



COMMUNITY GRANT OUTCOME REPORT

Project Connect

ID checks and Teen Court seek to reduce drinking

Project Connect uncovered flaws in age verification checking during its two-pronged efforts to curb youth alcohol use in Columbia County



Teen Court volunteers are sworn in as part of Project Connect. The Teen Court proceedings stressed behavior change around youth alcohol use over criminal sanction.

► **Description:** Project Connect sought to reduce youth alcohol use by working with vendors to increase ID checks. Project Connect also sought to transform the Columbia County Juvenile Justice System from a tool of punishment to a tool of behavior change through the use of Teen Courts. Rather than simply provide sanctions, Teen Courts were designed to express expectations for youth, build resiliency skills, and give youth a leadership role in changing youth behavior.

► **Results:** The project found that the majority of alcohol sales to minors were a result of store clerks either failing to ask for identification or misreading the identification cards. This information prompted efforts to enhance readability of ID cards. Checks were limited to areas of the county where local law enforcement agreed to participate in the program. Participants in the Teen Court program found it to be a better system for first-time

offenders, and it resulted in a decline in recidivism. Other comments focused on the use of positive peer pressure and the effective engagement of youth to change negative behaviors. The major benefit to the respondent or teen court offender was the opportunity to give back to the community (54%) through community service. The percentage of teenagers reporting recent alcohol use fell during the grant period, continuing the trend of decline.

► **The Partnership:** The academic partner assisted the grantee and the community in defining a manageable focus to be evaluated. He then served in an advisory capacity.

► **Next Steps:** The project received \$10,000 funds from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to work on alcohol compliance checks. A drinking diversion program supported by the grant is now self-sustaining.

GRANT FACTS

Grantee: Columbia County Connects

Contact: Tim Belleau, Director, Kenosha County Division of Aging & Disability, belleaut(at)cesa5.k12.wi.us, (608) 742-2214

Academic Partner: Michael E. Fleming, MD, MPH, formerly Department of Family Medicine, UWSMPH, m-fleming@northwestern.edu

Grant Award: \$427,500 over three years