
VCC STOP Act Youth and Adult Focus Groups Summary of Findings

Presented by the North Coastal Prevention Coalition and Vista Community Clinic as part of a grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMSHA) and the STOP Act



Overview

Findings from 4 focus groups conducted by the VCC STOP Act in the Spring/Summer of 2009 about perceptions and behaviors around underage drinking:

- 2 Youth Focus Groups conducted in English
 - 19 total participants
- 2 Adult Focus Groups conducted in Spanish
 - 28 total participants

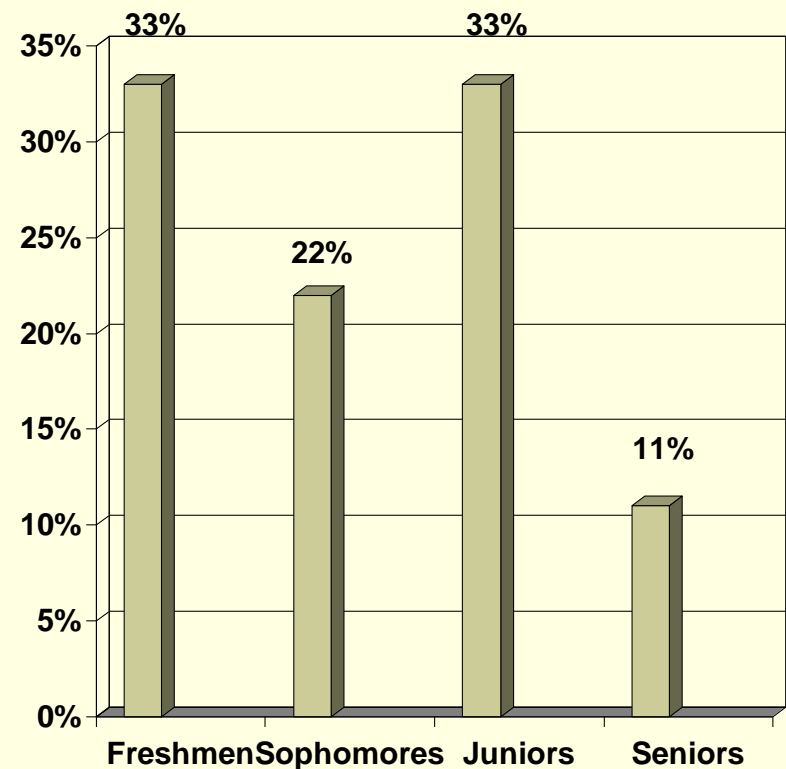
Findings from the Youth Focus Groups

Youth REACH Focus Group: Demographics

Conducted March 2009 with Project REACH

- 9 participants
- 67% males, and 33% females
- All Hispanic/Latino
- Primary language spoken in home:
 - 56% Spanish and English
 - 33% English
 - 11% Spanish

