



Social Hosting in Our
Communities:
A survey of youth and adults

Findings and Recommendations
A Youth Research Project
2008

Ideas and suggestions from Maine youth designed to help communities to enhance and improve their ability to reduce underage drinking activity.

The Youth Empowerment and Policy Project (YEPP) is sponsored by the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, Department of Health and Human Services and managed by AdCare Educational Institute of Maine, Inc. 75 Stone Street, Augusta, Maine 04330
Phone: (207)626.3615 www.adcare-educational.org

Acknowledgements

The Maine Youth Empowerment and Policy Project Representatives:

Megan Arsenault	Mountain Valley High School
Meghan Boucher	Kennebunk High School
Mary Callaway	Old Town High School
Annalise Carr	Maine Central Institute
Karista Chukwu	Morse High School
Gabriella do Amaral	Old Town High School
Conner Drigotas	Kennebunk High School
Stephen Goss	Poland Regional High School
Madeline Hicks	Morse High School
Kristin Ireland	University of Maine at Orono
Stasia McFadden	Mt. View High School
Alex Knight	Home Schooled
Maranda Maciel	Lawrence High School
Ellen Marlow	University of Maine at Farmington
Chris Melanson	Old Town High School
Nick Melanson	Old Town High School
Kayla Pittman-Cahill	Morse High School
Caleb Verrill	St. Dom's Regional High School
Hilary White	Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School

Technical assistance support, training and data analysis by:

Wendy Betts, The Shadow Group of Casco, Maine

The project is administered by AdCare Educational Institute of Maine under a contract with the Maine Office of Substance Abuse (DHHS):

Corrie Brown, Prevention Programs Manager, AdCare Educational Institute of Maine

Marie Haywood, Prevention Programs Coordinator, AdCare Educational Institute of Maine

The project gratefully acknowledges the work of Jessie Gogan, formerly of AdCare Educational Institute. Her guidance and support were critical in the completion of this project.

The project would like to thank the following Healthy Maine Partnership Coalitions for working with youth to implement the project on the local level by providing the technical assistance and numerous opportunities to share the project with their communities.

Building Communities for Children Belfast, ME	Patrick Walsh
Communities Against Substance Abuse Brunswick, ME	Melissa Fochesato
Greater Waterville Communities for Children and Youth Waterville, ME	Nancy Findlan
Healthy Androscoggin Lewiston, ME	Christine Letcher
Healthy Oxford Hills Norway, ME	Kathryn Gardner
River Coalition, Inc Old Town, ME	Willow McVeigh
River Valley Healthy Communities Coalition Rumford, ME	Patty Duguay and Steve Casey
Sebasticook Valley Healthy Communities Pittsfield, ME	Kirsten Webster

The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the youth group and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Maine Office of Substance Abuse (DHHS) or AdCare Educational Institute of Maine.

Table of Contents

Definitions	5
Introduction	6
Project Design and Purpose	7
Methodology	7
Implementation	7
Data Processing and Analysis	8
Findings and Recommendations	
Hallmark 1	8
Hallmark 2	9
Hallmark 3	10
Hallmark 4	11
Conclusion	13
Appendices	
Resources	
Youth Survey	
Adult Survey	

Definitions

A **Hallmark** is an ideal. It is our goal, what we strive for.

Findings describe what the reality is. This is what really happens in practice from a youth perspective.

Recommendations are what the Youth Empowerment and Policy Project think needs to be done to achieve the hallmarks. They should be remedies to the findings.

Suggested actions represent examples of how to implement the recommendations.

Social Hosting is when someone provides alcohol to an underage person.

Social Norms are people's beliefs about the attitudes and behaviors that are normal, acceptable, or even expected in a particular social context.

An **Adult** is someone who is 21 years of age or older.

A **Youth** is someone who is under the age of 21.

A **Party** is a social gathering (of any size) where alcohol is present.

**Youth Empowerment and Policy Project
Findings and Recommendations 2008
Social Hosting in Our Communities:
A Survey From Youth and Adults**

Introduction

- Are you concerned with the social norms or community attitudes around teen partying, especially social hosting? Have you ever wondered what the social norms are in your community? Do members in your community share your concern or curiosity? These are the questions we asked ourselves. We conducted our own research to gain a better understanding of the problem and what we can do about it.

