NITATVES ONE GOAL Innovative Collaborations to Prevent Underage Drinking M. Cornelius Pierce, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In 2014, there were 8.7 million (22.8 percent) youth ages 12 to 20 who reported currently using alcohol. Underage drinking contributes to more than 4,700 deaths annually, and is associated with academic failure, injury and violence, adult substance misuse, and increased risk of chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. Despite these serious consequences, in 2014, a majority of youth in the U.S. perceived no great risk from underage drinking. Although rates of underage drinking have declined over the past decade, it remains a significant public health challenge.

The Initiatives

The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a key player in reducing substance misuse in the U.S. SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) implemented two initiatives aimed at building prevention capacity in communities to reduce underage drinking.

communities town hall meetings to prevent underage drinking



These initiatives are designed to educate communities about the consequences of underage drinking, disseminate science-based prevention messages, and mobilize communities to implement prevention efforts on a local level. The initiatives support communitybased organizations (CBOs) and institutions of higher education (IHEs) in hosting community engagement events to discuss, prioritize, and plan strategic prevention approaches to prevent underage drinking.

EVALUATION METHODS

SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)

SAMHSA's SPF was developed to build capacity in communities across the U.S. The SPF includes five steps centered around two guiding principles—sustainability and cultural competence:

- Assessment
- 2. Capacity

This framework offers prevention professionals a comprehensive process for addressing substance misuse and related behavioral health problems facing their communities. SAMHSA's prevention initiatives use the SPF, employing quantitative (survey) and qualitative (case studies) methods to triangulate results and provide context for how and why the initiatives were successful. SAMHSA also provides community coalitions with information to assist in implementing the SPF, as well as important tools for collaborative approaches to prevent underage drinking.

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QUANTITATIVE

The success of *Communities Talk* is measured through two quantitative surveys approved by the Office of Management and Budget-one for community-based organizations hosting events and one for participants.

SUCCESS STORIES

In addition to survey results, information is gathered through self-reported community stories. Communities that have hosted meetings provide success stories that explain how the meetings helped to increase community awareness about the issues of underage drinking and substance misuse, and effected an increase in community action.

COMMUNITIES TALK QUICK START PLANNING GUIDE

Using the Communities Talk Quick Start Planning Guide, community coalitions can learn to host a results-oriented underage drinking prevention event in their community. The guide provides CBOs with the information they need to apply the SPF to their meetings and build capacity to sustain the ongoing prevention of underage drinking in their community.

COMMUNITIES TALK WEBSITE

The Communities Talk website includes a host of resources for communities with details on planning, implementing, and evaluating their event. In addition to the Communities Talk Quick Start Planning Guide, the website includes more than 150 success stories, state data on underage drinking, an image gallery with photos, and promotional materials developed by meeting organizers.

www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings

- 5. Evaluation . Planning
- 4. Implementation





Communities Talk: Town Hall Meeting Success Story

ROOKS COUNTY COMMUNITIES THAT CARE COMMITTEE

Every year, the Rooks County Communities That Care Committee, in Stockton, Kansas, hosts a Communities Talk meeting on substance misuse prevention. Meetings focus on confronting unhealthy alcohol norms in the community and educating parents about their role in prevention. In 2014, Rooks County residents and faith leaders began working with parents to prevent underage drinking and to support alcohol laws as a result of the meeting. Falling rates in the prevalence of underage drinking in Rooks County in recent years are evidence that the work of the organization and the annual **Communities Talk meetings have** an impact. According to the Rooks County Community Report, binge drinking by students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 declined from 17.84 percent in 2011 to 11.43 percent in 2014.







national prevention week

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION YEARBOOK

The National Prevention Week (NPW) Communities in Action Yearbook provides a source for qualitative information, including community success stories from organizations and communities that have held successful and creative prevention events to support the health and well-being of their communities.

NATIONAL PREVENTION WEEK WEBSITE

The NPW website, available in both English and Spanish, is the central hub where community coalitions can find resources about the observance, as well as information on behavioral health issues and the importance of prevention. Communities in Action Yearbook case studies are found on the site, as well as a planning guide, promotional materials, information to measure outcomes and feedback, and other tools to assist

communities in implementing the five steps of the SPF.

www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week

Community Success Story

RROLL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMEN1 (CARROLL COUNTY, MARYLAND)

The Carroll County Health Department (CCHD) created a plan to hold a variety of events in support of NPW. At one event, held at the Carroll County Flower and Jazz Festival, the CCHD had an exhibit with information on behavioral health issues. The CCHD distributed hundreds of NPW prevention resources and a variety of SAMHSA resources. By building on an existing community event, the CCHD reached a broad audience, including those who might not seek out prevention information on their own. The **CCHD** involvement in NPW led to changes in environmental policies in Carroll County, including the reinstatement of alcohol compliance checks, and has resulted in a decrease in alcohol violations.

RESULTS

Participation

Community participation in both Communities Talk and NPW has helped to raise stakeholder and national awareness of underage drinking as a public health concern affecting all communities.

Over the past decade, CBOs and IHEs have held Communities Talk meetings in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. Meetings are held in a variety of settings, including urban, rural, suburban, and Native American reservations. Expanded outreach by SAMHSA to IHEs led to more than 350 IHEs either serving as the primary Communities Talk host or collaborating with community-based organizations in hosting a meeting.

