

**GETTING TO ACTION ON
UNDERAGE DRINKING
AND HIGH RISK DRINKING
AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

**A SHORT LIST OF LOW-COST/NO-COST THINGS
TO DO
THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

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Prepared By and For:

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TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
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Introduction: Sometimes the hardest thing to do in a community planning process is getting from thinking about things that MIGHT be done, to actually selecting one or two or three specific things that WILL be done next in your community. This document, with its description of several low-cost, no-cost projects, has been prepared to help people get over that hurdle—and get started on some specific projects.

There is nothing magic about this group of projects. They are some options—some ideas. They might be a fit for your community; they might not. Hopefully they will help people in individual communities think about:

- the range of things that might be done, and
- how some things might be done.

I hope you find this information useful. Let me know if you have comments, suggestions, or experiences with the list that you think would be useful to share.

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Some Underlying Principles: As you think about what to do next,

It isn't really just about alcohol: Communities want their youth and young adults to do more than say “No” to alcohol. We want young people to make healthy choices: to avoid a host of dangerous behavior, and choose positive, productive alternatives. Consider opportunities to insert the “No to alcohol” message into other, wider events, projects and discussions.

Less is sometimes better than more: If your goal is to build awareness of the problem and what to do about it, consider doing things that get that message out in bite-sized pieces. A short message (repeated in several different ways, in different places) that reaches a lot of people can be more effective than a long message that only a few people absorb.

Take the Long View: We are gradually making progress in reducing underage drinking. If we can do a few new things each year—or the same things, just a little more effectively—we will continue to make progress.

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REDUCE ACCESS

Implement the “Parents Who Host Lose the Most” Campaign

Overview of the Strategy: Youth get most their alcohol from friends and family. Misguided parents or older relatives sometimes furnish places for youth to drink—and provide the alcohol. A common argument is that “they are going to do it anyway. Why not create a “safe, supervised environment’ where they are less likely to get into trouble.

The Parents Who Host Lose the Most campaign is a strategy that was developed in Ohio, and has been used in Maine with some success. In sum: during a time when parties are common (often in the spring—April, May, June), a local group distributes information about Maine laws regarding furnishing alcohol to minors. The information encourages local community members to inform law enforcement about parties in the planning or in progress. Local police departments follow up on the reports and investigate and process violations of Maine’s furnishing laws.

Purpose:

- To promote public awareness of Maine law
- To discourage the hosting of parties for young people by parents and/or other older people, allowing them to drink “safely”
- To generate reports of parties in planning or in progress so they can be investigated

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Small group of people within the community: to promote awareness of Maine law by distributing prepared materials
- 2) Local law enforcement: willing to respond to complaints/referrals from the public about parties in planning or in progress
- 3) Healthy Communities of the Capital Area: to gather and distribute materials to local community groups for distribution; to arrange for promotion of the campaign in the local media

Recommended Timeframe for Implementation: April to June

Strategies That Have Been Used Locally In Previous Years to Get the Word Out:

- Through schools -
 - Report Card stuffers (fact sheets about laws and parents’ responsibilities)
 - Handouts in connections Project Graduation/Prom Night
 - Articles in school newsletters
 - Handouts at FAFSA information meetings
- To Public in general –
 - Letters to Editor
 - Radio/Newspaper/Local Cable TV Ads
 - Posters in public places
 - Pizza Box inserts
- Through worksites –
 - Payroll Stuffer
 - Presentations – either by staff with materials provided, or directly to staff

REDUCE ACCESS TO ALCOHOL

Reduce The Sale of Alcohol To Youth, People Purchasing For Youth and Impaired Patrons: Strategy #1: Training For Alcohol Retailers

Overview of the Strategy: Offer periodic training for area alcohol retailers, covering the following topics:

- Identifying minors and VIPs
- Intervention to prevent a visibly intoxicated patron from driving
- How alcohol is ingested and metabolized by the body
- What alcoholism is and how alcohol affects the body
- False ID detection and carding policy
- The importance of good written policies
- The Liquor Liability Act

Training events are marketed to either on-premise (e.g., bars, restaurants) or off-premise (e.g., convenience stores) retailers. The minimum number of participants is 10; the maximum is 25-40, depending on the size of the room and the availability of staff support.

HCCA staff will be planning, supporting and paying for two retailer trainings per year in southern Kennebec County. Local community groups are invited to help market the training to local retailers they think would be interested in the opportunity—or could benefit from it.

