

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention in Higher Education

Summary of Discussion Points

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THE ISSUE

- 65% of college students drink alcohol, and 40% of students consume heavily (5 or more drinks at least once in the past two weeks).¹
- Over 1,800 college students die each year due to alcohol.²
- Prescription drug abuse is a major concern, with students using these drugs for self-medication as well as for studying; this is an area of policy focus for the Office of National Drug Control Policy.³
- Alcohol is involved with a wide range of campus: 57% of residence hall damage, 58% of violent behavior, 32% of suicide risk, 65% of acquaintance rape, 26% of attrition, and 38% of physical injury.⁴
- High risk drinking is relatively unchanged over the past 30 years.
- High school student drug/alcohol use is problematic and continuing.
- New substances continue to appear.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

1. Implementation of various components of a campus program is limited (weighted scores from 41% to 68%).
2. Implementation of a comprehensive campus effort is rare.
3. The focus has often been on doing “things.”
4. Many look for a magic bullet or simple solution.
5. Lack of progress with high risk drinking suggests “why bother.”
6. Substance use is often viewed as a rite of passage; associated problems are seen as inevitable.
7. Professional preparation is minimal in higher education masters degree programs.

NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- A comprehensive approach
- Change the culture – college environment and external
- Attend to the root causes, and the associated demand side
- Examples of campus leadership are limited
- Opportunity for a wellness, positive approach
- Increased resources and attention to this issue

¹ Johnston, L. D., O'Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2012). *Monitoring the Future national survey results on drug use, 1975-2011. Volume II: College students and adults ages 19-50* Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, 314 pp.

² Hingson, RW, Zha W, Weitzman ER. Magnitude of and trends in alcohol-related mortality and morbidity among U.S. college students ages 18-24, 1998-2005. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, July(Suppl 16): 12-20, 2009.

³ Office of National Drug Control Policy. *National Drug Control Strategy 2013*. Washington, D.C. 95 pp.

⁴ Anderson, DS and Gadaletto, AF. *The College Alcohol Survey*. George Mason University. 2012.