Parents Making a Difference in Curbing Underage Drinking

The intervention helped to reduce underage drinking rates in Edgerton, Wisconsin.

▶ Description: The Underage Drinking: A Parent Solution project team focused on reducing underage alcohol use among Edgerton School District adolescents through prevention strategies involving school, family and community.

▶ Relevance: Underage drinking is a pervasive and growing problem nationally, and Edgerton youth report drinking at rates higher than the county, state and national averages. The National Academy of Sciences reported that reducing underage drinking cannot be successfully achieved by focusing on youth alone; greater attention must be given to environments in which drinking takes place and the situations in which adults drink.

▶ Partnerships: The project team collaborated with the Rock County Public Health Department, the Edgerton School District and the Edgerton Coalition for a Healthy Community.

▶ Results: According to Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data, drinking rates declined among Edgerton students in grades 10 to 12 from 2005 to 2009: the number who reported having at least one drink in the last 30 days dropped from 55 percent to 46 percent; binge drinking rates decreased from 44 percent to 31 percent; and the first use of alcohol before the age 13 dropped from 36 percent to 25 percent.

Assessment data were collected through surveys, community focus groups and interviews with key community leaders. The project team developed an intervention, “Parents Make the Difference,” and delivered an educational session to 175 parents. A community information campaign of advertisements, articles and press releases for events such as prom and graduation delivered messages about brain development and how parents and the local environment contribute to underage drinking.

The project was successful at raising the awareness of underage drinking with a focused target population. Parents involved in prevention efforts report better communication with their children about choosing low-risk behaviors, a better understanding of adolescent development and more adult supervision during youth events. The school district’s athletic code has mandated stricter penalties for alcohol and other drug use.

Billboards, banners, posters and informational booths targeted parents in the Edgerton school district with messages about youth alcohol access.

UNDERAGE DRINKING: A PARENT SOLUTION

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Award: $416,746 over four years