Participant Grade in School



Youth REACH Focus Group: Drinking Perceptions and Behaviors

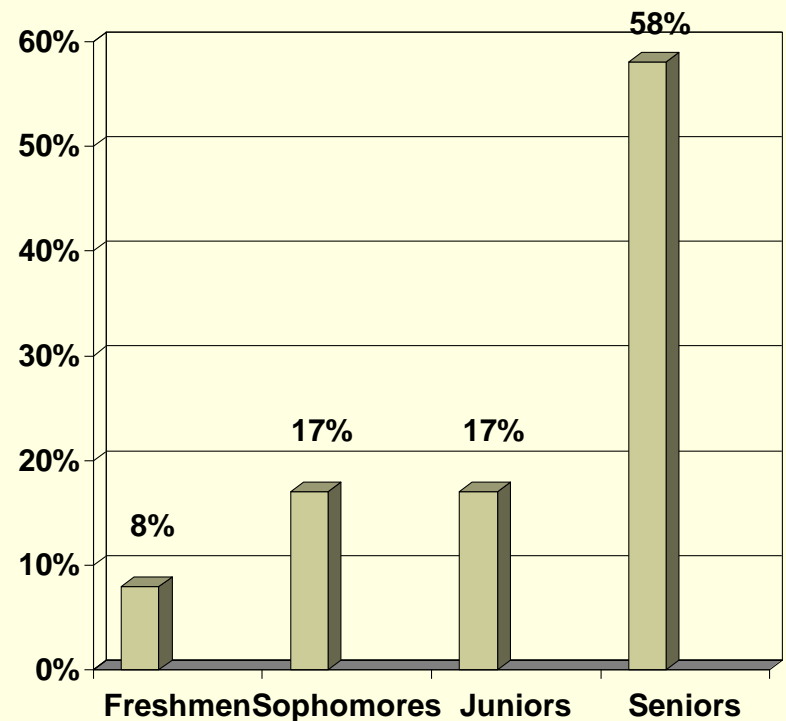
- 56% of participants said that they do not drink alcohol
 - 11% drink at least once a month
 - 11% drink less than once a month
 - 11% were not sure
- 67% agreed that underage drinking is a problem
 - 33% were not sure
- 67% believed that males are more likely to drink than females
- 66% reported most of their friends *do not* drink alcohol
 - 44% said most of their friends *do* drink alcohol
- 78% agreed that most underage drinking occurs at parties

Youth RBVHS Focus Group: Demographics

**Conducted May 2009 at
Rancho Buena Vista
High School (RBVHS)**

- 12 participants
- 50% males, and 50% females
- Primary language spoken in home:
 - 100% English

Participant Grade in School



Youth RBVHS Focus Group: Drinking Perceptions and Behaviors

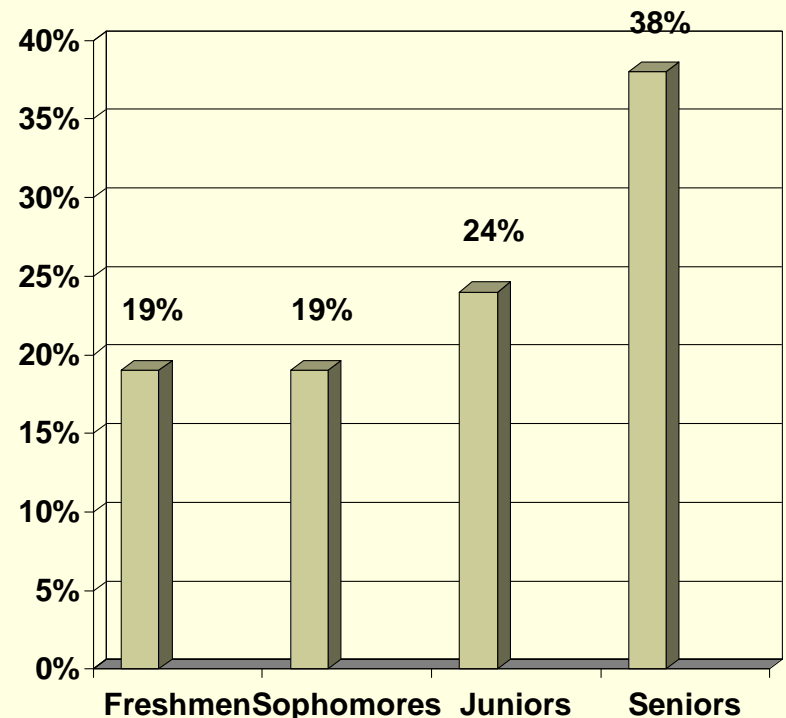
- 58% of participants said they drink alcohol at least once a month
 - 25% of participants do not drink alcohol
 - 17% drink less than once a month
- 41% agreed that underage drinking is a problem
 - 18% disagreed, 41% were not sure
- 67% believed that males are more likely to drink than females
 - 8% stated females were more likely to drink
 - 8% said both were equally likely to drink
- All reported that most of their friends drink alcohol
- All said that it was easy for underage people to get alcohol
- 75% agreed that most underage drinking occurs at parties
 - 17% disagreed, 8% were not sure