Purpose:

- Promote retailer awareness of Maine law
- Provide retailer staff with skills they need to reduce sales to youth, people buying alcohol for youth, and impaired patrons

Recommended Partners:

- 1) HCCA staff to organize, pay for, and support the training
- 2) Local law enforcement: help market the training and provide encouragement for retailers who need to change their practices to participate
- 3) Local community members: help market the training to personal and professional contacts in the community

REDUCE ACCESS TO ALCOHOL

Reduce The Sale of Alcohol To Youth, People Purchasing For Youth and Impaired Patrons: Strategy #2: Implement the Card ME Program

Overview of the Strategy: The Card ME program walks local retailers through a process where they assess how well their establishment complies with Maine liquor laws and good sales practices related to alcohol. It helps them identify areas where they need to make improvements, and encourages them to select specific strategies that they think would be a good fit for their business. Local community members are trained in the process of marketing the program and coaching business owners/managers through the steps.

This program is under revision by the Office of Substance Abuse. Once that revision is completed, HCCA staff will be looking for volunteers in local communities to help learn how to market and support participation in the program.

Purpose:

- Provide local alcohol retailers with the information and skills they need to identify the ways in which they can improve their alcohol sales practices
- Help retailers choose and initiate specific changes in practice that they think would be useful

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Healthy Communities of the Capital Area: to organize and support the implementation of the Card ME program
- 2) Local law enforcement/local community members: learn how to market the program, and coach willing retailers through the self-assessment and practice improvement steps.

EDUCATE AND EMPOWER PARENTS

Disseminate Information To Parents About Underage, High Risk Drinking And What to Do About It: “Know More, Do More”

Overview of the Strategy: Alcohol is a perplexing drug: it can be fun to use; some people use it safely; it is legal for adults. And yet it is a very dangerous drug: it kills some people outright, and others slowly over time. This is true for both adults and youth who choose to use. Too few parents have sorted out all the issues around alcohol, and figured out how to communicate their conclusions and expectations to their kids in an effective way.

The Office of Substance Abuse has developed some great materials, in many different formats, advising parents how to tackle this difficult topic. The campaign is called “Know More, Do More.” Community members and school personnel can take these materials and quickly adapt them to deliver short messages and/or brief presentations to parents. Rather than creating a whole event designed to address alcohol, consider inserting an alcohol message or presentation into two or three larger events where you know parents will already be: e.g., School Orientation Meetings for parents; PTA meetings for parents with a wider agenda.

Purpose:

- Build awareness of the risks all youth and young adults face
- Drive home the importance of parents taking action on this issue
- Give parents some ideas about how to be active in a positive, helpful way

Recommended Partners:

- 1) School personnel: to identify general parent meetings where an alcohol message might fit
- 2) Parent Leaders: to advocate for and help plan the delivery of brief messages or information sessions.

EDUCATE AND EMPOWER PARENTS/COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Promote ongoing public awareness/discussion about the issue of underage drinking by offering educational opportunities to the community about the issue, and related topics

Overview of the Strategy: Community education activities, offered in a thoughtful way, integrated into a larger public education plan, can create an ongoing awareness of the nature of the problem, and what can and should be done about it. Community education activities include a wide range of events, such as formal talks by local/regional/national experts; arts or theatrical presentations with an alcohol prevention message; community forums; and skill building sessions for local professionals (such as in-service training for teachers) or volunteers who want to take specific action. Community education activities can be separate, stand-alone events, or part of a larger forum or one event in a series of related events.

A community education campaign is most effective when it clearly identifies the target audience and learning objectives for that target audience. It can achieve greater impact when tied to national “awareness days/weeks/month,” which receive wider media and related support.

This kind of educational campaign has been undertaken in Winthrop, over a period of years, related to suicide prevention. Although the Winthrop group is a stand-alone community based group of volunteers, it could be undertaken by a broader based coalition of local groups (see below).

Purpose:

- Build awareness of the risks all youth and young adults face
- Promote awareness of what can and should be done about the issue by various target audiences
- Stimulate action planning among the target audience

Potential Partners:

- 1) Local citizens who are interested in the issue
- 2) Civic groups, local businesses, non-profit organizations with a special interest in the issue.
- 3) The local hospital with an interest in the issue
- 4) Local higher education institutions with an interest in the issue
- 5) HCCA staff, to provide planning and implementation support

ENGAGE AND EMPOWER YOUTH
Organize and Support A Youth Group That Wants To Take Action
Against Underage Alcohol Use;
Strengthen an Existing Group
(Youth Voices)

Overview of the Strategy: Youth Voices groups do two things: 1) they provide youth who do not want to use a group of friends/fellow students who have made the same choice, and 2) they give youth the opportunity to plan and take action to reduce underage use in their school or community. Youth Voices groups across the state have done a wide range of things:

- a) promoted awareness of Maine liquor laws through the “sticker shock” campaign,
- b) planned educational events for other students (younger students or peers) or parents,
- c) identified weaknesses in school or community policies, and advocated for changes, and
- d) produced print or video advertisements discouraging use

Groups exist on their own in Winthrop and Augusta. HCCA staff would like to expand the program to include more schools, and support sharing of accomplishments and challenges across the groups in our service area. Communities without a program could agree to start one. Communities with a program could help plan and participate in the expansion of the program.

