



**Work Group on  
Underage and High Risk Drinking Among Young Adults  
January 24, 2008**

Southern Kennebec Vocational Cer  
Augusta, ME  
Cafeteria

***Substance Abuse Working Group Members Present:***

**Co-Chairs:** Senator Beverly Daggett; Joseph Young, Winthrop Police Chief

**Members:** Fred Ackley, Anthony Anderson, Garrison Beck, Steve DeAngelis, Anna DeMerchant, Linda Dyer, Don Ferrara, Cynthia Flye, Carol, Fritz, Ginny Geyer, Peter Griffin, Laura Harper, Megan Karges, Steve Lavoie, Randall Liberty, Chi Luu-Trann, Steven MacDougall, William McPeck, Robin Miller, Jared Mills, Elizabeth Rowe, Kara Strout, Emilie van Eeghen, Kathi Wall, Doreen Walters, Joseph Young

**Guests:** Steve Rowe, AG; Jessica Mauer

**HCCA:** Neill Miner, Substance Abuse; Renee Page, Youth School and Community; Karen Tucker, Project Coordinator; Rebecca West Dick, Board Chair

<b>HCCA Board Meeting</b>	<b>Discussion/Presentation Highlights</b>
<b>Opening</b>	Rebecca West Dick, PhD, Healthy Communities of the Capital Area (HCCA) Board Chair, opened the meeting: she welcomed participants, gave a historical overview of HCCA and introduced HCCA Staff.
<b>Introductions</b>	Senator Daggett invited participants to introduce themselves and state their attraction to this working group.
<b>Dinner Break</b>	We enjoyed a healthy meal prepared by CATC students and staff
<b>Opening Remarks: <i>Underage/High Risk Drinking--Taking on the Challenge</i> Steve Rowe, Attorney General, State of Maine</b>	<p>Senator Daggett introduced Attorney General Steve Rowe.</p> <p>The Attorney General expressed support for the group, which is committed to working for the next six months on planning action concerning underage/high risk drinking. He was pleased to see all the roles present: parents, officers, schools, community members and, especially, the youth represented, since it takes all these partners to initiate a comprehensive response to the issue..</p> <p>Rowe then distributed “The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent Underage Drinking” and reviewed some of the findings with the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol’s effect on brain development               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Frontal lobes are not fully developed until a person’s mid-twenties; this is the center governing decision-making.</li> <li>○ Starting drinking prior to frontal lobe development has been shown to have irreversible effects on the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Starting drinking prior to 14 years increases by 4 times the likelihood that person will become addicted to alcohol.
- “Drinking limits your future” is a primary message that needs to be delivered to youth.
- Scare tactics do not work; instead, creating changes that make a difference are desired.
- Why do youth choose to drink?
  - Increased stress, peers, parents lifestyle; basically the world they live in has been cited as a major factor
  - Physical changes, more responsibilities

Rowe advocates for developing alcohol prevention supports early in a child’s life and urged the group to take into account what is going on for teens as strategies are developed. Creating relational support systems of parents, teachers, coaches, store keepers and peers that are accessible to youth prior to the age of 14 appears key to preventing youth from choosing alcohol.

We need to begin “lifting up” in society’s consciousness those who choose not to drink, rather than those who do.

Key strategies

- Speaking up as a community to influencing positive choices, for example: advertisements targeting young children (Barbie’s wet Bar), product placement in stores, alcohol branding on clothing.
- Parents: find easy access points for parents and help them connect with each other to support their children in choosing not to drink.
- Young people’s involvement: they know what is going on and give insights needed to impement strategies to work.

Rowe closed by again congratulating the group, and urging the members to stay together for the whole six months and complete the process. He indicated that participation will help create and maintain momentum for change.

**Discussion: Applying the Attorney General’s Remarks to Southern Kennebec County**

Beverly Daggett and Chief Young thanked Attorney General Steve Rowe for his informative opening remarks and invited the group to discuss/comment/respond to ideas Rowe had presented.

Group comments:

- The question of the legality of serving alcohol at home to your own children was raised. Attorney Rowe indicated that the right to do this is a basic freedom in our country. Though it is always useful to review, from time to time, how this right is exercised. A group member suggested that perhaps it may be time to change that law, making the serving of alcohol to your own underage children illegal.
- We send the wrong message to kids when we say it is OK to drink just as long as you don’t also drive.
- From a school councilor: many youth express that concerns with relationships, or conflicts in relationships are often rooted in alcohol. The impact of alcohol use on interpersonal relationships is significant.

- Suggestion: Focus on asset building, resiliency. Create opportunities for youth to work and meet with other youth, or mentors and provide more opportunities for the teens to lead and positively influence the younger kids.
- Comment: Would like the state to focus on prevention not effects; it is disturbing that the state has not been willing to support this type of group.
- Elements of prevention appear to be: healthy start, caring adults and a place to help one another.
- We can start right now by speaking up about product placement in stores, remember economic pressures work! Also, ads located below the door handle are at eye level for young children, and target them. There are many “subliminal” messages about alcohol targeted at young children.
- HCCA staf asked for youth input and youth members offered that while peers do influence each other, youth still look up to their parents and other adults and are influence by their choices and input.
- The group was reminded that half of all youth choose not to drink.
- What influences them to make this choice? These strategies may help influence youth choices:
  - Mentoring programs -- High School students paired with a younger kid as a mentor.
  - Shifting generational attitudes away from alcohol as an inevitable part of a youth’s entry into the adult world.

Beverly Daggett thanked all who participated in the conversation.

**Next Steps, Evaluation, Wrap Up and Adjourn**

Neill Miner provided an overview of the six month group process, stating that

- In February and March the group will discuss what is being done locally and in other Maine towns to address underage and high risk drinking in young adults. The survey in the packet “How (And What) Are We Already Doing In Preventing Underage Drinking And High Risk Drinking Among Young Adults” will be used to gather basic information. At the next meeting, group members will break into smaller groups, by area of interest, to discuss what is being done, and what can be done in the future.
- In April members will bring their findings back to their communities, or a nearby community, to identify what 1, 2, or 3 things can be done next. Emphasis will be placed on no-cost/low cost, sustainable actions that build on what is already being done.

Neill asked participants to help HCCA staff prepare a regional profile of what is already being done about the issue of unsafe drinking by completing and returning the “How (and What) Are We Already Doing?” survey.

Neill thanked everyone for coming, participating, and asked people to fill out the meeting evaluation.

**Meeting adjourned**

Adjourned at 7:00 PM.

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*Karen Tucker: 1/30/08*

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