Youth Focus Groups: Combined Demographics

21 Total Participants

- 57% males, and 43% females
- Primary language spoken in home:
 - 71% English
 - 24% Spanish and English
 - 5% Spanish

Participant Grade in School



What Youth Believe About Underage Drinking

- Consensus in both groups was that drinking leads to problems
 - *“Drinking and driving can be dangerous.”*
 - *“People die, get hurt, get addicted. It’s a problem.”*
- A few participants in both groups said that drinking is a way to have fun and relax
 - *“People want to have fun; it can be bad and it can be good at times.”*
 - *“[For] people that control their alcohol, it is not a problem; only when done in excess.”*
- When the REACH group was asked if drinking alcohol was a rite of passage, one participant stated, *“People do it to fit in. Peer pressure.”*
- When the RBVHS group was asked if there are situations where it is okay for people under 21 to drink, participants responded:
 - Family weddings, if family members approve
 - On military bases where waivers allow those over 18 to drink beer
 - At parties with parents’ friends
 - It is not okay in any situations

Prevalence of Underage Drinking

- All participants have friends under the age of 21 who drink alcohol
- When asked who is more likely to drink alcohol, responses ranged from most to least mentioned as follows:
 - *“It depends on the person, what kinds of friends they have.”*
 - Both males and females
 - *“I don’t think race matters, it is more their social group.”*
 - *“It’s the groups like jocks for instance, little Cholitos running around. They’ll drink just because they think they have to, to be cool, to be tough.”*
 - Sophomores and Juniors more likely to drink, *“Some Seniors slow down because they realize they need to graduate.”*

Where Underage Drinking Occurs

From most to least mentioned by participants

- House parties
 - The REACH group stated that alcohol is obtained for house parties by older people at the parties, charging money for alcohol at parties, and people bringing their own alcohol
 - *“Parents aren’t usually there. They have a stash [of alcohol].”*
- Outside in secluded areas, including beaches
 - *“Places that are hidden. Wherever alcohol is easily accessible.”*
 - *“When you are younger, you drink outside.”*
 - The *“Green Belt”* in residential areas
- In cars
 - Both parked and on the way to parties
- Hotels
- School
 - *“It is more common to hide it in a Monster or cranberry juice. People do that a lot at school.”*

How Youth Access Alcohol

- All participants agreed that it is very easy for youth to get alcohol
 - Mostly from house parties
 - Also mentioned: parent's liquor cabinets, parents providing it, stealing it, buying it, and paying someone to buy it (such as a homeless person)
- Participants who drink, were able to access alcohol in the following ways:
 - *“With a fake ID. A lot of stores do not check. It depends on who is working; young cashiers.”*
 - *“Not from chain stores. Go to small independent/mom-pop stores that care more about making money than turning away underage youth. Some stores don't care about IDs.”*
 - *“Youth know where to go. Mostly teens get other people to buy it for them. It depends on how close you are with your family and if they're strict.... I drink with my family.”*
- When the REACH group was asked how many liquor stores were in their neighborhood, they responded 5-10 stores

Consequences of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants have seen the following due to underage drinking:

- Fights, violence, increased aggressiveness
 - *“People try to fight you, get more aggressive.”*
- Rape, sexual assault, and/or sexual promiscuity
 - *“Girls get raped and are more likely to be taken advantage of when they drink.”*
- Drunk driving, speeding and car crashes
- Injuries, hospitalizations, needing stitches
- Increased mood swings, sadness, and anger
- Needing to care for intoxicated people
- Passing out, losing awareness, and not remembering
- Vomiting
- Losing relationships

Enforcement of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants have seen police respond to underage drinking in the following ways:

- Throw away or pour out alcohol
 - *“They will take the beer and throw it away.”*
- Do nothing about it
 - *“Cops don’t really do much.”*
- Arrest underage drinkers for DUI or fighting
- Show up at or break up parties
 - *“Usually they just want everyone to leave and the neighborhood to be quiet.”*
- Chase away people drinking in the streets

Prevention of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants recommended the following prevention strategies:

- Increased involvement and communication between parents and children
 - *“Get parents involved, inform them to talk to their kids at an earlier age.”*
 - *“More involved in the sense of being apart of their lives.”*
 - *“Parents need to be understanding and approachable.”*
- More police enforcement with harsher consequences for underage drinkers and those supplying alcohol to youth
 - *“Police should have stricter punishment. People would drink a lot less.”*
 - *“Harsher consequences for kids and the people who are supplying it.”*
 - *“Harsher consequences that would affect youth, maybe do community services where youth would be able to see alcoholics.”*
- Teach youth about the effects of alcohol
 - *“Teach people about long term effects-- not graduating. Some people just don't understand.”*

Prevention of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

Continued recommendations for prevention:

- Increased security outside of stores
 - *“More security outside of stores so that people won’t tell strangers to buy them alcohol.”*
- Remove advertisements about alcohol
 - *“Advertising, take off the alcohol ads.”*
- Have youth speak about their experiences with drinking
 - *“More kids should speak about their experiences. Personal stories make an impact.”*
- Learn from personal experiences
 - *“Life is the only thing that can change you. You need to experience it personally or someone close to you.”*

What Inspires Youth Not to Drink

From most to least mentioned by participants

REACH group participants were inspired not to drink alcohol by:

- Consequences at home
 - *“It’s the consequences at home. Family members drink so my family does not want me to end up like them.”*
 - *“Getting grounded, getting phone taken away.”*
- Parental experiences with alcohol
 - *“My dad is an alcoholic. I don’t want to be like him.”*
 - *“My dad has liver cancer. That’s why I don’t drink.”*
- Other activities and athletics
 - *“Sports help people not drink. If you drink on a Thursday night, you won’t be able to perform on game day Friday.”*
 - *“I keep busy with something else. I come [to REACH] and do homework; focus on something you like. I like to draw.”*
- Knowledge about alcohol
 - *“I know what will happen if I start drinking.”*