At least 103 community organizations in 43 states and territories hosted more than 185 prevention-related events as part of NPW 2015. Compared to 2014, this represents a **27 percent increase** in the number of participating community organizations and a 45 percent increase in events held. The number of community events held during NPW has increased each year since 2012.

2014 Survey Results

NEW KNOWLEDGE

83 percent of participants reported gaining new knowledge about the prevention of underage alcohol use.

PARTNERSHIPS

91 percent of the organizers collaborated with other organizations to hold an event.

ACTION

48 percent of hosts planned to follow up their event by developing a prevention strategy.

Over 10 years: NEARLY 1,000,000 PEOPLE

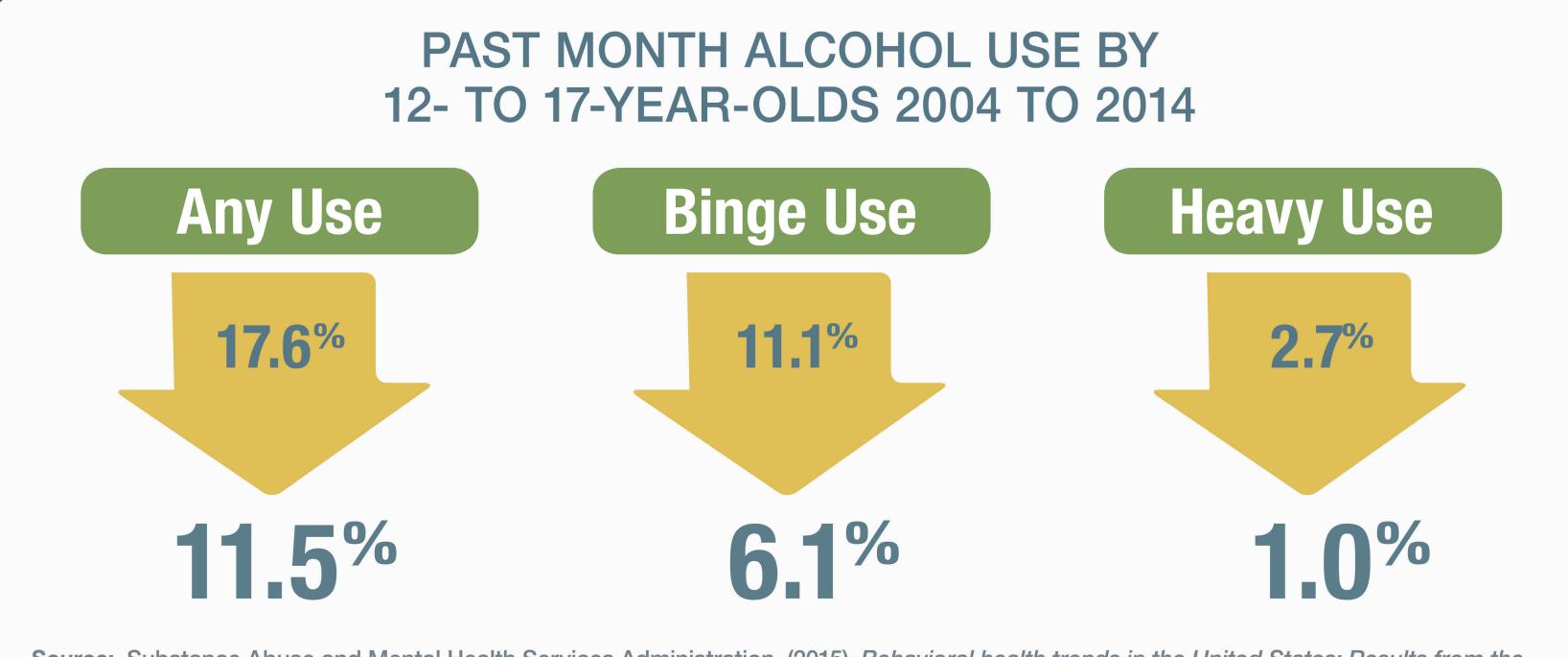
aware of the risks of underage drinking



www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhallmeetings/findameeting

CONCLUSION

The Communities Talk and NPW initiatives have significant and proven value in supporting and sustaining prevention efforts. While numerous factors are contributing to reductions in underage drinking, Communities Talk and NPW can be counted among the federal initiatives creating a climate for change.



al Survey on Drug Use and Health. Table A.7B Tobacco Product and Alcohol Use in the Past Month among Youth Aged 12 to 17.

Definitions: Current alcohol use-having a drink in the past 30 days. Binge alcohol use-having five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least one day in the past 30 days. Heavy alcohol use-binge drinking on five or more days in the past 30 days.

The need to promote change, however, is continuous:

- New cohorts of youth are making decisions about alcohol use in a culture where underage drinking might appear accepted, expected, or encouraged.
- For many communities, these events offer the only organized forum where individuals come together to discuss the need to change social norms around underage drinking.
- Communities Talk can be a wake-up call to communities that are unaware of the extent of the problem and can spark a renewed call to action.

Visit www.stopalcoholabuse.gov for resources on underage drinking prevention.