

REDUCING UNDERAGE DRINKING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN STRATEGIES

Approaching the Underage Drinking Problem – Nationally Recommended Strategies

“Underage drinking can not be successfully addressed by focusing on youth alone. Youth drink within the context of a society in which alcohol use is normative behavior and images of alcohol are pervasive. They usually obtain alcohol- either directly or indirectly- from adults. Efforts to reduce underage drinking, therefore, need to focus on adults and must engage the society at large.”

“Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility”
Institute of Medicine, National Research Council of the
National Academies

National assessments and recommendations exist to guide Nevada’s efforts to reduce underage drinking. In response to a congressional request, the Institute of Medicine’s National Research Council of the National Academies formed the Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking (NRC Committee) charged with providing science-based recommendations about how best to prevent and reduce underage drinking. The NRC Committee approached the problem of underage drinking from population-based primary prevention approaches rather than on individual-oriented approaches. Based on the NRC Committee’s expertise, consideration of public input, and review of the available scientific literature, three broad themes were identified as crucial to combating underage drinking and resulting human and social costs to the nation:

- Reduce the *availability* of alcohol to underage drinkers
- Reduce the *occasions and opportunities* for underage drinking, and
- Reduce the *demand* for alcohol among young people (NAS, 2003)

Within the broad framework of these three themes, the NRC Committee suggested the following general strategies to reduce underage drinking:

- Media campaigns designed to discourage underage drinking directly, to affect the behavior of adults, and to build a broader public awareness of the nature and magnitude of the problem;
- Measures to curtail or counteract activities by individuals or businesses, including alcohol marketing and practices, that tend to encourage or facilitate underage drinking;
- Measures restricting youth access to alcohol in both commercial and noncommercial settings, together with programs enforcing these laws;

- Measures to reduce alcohol-related social harms by enforcing compliance with underage drinking restrictions, such as zero tolerance laws and other programs to reduce alcohol-related traffic injuries and criminal behavior;
- Educational activities undertaken by schools, colleges and universities, faith-based institutions, healthcare organizations, alcohol companies, parent associations and other entities designed to discourage underage drinking;
- Community-based initiatives designed to tailor comprehensive approaches to the specific underage drinking problems of local communities;
- Screening, counseling, and treatment programs to assist underage drinkers who have developed alcohol problems; and
- Methods of increasing the price of alcohol to underage purchasers, including increases in excise taxes.

The Role of Community Coalitions in the Prevention of Underage Drinking

Community based organizations should work in partnership with their local law enforcement agencies to reduce underage drinking. *The role of law enforcement agencies and those of community-based organizations should be clearly defined to insure that each is operating within their area of expertise for maximum effectiveness.*

The following list presents activities appropriate for community based organizations that will support law enforcement operations, deter youth from drinking, and/or help reshape the community environment to reduce underage drinking.

Law Enforcement Operation Support

1. Assist with identifying youth to work as minor decoys in Alcohol Sale Compliance Checks and Third Party Purchaser operations. Free training for youth is available by contacting the Statewide EUDL Coordinator.
2. Create a letter for the Sheriff/Police Chief to send out to liquor establishments prior to compliance check operations stressing the serious nature of underage drinking, providing prevention strategies and staff straining opportunities, and the upcoming efforts to reduce youth access to alcohol through compliance check operations.
3. Create a letter from the community-based agency that can go to repeat business offenders expressing concern for their lack of compliance, and letters to businesses/clerks congratulating them when they pass.
4. Distribute signage that can be used in stores that announce purchasers of alcohol will be carded. (Static clings for glass windows and cold case doors, small signs for the countertops, etc.) Signs can be ordered free from the Century Council, purchased

from the FACE Co. or created by the organization to include personal messages or logos.