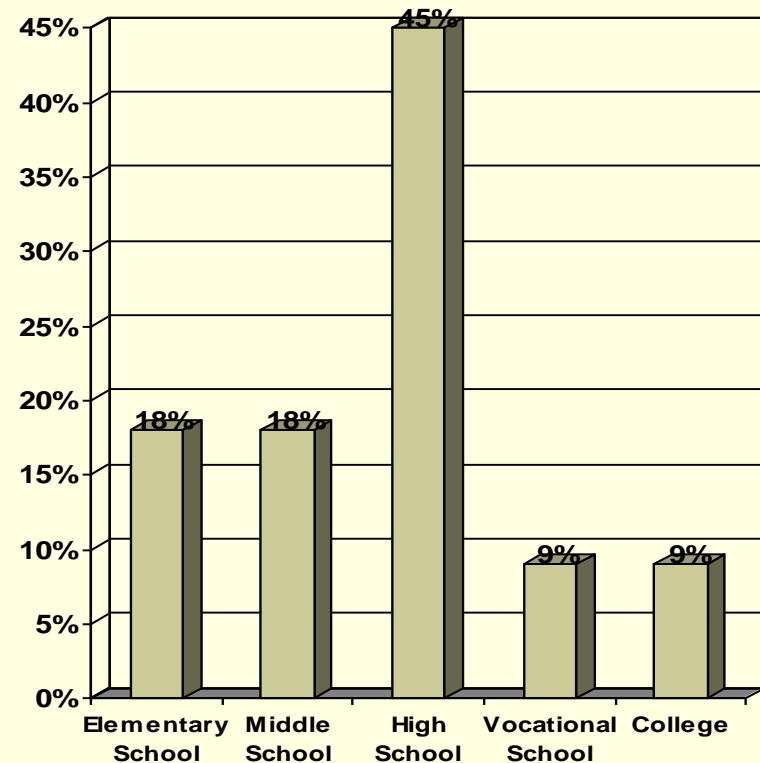
Findings from the Adult Focus Groups

Adult Focus Group 1: Demographics

Conducted April 2009

- 11 participants
- All females
- All speak Spanish in home
 - 27% also speak English in home
- All have children
- 64% work full-time
 - 36% not working outside of home

Participant Education

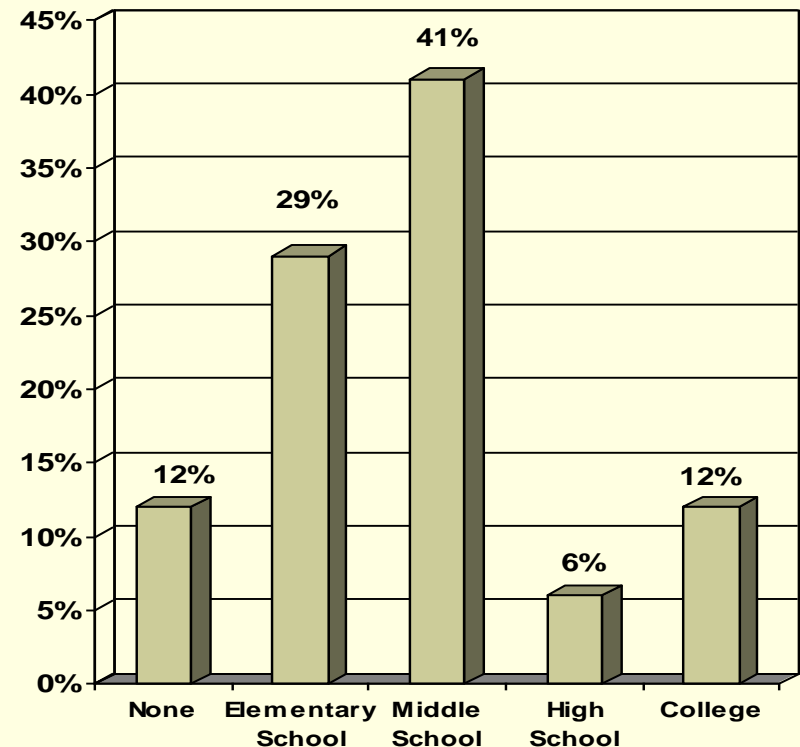


Adult Focus Group 2: Demographics

Conducted April 2009

- 17 participants
- 59% females and 41% males
- All speak Spanish in home
 - 6% also speak English in home
- All have children
- 35% work outside of home
 - 65% not working outside of home