Background Information:

The Youth Empowerment and Policy Project is a group of Maine youth who work together to make their communities a safer place. Since 2001, we have worked with local communities, leaders in the substance abuse field like Attorney General Steven Rowe and the Office of Substance Abuse (Department of Health and Human Services), as well as each other, to tackle projects that are centered on the underage drinking problem in Maine. In short, we provide youth perspectives on the problems around underage drinking that are commonly approached from an adult perspective.

Project mission:

Social hosting has been a rising problem across the country. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association's 2006 National Survey on Drug Use & Health, a little over 25% of people under the legal drinking age have had at least one alcoholic drink within the past month. The last time they reported using alcohol, over half of underage drinkers did so at someone's house.

YEPP was curious about what ideas and attitudes existed around the problems in our communities. It was our impression that many parents and young adults were not aware of the dangers of underage drinking beyond the basic issue of driving while intoxicated. We wondered how aware communities were about the other dangers, so we decided to conduct our own research to find out. We administered a survey in various regions throughout Maine, receiving 393 youth and 430 adult surveys, to learn more about experiences and acceptance levels around social hosting in the state.

Project Design and Purpose

This document is a publication of our findings and recommendations regarding our social hosting project. The YEPP members designed the survey used for the data collection as two separate surveys, one for youth and one for adults.

Methodology

In November of 2007, the YEPP members met with a research design specialist for a weekend retreat to learn about the implementation of the research project. As a part of this training, YEPP members:

- Learned how to design effective surveys
- Designed their own Adult and Youth Surveys based on their perspective; armed with information from others who have conducted similar surveys
- Learned how to implement the surveys in different settings to gain both youth and adult perspectives

In consultation with a research specialist from The Shadow Group, the YEPP members designed two survey instruments used for data collection, which targeted youth and adult audiences separately. The survey contained the following six sections:

1. Prevalence of underage drinking.
2. Availability of alcohol to underage youth.
3. Community and family norms about underage drinking.
4. Knowledge of underage drinking.
5. Enforcement of underage drinking laws.
6. General demographic information about the respondent.

Many of the questions asked of the two groups were identical and allowed for useful comparisons of the responses.

Implementation

The YEPP members approached the use of a survey using a multi-step method. The first step was to create two surveys, one for adults and one for youth. The second step was to find places, such as schools and community centers that could be used for the dissemination of the surveys. The final step was to collect the completed surveys and return them to the AdCare office to be processed and formatted into a readable document.

Youth Survey Implementation

- 1) Each YEPP member contacted school officials to gain permission to enter classrooms and administer surveys.

- 2) YEPP members approached storeowners and delivered a short information session then asked to distribute the surveys at public special events.
- 3) YEPP members presented the survey to youth group coordinators.

*A total of 393 youth surveys were obtained.

Adult Survey Implementation

- 1) Our Healthy Maine Partnership coalition partners distributed surveys at parent meetings.
- 2) Surveys were distributed at workforce development trainings by coalition partners and AdCare Staff.
- 3) YEPP members contacted local storeowners and employees to complete the surveys.
- 4) YEPP members approached school faculty members to complete the surveys.

In addition, on-line surveys were made available using Survey Monkey, whereby adult respondents answered questions to an electronic version of the survey. This version of the survey was distributed to a varying audience including professionals in the substance abuse prevention and treatment fields, educators, and a list of previous respondents of YEPP surveys.

*A total of 430 adult surveys were obtained.

Data processing and Analysis

Data was entered into an electronic database by an independent organization specializing in data entry. They used standard data processing procedures, including 100 percent verification to ensure accuracy. Data cleaning and analysis was done through the software SPSSpc, using standard data processing procedures by a research specialist.

The YEPP members met with the research specialist for a two-day retreat to review and interpret the survey results. The results reported here have been verified for reporting accuracy by our research specialist. The following findings, recommendations, and suggested actions are based upon YEPP members' interpretation of the data.

Findings and Recommendations

HALLMARK #1

Individuals in the community understand and are aware of issues concerning social hosting.

FINDING: There is a lack of awareness about the concept that there is no such thing as safe social hosting.

FINDING: Adults and youth agree that social hosting is a problem in the community. The following supports this finding:

- 89.5% of adults report never providing alcohol or a location for underage drinking, but 57% report knowing someone who has.
- 94.6% of adults and 58.1% of youth report they are either somewhat or very concerned about underage drinking in their community.
- 73.3% of youth and 71.8% of adults report it is either somewhat easy or very easy for youth to obtain alcohol in their community.

