

Enrolled College Females, Ages 18 to 24:

Alcohol Use, Knowledge and Attitudes

July, 2006

Problem Statement

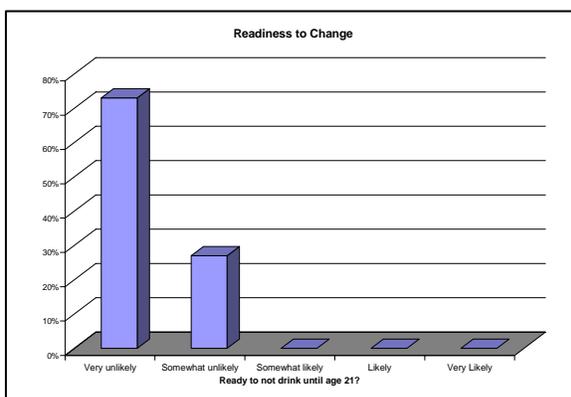
Women students in Maine colleges and universities who drink may be subject to unique risks arising from their alcohol consumption. Research is available which demonstrates their alcohol consumption exposes them to increased health risks, including risky sexual practices, victimization from sexual assault, physical injury, negative academic consequences, exposure to STD's, and the possibility for alcohol-affected pregnancies.

Study Findings

- ❖ Focus group discussions with female students found very few who indicated they did not drink alcohol – less than one person per focus group. Even among the underage students, drinking prevalence appears to be normative behavior.
- ❖ About 58% of campus administrative personnel interviewed at the 5 colleges included in this study believe on-campus drinking by female students is a problem.
- ❖ The most active days of the week for alcohol consumption by the population was reported to be Thursdays and Saturdays. Thursday at every campus was referred to as "Thirsty Thursday", and appears to be universally celebrated by college students. "Many students miss Friday classes because of Thirsty Thursday events; and it doesn't appear the school is taking this issue very seriously" (campus nurse).
- ❖ When asked about the diligence of establishments that run specials on confirming the legal age of their female student patrons, the most common response by focus groups was: "if you want to get in, you can."
- ❖ In almost every focus group, at least one person indicated they were familiar with someone who had been victimized (sexually assaulted) on or near the campus while the victim was under the influence of alcohol

Impacts

- ❖ "...the choices women make in the first week of school are what set up her social life for the year. And, those who participate in the 'Thirsty Thursday' ritual appear to maintain their participation for the entire year" (campus counselor).
- ❖ Population members indicated that in the event of an assault while they were drinking – they probably wouldn't report it because of embarrassment – believing they put themselves in that position by drinking too much.



When asked if the study population was ready to not drink until they reached age 21, 100% of respondents reported this to be Very to Somewhat Unlikely.

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With regard to the female students, ages 18 to 24, Student Researchers believe they are Likely ready:

- To work to improve alcohol consumption safety among their peers by personally taking responsibility for friends who appear to be drinking to excess.
- To educate themselves on the signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning, and take steps to know what to do should they become aware of a case of alcohol poisoning
- To inform / advise friends of the dangers of harmful alcohol use
- To educate themselves around those alcohol consumption behaviors that may increase their susceptibility to harm (where they drink; when they drink; with whom they drink; etc.)
- To modify their alcohol consumption behaviors to minimize their susceptibility to risk of harm
- To accept and read information designed to educate them about the harmful effects of alcohol consumption
- To be willing to increase their awareness of available 'helping' resources designed to minimize harm to them from alcohol abuse

But, the Student Researchers believe the sub cultural population is Unlikely ready to:

- Initiate stricter self-imposed limits on the amounts of alcoholic drinks they consume during a single occasion
- Recognize the reasons they drink to excess, and seek help with these issues
- Improve their awareness of the official policies governing alcohol use on campus, nor adhere to the official policies governing alcohol use on campus
- Work to improve alcohol consumption safety among their peers by volunteering to work on prevention programming on campus.

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