Participant Education

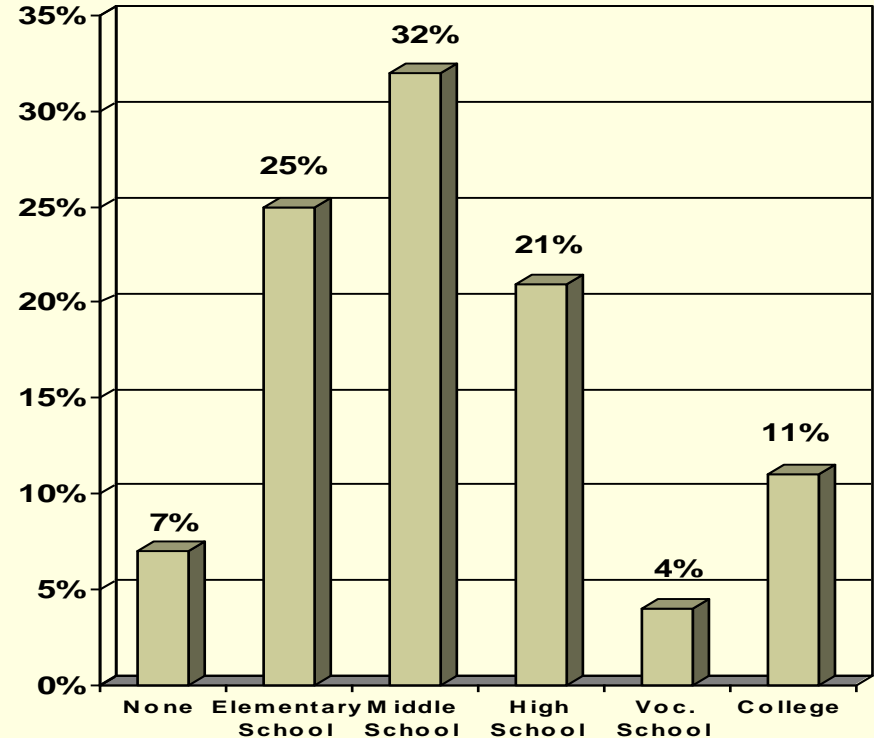


Adult Focus Groups: Combined Demographics

28 Total Participants

- 75% females and 25% males
- All speak Spanish in home
 - 14% also speak English in home
- All have children
- 46% work outside of home
 - 54% not working outside of home

Participant Education



What Adults Believe About Underage Drinking

- Most participants thought it was okay to start drinking alcohol by age 21 or over
 - Responses ranged from 21-30 years old
 - *“Whenever a youth has sufficient knowledge of the consequences, maybe around 25.”*
- None provided an age under 21; however, two said:
 - *“Whenever someone is able to be responsible for themselves.”*
 - *“It depends on the person, whenever they are mature.”*

Causes of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants thought that underage drinking was caused by:

- Parents' example or responsibility
 - Parents are role models and/or give permission
 - Cultural appropriateness
- Friends/peer pressure
- Television, commercials, advertisements in stores, and movies that promote alcohol
- Self-esteem and emotional heartache
 - Rejection, sexual abuse, not enough love
- Businesses that don't ask for ID
- Youth who ask adults for alcohol

Cultural Influence on Underage Drinking

- Most participants believed that cultural/ethnic background is related to underage drinking
 - *“80 % of all Mexicans drink alcohol. Culture is a very strong thing.”*
 - *“Culturally, we are not accustomed to having a party without alcohol.”*
 - *“In Mexico the drinking age is 18 so sometimes here people say, ‘Well you’re 18, you’re over age, so you can have a beer.’”*
- A few participants said that it depended
 - *“It depends on the person.”*
 - *“It depends on the family. All cultures drink, even Americans.”*

Community Problems Due to Underage Drinking

- All participants thought that underage drinking is a problem in their community
- Community problems reported:
 - Drinking and driving
 - Car accidents
 - Domestic abuse
 - Youth drinking in the parks
 - Empty bottles left behind
 - Discomfort telling youth not to drink
- One participant stated, *“Sometimes when we see underage kids drinking we can’t say anything because who are we to tell them anything.”*

Prevalence of Underage Drinking

- Almost all agreed that underage drinking is very common
- Only one participant said, *“I have never seen minors drinking in my neighborhood. There aren’t too many kids in my neighborhood.”*
- The second focus group thought that underage drinking is more common among men than women
 - The first group stated that men and women drink equally
- Most participants believed that underage drinking is more common among Latinos
 - *“Latinos drink more because it is acceptable.”*
 - *“In general, Latinos are not familiar with American laws. Anglos have more access to that information.”*

How Youth Access Alcohol

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants thought that youth get alcohol from:

- Their own homes
 - *“They simply take it without being noticed.”*
- Other adults
 - *“I’ve seen minors give money to an adult to buy it for them.”*
 - *“There are people that sell alcohol from their homes.”*
- Parties
- Parks and beaches
- Friends
- Tijuana