Recommendation: All aspects of the community (youth, adults, retailers, enforcement) should become better informed on laws and health facts about social hosting.

Recommendation: Citizens should be encouraged to be more involved in their communities, as well as more informed about the lifestyles and schedules of their family members. We feel that the more involved a citizen is with their community, the more opportunities they have to help control its safety.

- Suggested actions:*
- 1) Citizens can look into getting involved in their local community health coalitions, town meetings, and community events in order to be aware of current issues.
 - 2) Look for ways to organize community events, such as recreation events and festivals, in order to get parents involved.
 - 3) Have community health coalitions and other civic groups set up tables with information and pamphlets at local events, such as sports or fairs. This is to spread awareness and information about the risks of underage drinking and the problem of social hosting.

HALLMARK #2

Youth do not have access to alcohol or a place to consume.

FINDING: Youth have access to alcohol and a location to consume. The following supports this finding:

- 40.8% of adults report attending a party where an adult has provided alcohol and a location to underage youth.
- 56.8% of youth have been to party hosted by an adult where both a location and alcohol were provided.
- 61.8% of youth reported that other youth obtain alcohol at home without parental permission.
- 80% of youth say it is somewhat or very easy to find a party where alcoholic beverages are present.
- 40.5% of youth report that other youth drink at friend's homes with permission.
- 58.3% of youth report knowing someone who has provided alcohol to youth.

Recommendation: A specific law enforcement position should be created in each community to monitor and enforce underage drinking laws. We feel that if there were a

group concentrating on this area, they would be more efficient in monitoring and enforcing social hosting laws.

Suggested action: Funding should be acquired to afford underage drinking law enforcement details for an area through grant writing, community coalition collaborations, and other fundraisers.

Recommendation: Adults should become more aware of the places youth obtain alcohol and work to prevent it.

Suggested actions: 1) Parents should lock up their liquor at home.
2) Parents know where their children are, whom they are with, what they are doing, and when they will return home.
3) Local retailers should always ask for identification when selling alcohol.

HALLMARK #3

Communities and families do not tolerate underage drinking.

FINDING: Adults are more concerned about underage drinking than youth. The following supports this finding:

- 94.6% of adults but only 58.1% of youth report being concerned about underage drinking in their community

Recommendation: Communities should be proactive in raising youth awareness about the dangers of underage drinking.

Suggested Action: Communities should host public forums, educational presentations and other community events to raise awareness of the risks associated with underage drinking.

Recommendation: It is important for schools to increase the quality and frequency of substance abuse education at all grade levels. Currently, youth are less concerned with the issue of underage drinking than adults. We believe this level of concern stems from a lack of knowledge about the dangers of underage alcohol consumption. Therefore, it is imperative to increase this knowledge through a greater availability of information.

Suggested Action: Quality can be improved by providing a comprehensive curriculum explaining the dangers and consequences of underage drinking.

Recommendation: Adults should be encouraged to take a proactive role in their community and in their child's life.

Suggested Action: 1) Parents should talk with their youth regularly to establish trusting relationships.
2) Parents should know where their child is, what they are doing and with whom.
3) Adults should be vocal about their intolerance of underage alcohol use.
4) Adults should attend community events such as town hall meetings and community forums.

Recommendation: Adults have an obligation to stay active in their community by understanding teen drinking trends.

Suggested Action: Pay attention to local media for current news surrounding the issue of social hosting. Be sure to talk to your child about the issue and what is happening outside of the home.

FINDING: Youth are not receiving clear messages about underage drinking. The following supports this finding:

- 69.8% of youth report attending parties even though their families disapprove.
- 62% of youth say an adult has spoken to them about underage drinking in the past 12 months. 89.6% of adults reported speaking to their youth about the dangers of underage drinking in the past 12 months.
- 92.6% of adults and 76.4% of youth report they have clear family rules about underage drinking.
- Youth report that their community norms support drinking alcohol at an average age of 16, while adults report community norms support drinking alcohol at an average age of 18.

Recommendation: Media should be used to discourage social hosting and substance abuse rather than glorifying it.

Suggested Action: 1) Encourage community health coalitions to sponsor public service announcements, radio commercials, and newspaper articles.
2) Parents should monitor their teen's media access, such as TV shows, Internet access, and cell phone use.
3) Use networking and popular teen sites to distribute well-rounded information about underage drinking.