5. Assist with setting up a Server Training Program for on and off premise sellers and servers. A point training is being developed to comply with the server training mandates outlined in SB 457 and will be available free to communities. Organizations may choose to offer the training free, charge up to \$45 allowed in SB 457, or work with local courts to waive a portion or all of a fine for selling if the individual attends training.
6. Create a reward or recognition event for outstanding businesses and their employees which can also act as a media awareness event for underage drinking community education.
7. Organize a recognition event for your law enforcement to create an opportunity to educate the community about law enforcement activities, and underage drinking in the community.
8. Generate media coverage of law enforcement activities and how their efforts reduce risk behaviors and incidences in the community.
9. Offer to host one of the EUDL Law Enforcement training classes in your community by working with the Statewide EUDL Coordinator to arrange for a location, refreshments and lunch (See EUDL Brochure for listing of training classes) for officers attending the training.

Youth Focused Interventions

1. Arrange for the Highway Patrol or local law enforcement to do education at community youth organizations using Fatal Vision Goggles or the DUI Simulator creatively followed by education on alcohol and impairment. Contact the EUDL Statewide Coordinator.
2. Create Stand Tall Teams that can be involved in a number of youth driven activities to “glamorize and normalize” non-drinking behaviors. This may include mini learning “camps” in their community for their peers, involvement in law enforcement activities, recognition events for outstanding alcohol free youth, community mapping, outlet surveys, Safe House lists (parents that commit to a supervised home without underage drinking while youth are in their home), etc. youth (Teams may also work on other prevention issues such as teen sexual conduct, tobacco and other drug use.)
3. Assist with distributing “we card” information and/or letters of congratulations to local businesses.
4. Develop education programs (skits, etc) for younger youth.
5. Conduct fun, alternative activities for their peers or preferably younger youth while promoting non-drinking messages.

Community Environmental Change

1. Encourage local Special Events sponsors to employ underage drinking deterrent strategies such as alcohol sale placement, and the wristband machine for “carding” purposes. Special Event control Training is available for local law enforcement, event control special security personnel, and event sponsors by contacting the Statewide EUDL Coordinator.
2. Use or underage drinking prevention and awareness educational tools such as the Fork in the Road curriculum to present at local adult gatherings such as Service Club meetings, Chamber of Commerce, employee lunchtime at bigger businesses, churches, etc.
3. Actively use the media to educate the public by covering local law enforcement operations and other events, submit letters to the editor or guest opinion columns, etc.
4. Review local laws and ordinances to insure irresponsible adults are held accountable. Laws governing alcohol sale to minors compliance checks, social host, and public nuisance laws can all be worded to greatly deter youth access to alcohol through adults.
5. Work with local youth community-based athletic organizations such as Babe Ruth, Pop Warner, and AYSO to promote awareness of alcohol effects on athletic performance and general health for both athletes and coaches. Presentations for coaches, parents and/or athletes can be arranged, or “info bags” can be handed out.
6. Recognize the positive businesses and adults in the community publicly, using this as a vehicle to further educate the general public.
7. Be on the “look out” for irresponsible alcohol advertising, and urge others in your community to use the *Talk Back to Big Alcohol* reporting system through the Marin Institute.
8. Support the high school implementation of the Nevada Interscholastic Activity Association ATOD prevention/intervention policy by working with the school Athletic Director to monitor policy offenders’ required education and community service. Encourage the local school board to adopt the policy for their middle schools, where school-based athletic participation begins.
9. Create a Juvenile Conference Committee to hear juvenile alcohol status offenses (may be expanded to include other status offenses). The JCC usually consists of a list of approx. 10 – 16 community adults who volunteer to review alcohol status offenses about once every two-three months. Four JCC members are asked to serve each month to review alcohol status offenses for the month. Instead of going to court, these youth and at least one parent appear before the JCC to outline the circumstances of the offense. The JCC determines what the consequence should be, which may be

community service, an education program or assignment, or other creative dispositions as the situation warrants. The juvenile and his family are responsible for reporting back to the committee the following month. In addition to providing a creative alternative to court involvement for the juvenile, it creates an opportunity to educate the adults involved in the type of youth drinking situations occurring in the community.

- 10.** Disseminate alcohol awareness and positive tips for parenting to parents of children entering middle/junior high schools. This is an anxious time for parents, and assistance in maintaining communication and setting appropriate boundaries is helpful.

Detailed information on how to proceed with any of the suggestions can be obtained by calling Kathy Bartosz, Statewide Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) Coordinator, Juvenile Justice Programs Office: (775)232-1417.