violations

In 1999, Congress made it possible for college and universities to notify parents of students' alcohol violations. Many campuses, including Texas A&M, instituted parental notification policies that have resulted in significant declines in alcohol violations and in recidivism rates. "Since instituting parental notification in 1999, Texas A&M University has seen only nine repeat offenders out of 45,000 students," said Dr. Bill Kibler, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, in an interview last year. He also pointed out that because Texas A&M partners with parents to achieve success, less than 10 percent of parents have contacted the university to express concern about the policy.

Recognizing the positive developments at Texas A&M, members of Texans Standing Tall (TST) began to think about how parental notification policies could be more effectively promoted to other colleges and universities within the State. Indeed, the need for action was documented when qualitative data from more than 60 focus sessions with college and high school athletes indicated that alcohol laws and policies were not being consistently enforced.

Working in close collaboration with the Office of the Governor and the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), TST organized a series of forums to inform college administrators, members of the judicial system, campus planning teams, and campus enforcement officers about the potential of parental notification policies to change the college climate on underage alcohol use.

Twenty-one college presidents and senior administrators were invited to a Presidents' Forum in 2003 to review new science-based information from the NIAAA's "Changing the College Culture on Alcohol" report. Participants were encouraged to implement parental notification policy, develop a campus task force, and appoint a key team leader for each school.

Based on student perceptions of inconsistent enforcement of underage drinking laws, the

collaborating organizations held a "Judicial Think Tank" to promote the enforcement and adjudication of laws and policies in college environments. This forum opened an important dialogue between campus and community judicial systems and furthered understanding of the parental notification policy.

Fifteen college "teams" attended a symposium and received training in effective strategies for college environments, including parental notification. Each team consisted of a judicial officer, a campus enforcement officer, an alcohol and other drug prevention coordinator, a student representative, and a community coalition member. The teams developed plans for enforcing alcohol laws and policies on campuses and in communities.

**Our Point:**  
**Communities, institutions, and States are successfully changing laws, ordinances, and policies to reduce underage drinking.**

Following the groundwork of last year, six campuses adopted parental notification policies. Another three are well on their way to adopting a policy. Five campuses also instituted on-campus party patrols and bans on alcohol use or kegs on campus.

The work on parental notification also resulted in identification of an often overlooked but key member in any effort to enforce campus alcohol policies: the resident advisor. Several campuses strengthened resident advisor training to focus more on the importance of alcohol policy enforcement, resulting in greater rates of citations at those schools.

Reducing underage drinking on college campuses in Texas is a tall order, but through the collaborative efforts of committed agencies and organization, change is happening.

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