

SCHOOLCRAFT COUNTY COMMUNITY DISCUSSION
August 16, 2007

1. Immediate reaction to data presentation

- Surprised – bigger problem is prescription drug use
- Did not know alcohol was that severe
- Saw a shirt – “Manistique – a drinking town with a fishing problem
- Drinking is expected
- Surprised by concentration of active liquor licenses
- Parents – situation with a kid in the bar who was ID’d – son of State policeman – parents got mad at bartender
- Drinking is a right of passage – it is what is expected
- One experience where establishments were watched on Friday afternoon – amazed at how much alcohol was purchased
- Kids say there is nothing else to do
- Winter is even more limited in choice of entertainment
- One program had kids list things to do and there really were many things
- Low income area – many kids cannot afford the cost of some activities
- Dysfunctional families – intergenerational/hereditary
- There is hope – Prime for Life saw changes and the “light dawning” – MADD hope to implement Protecting Me Protecting You
- Lots of latch-key kids
- Adults need to support kids and give extra help
- Law enforcement is not surprised – it seem to be a way of life for family events – it’s okay to party at camp as long as they don’t drive
- In 21 years working in children’s services alcohol is the drug of choice – there may be some prescription drug abuse but it all comes back to alcohol
- Kids wise up and if parents take keys away kids may have had another set of keys made

2. Factors (Intervening variable – why is this happening?)

- Culture
- People lack knowledge of the disease of alcoholism and how harmful it can be
- Still a stigma about alcoholism and there is shame and fear to admit a problem – need to educate
- Denial is still prevalent
- Vendors, media and role models are all part of the problem – a contributing factor – it reinforces the local culture
- Pressures on kids in school is also a contributing factor – pumping them full of information – no support at home – no program in the schools
- Youth thought the numbers would be higher – there is nothing to do – the arcade became a drug hang-out – especially limited at night and on weekends
- In school they heard about kids drinking – even middle school

3. Efforts underway to address the issue

- MCRUD – wrecked car demo at school before prom – PSA’s and speaker got good reaction
- Drunk driving simulator
- DARE Program
- Prime for Life in high school – only 4 lessons this year – need to do all classes and all 6 lessons
- Health program for expectant moms is not available here though working on getting “welcome newborn” program

- DHS and courts have good relationship and do assessment, counseling through Great Lakes recovery Center but kids can't get in and can't stay long enough – are released back into peer pressure situations

4. What works, what doesn't and what would you do differently?

- Pressure on kids – school is negative and doesn't give kids a good reason to stay in school
- DARE changed – has taken off the kid gloves and stopped sugar-coating – talk health and consequences through role playing with more focus on peer pressure
- Youth said kids drink when they don't think there's much consequences – there was more information on drugs and smoking when they were younger that spoke to health consequences – not so much on alcohol
- Movies that scare you have an impact
- MCRUD and Students Against Destructive Decisions
- Victim impact panel during sentencing – folded due to lack of funding

5. What outcomes would you like to see from this process?

- Have discussion on the topic and points so people can understand what alcohol is doing – there are fundamental personal needs that need to be met
- Courts going into school to let kids know the consequences – and speakers to share what kids can do with a way to sign up for activities
- Go out to younger kids
- Calendar with picture for underage drinking with positive messages
- Using effects the entire family and they will only get help if they want to get it

6. Final Comments

- Would like to see more youth involved
- More youth and more parents
- AA group and inner group – public invitation to attend and get information got no response

Comments from 3 x 5 cards:

- How does binge drinking in Schoolcraft compare with Marquette and Chippewa Counties?
- I do agree with 2 students. There are not enough activities in the evening for our youth. I am in big brothers/big sisters program and I find lack of evening activities. My big brother is 17 years old.