Youth Access to Alcohol at Parties

- None of the participants reported providing alcohol to people under 21 when they serve alcohol at their parties
- However, several participants said that youth easily access alcohol at parties
 - *“Kids can easily get alcohol by sneaking it while no one is watching or people are distracted.”*
 - *“Sometime there are other adults at the same party giving alcohol to minors. You might not be giving it yourself, but there’s always someone else.”*
 - *“I feel uncomfortable telling the kids not to drink when it’s not my house or party.”*

Consequences of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

- Participants reported seeing the following as a result of underage drinking:
 - Car accidents, some resulting in deaths
 - *“In front of my house, an underage drunk person hit a pregnant woman and killed her.”*
 - Fights and violence
 - Rape, sexual abuse, and pregnancy
 - Drag races on the street
 - Alcohol leading to drug abuse
 - Alcohol poisoning

Prevention of Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

- Increased communication among parents and youth, including talking about the problems
 - *“We need to have more communication with our kids.”*
- More information/resources for parents and youth, including more brochures, classes and community forums
- Parents being better role models
 - *“You should lead by example. I can’t tell my son not to do something while I’m doing it.”*
- Increased vigilance at parties
- More consequences for parents and underage youth
 - *“Adults do not take the issue seriously.”*

How Participants Prevent Underage Drinking

From most to least mentioned by participants

- Talking to their children about consequences of drinking alcohol
- Preventing their children from going out with peers
- Leading by example
- Sharing information with spouses/dads
- Arranging alternative plans
 - *“I have a secret phrase with my son so if he’s ever in a situation where he’s uncomfortable he can text me that secret and I can come pick him up.”*
- Even though they reported talking to their children about drinking, a couple adults shared that their children still drink
 - *“[My sons] say they will try to obey. But they go off with their friends and drink. Sometimes kids just don’t listen.”*

Support for Prevention Efforts

From most to least mentioned by participants

Participants would support the following prevention efforts:

- More programs and activities for youth, including after school programs, skits in churches and clinics
- Parents becoming involved and proactive, spending more time communicating with youth
- More classes, forums and info for adults and youth
 - *“We are not informed with laws here in the United States that we need to be aware of.”*
 - *“More programs such as ‘Clubs de Padres’ to teach parents how to have healthy relationships with their children.”*
- Getting rid of alcohol advertisements and billboards

Support for Laws/Ordinances

The second focus group responded to additional questions as follows:

- When asked about Social Host Ordinances, the consensus was that more information was needed
 - *“Word about this law needs to be better spread throughout the community.”*
 - *“First distribute information about the law and then enforce it.”*
- When asked what laws or ordinances they recommend to prevent underage drinking, a couple participants said:
 - *“Adults should be cited when they buy alcohol for minors and parents should be more aware of their kids.”*
 - *“We need more support from law enforcement. They need to work together with parents.”*

Ways to Inform the Community

Participants in the second group recommended the following ways to inform the community about prevention efforts:

- Television and radio campaigns
 - *“Everyone sees [TV] and listens to the radio.”*
 - *“Message on laws such as Social Host should be announced during large sporting events.”*
- More outreach at events such as Dia del Nino
- More community events
- Better understanding of laws and support from police

Summary

- A total of 21 youth and 28 adults participated in focus groups regarding their perceptions and behaviors around underage drinking.
- Both youth and adults agreed that underage drinking is very common, with all youth knowing people under 21 who drink alcohol.
- Youth and adults reported that youth can easily access alcohol at house parties, from their own homes, and from other adults buying alcohol for them.

Summary

- Increased involvement and communication between parents and children was the most frequently mentioned way to prevent underage drinking by both youth and adults.
- Youth also recommended increased police enforcement and consequences to prevent underage drinking; whereas, adults emphasized the need for increased information and resources to prevent underage drinking.

Questions & Comments

For additional information, please contact
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