Programs are traditionally school based, but don't have to be. Community based organizations that work with youth might also sponsor a group.

Purpose:

- Create a group of youth who are explicitly and publicly for non-use
- Create opportunities for youth to take action on the issue
- Promote dialogue among adults about things they can do, based on the ideas and actions of youth

Recommended Partners:

- 1) School or community based non-profit group to sponsor a group, and identify an adult to lead the group
- 2) Healthy Communities of the Capital Area: to provide financial support for the coordinator stipend, and organize and plan and support monthly phone calls of the Youth Voices adult leaders.

DISCOURAGE USE BY STUDENTS

Review and Revise The School's Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Policy

Overview of the Strategy: Alcohol, drug and tobacco policies are a work in-progress. Most policies are reviewed and changed after the current policy is enforced in a public way that upsets a segment of the community. Periodic review of existing policy—before a public controversy generates the need—is recommended to:

- ensure that the policy reflects current community norms
- encourage consistent and on-going enforcement of the current policy, and
- provide an opportunity for dialogue of the size and nature of the problem, and overall, what is being done about it—and how that is working.

Policy review is best done by a broad group of people, from all levels within the school system and from the community (parents, law enforcement, community organizations that serve youth).

The Office of Substance Abuse is completing a document that will help school systems assess their current policy, compared to best practice, and select specific changes that will strengthen the existing policy.

Purpose:

- Promote public dialogue about current policies and enforcement of the policies
- Support adjustments to existing policy that will help reduce substance use.

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Small group of people within the community: to promote awareness of Maine law by distributing prepared materials
- 2) Local law enforcement: willing to respond to complaints/referrals from the public about parties in planning or in progress

**PROVIDE YOUTH WHO HAVE USED
WITH SKILLS TO MAKE DIFFERENT CHOICES**

**Implement A Skills Based Program For Youth Who Have Violated School Policy
(Student Intervention and Rehabilitation Program-SIRP; Boomerang)**

Overview of the Strategy: A natural consequence of having and enforcing a strong policy against alcohol and other drug use is the identification of youth who have violated that policy. It is essential to create consequences for these violators that will reduce the likelihood that they will violate the policy again. If you send a violator home (out-of-school suspension), you run the risk of expanding his/her opportunities to use! If you teach him/her what they need to know to avoid using in the future, you have a chance to make things better not worse.

HCCA staff are exploring delivery and funding options for expanding the SIRP or Boomerang programs beyond the Gardiner school system to other schools in southern Kennebec County. Local school systems are being asked to evaluate whether or not they a) are interested in this service option, and b) have enough violators of current policy to make a program viable in their area—either as a stand alone program or in cooperation with a nearby system.

Purpose:

- Teach youth who have violated school policy the skills they need to make different choices in the future.

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Local School Systems: agree to host a program, promote awareness of it, and refer youth to it
- 2) Healthy Communities of the Capital Area: work in partnership with the local school system to assess local need, create access to the service, and identify funding for the service

ENFORCE MAINE LAW RELATED TO UNDER AGE AND HIGH RISK USE
Option #1: Review and Strengthen Existing Enforcement Policies

Overview of the Strategy: Core elements of model enforcement of Maine's laws around the possession of consumption of alcohol include:

- investigating underage drinking complaints as crimes
- treating all underage drinking incidents consistently
- calling parents whenever juveniles are involved, and
- writing summonses whenever there is probable cause

Local law enforcement bodies can benefit from a review of current practice compared to both existing policy and the Maine Chiefs' model policy.

Policy review is probably best done with some form of input from a range of community people

Purpose:

- Promote public discussion of community values related to alcohol use and enforcement
- Generate public support for stronger enforcement
- Promote more aggressive enforcement of existing laws

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Local law enforcement: initiate a review of existing policy
- 2) Small group of people within the community: support the discussion and provide input, support and encouragement for stronger enforcement

ENFORCE MAINE LAW RELATED TO UNDER AGE AND HIGH RISK USE

Option #2: Refresh Officer Skills Through Training

Overview of the Strategy: Periodic turnover in law enforcement personnel creates the need for training in the enforcement of Maine's alcohol possession and consumption laws. The Maine Criminal Justice Academy offers a free on-line course for officers in this area.

Local police department can monitor the knowledge and skills of staff in implementing the Department's current enforcement policy, and where there are gaps, provide incentives for staff to complete necessary training.

Purpose:

- Ensure that officers have the knowledge and skills they need to handle alcohol violations

Recommended Partners:

- 1) Local law enforcement: ensure that staff have the training they need