Recommendation: Adults should monitor their own actions to ensure they act as positive role models.

Suggested Action: Adults should pay attention to their actions and words while drinking to avoid glamorizing alcohol in front of youth.

Recommendation: Youth should be encouraged to take a proactive role among their peers, family, and local community.

Suggested Action: Local community coalitions should reach out to youth and create opportunities to involve them in healthy community projects.

HALLMARK #4

Communities maintain effective enforcement and prevention to decrease social hosting.

FINDING: Youth are unaware of the consequences they might experience after participating in underage drinking. The following supports this finding:

- 53.9% of youth report that it would be somewhat unlikely or very unlikely for them to get in trouble with the police after consuming 3-4 alcoholic drinks.

Recommendation: Parents and community members should encourage enforcement of underage drinking laws.

Suggested action: Advocate for a Substance Abuse Officer in your community

Recommendation: Parents should maintain and enforce family rules on underage drinking

Suggested action: 1) Parents should have frequent family talks with their teens about the risks associated with underage drinking, their expectations for their teens regarding underage drinking, and the family rules around underage drinking.
2) Parents should evaluate current family rules about underage drinking and be sure they are enforceable.
3) Parents should talk to the parent of their teen's friends and come to an agreement on rules and expectations about underage drinking for their children

Recommendation: Raise awareness of social hosting laws

Suggested action: 1) Create and look for opportunities to publicize social hosting laws in your community.
2) Encourage retailers and law enforcement to display visible and eye-catching signs stating the current laws about underage drinking and social hosting.

FINDING: Youth believe an increase in law enforcement won't stop adults from social hosting, while adults disagree with this statement. The following supports this finding:

- 50.8% of adults but only 19.7% of youth reported that strict enforcement of underage drinking laws would stop parents and adults from hosting parties or providing alcohol to underage youth.

Recommendation: All members of the community (youth, adults, law enforcement, community leaders) should encourage change in the current social norms that support social hosting.

Suggested action: 1) Student leadership groups should take on a larger role in talking with their communities about underage drinking and social hosting.
2) Communities should hold frequent community forums on issues concerning youth and underage drinking.
3) Parents, community health coalitions, and law enforcement should ensure that the local Parent/Teacher Associations are addressing the risks of underage drinking during meetings.
4) Law enforcement should "educate when busting" teens for underage drinking and social hosting.

Recommendation: Clarify and support consequences for underage drinking and social hosting in the home, school, community, and law.

Suggested action: 1) Encourage stricter laws for social hosting.
2) Elected officials and law enforcement should publicize any underage drinking or social hosting law changes and amendments.

3) Community members, parents, teens, and local law enforcement should encourage the act of reporting underage drinking parties and people that they know who are providing access to and a place to consume alcohol.

FINDING: Youth do not think strict laws would help decrease social hosting. The following supports this finding:

- 50.8% of youth say they wouldn't get caught if they drank, but 90.3% feel they would get in trouble with their family if they did get caught.

Recommendation: Develop alcohol enforcement details in your community

Suggested action: 1) Encourage and educate city officials about the importance of having specific concentrated law enforcement officers for substance abuse issues in their community.
2) Support community members in voicing their support of dedicated law enforcement officers for substance abuse related issues to their elected city officials.

Recommendation: Develop health awareness projects targeting social hosting

Suggested action: Work with local community health coalitions to locate qualified, experienced speakers paired with effective environmental strategies to promote awareness and action in local schools.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that all members of local communities, youth and adult alike, need to work together in order to eliminate the increasingly prevalent problem known as social hosting. From our findings, social hosting is a problem caused by lack of knowledge within a community, lack of enforcement, lack of communication, and a difference in understanding between youth and adults. As a community, we need to learn more about this problem and consequences in order to discourage the practice permanently. Through our research we've developed a way to begin the endeavor for healthier communities. We have included a list of resources that is available to any person interesting in learning more about social hosting or would like to get involved in their community and change the social norm to one where social hosting and underage drinking is not tolerated. We will also be working with our Healthy Maine Partnership coalitions to disseminate the findings and recommendations to their local community, using a variety of tools and promotional items. For more information, or to learn how you can get involved, contact AdCare Educational Institute of Maine or visit www.neias.org/YEP.