

MAINE 2008: Underage Drinking Summit - Introduction

We are pleased that so many Maine communities are organizing underage drinking summits. Thank you for taking the lead in mobilizing your community around this important issue. We look forward to assisting you as you plan your summit.

Because you have agreed to organize this summit, you recognize that underage drinking is a serious community problem. Therefore, it is our hope that you take the opportunity to use this event as the catalyst for energizing your community around the **solutions, not just the problem.**

There is significant research that affirms that preventing underage drinking and related problems lie in these four areas: *enforcement, access, norms and parental monitoring*. We must work on all four areas in order to see success. Fortunately, these are also the areas that the community as a whole can influence. Are laws enforced consistently, and does law enforcement feel the community supports them when they do enforce the laws; how easy is it for young people to get alcohol, either from adults, peers or retailers; what messages are we sending young people about alcohol - do community norms support the notion that “everyone does it”; do young people know that their parents disapprove of alcohol use because the parents have set clear boundaries?

For events like these, we are often tempted to focus on the horrible things that can happen as a result of underage drinking – drunk driving, addiction, etc. – so therefore are tempted to have speakers tell their stories with the hope of “scaring” our communities into action. This can leave individuals feeling frustrated because they are unclear about what they can do to help. Our hope is that these summits will take a proactive approach and use the time with your participants to help them understand they have a role to play. Community members should leave your event wanting to be involved because they truly see there is a solution.

Underage Drinking Summit - Logistics

✓ **Who should be invited?**

Be creative – you really want to get all sectors of your community involved!

- School superintendent
- School Board members
- Teachers
- Law Enforcement (PD and Sheriff)
- Judges
- District Attorney
- Parents (PTA/PTO, etc)
- Young people
- Coaches
- Local business representatives
- Chamber of Commerce/Rotary, etc.
- Elected officials (including state legislators, town/city council members or selectmen, county commissioners)
- Health care providers
- Faith leaders
- Other community program leaders
- General public

NOTE: Community leaders, decision makers and those that may not traditionally be a part of your coalition (i.e. legislators, police chief, superintendent, etc.) are going to take a little extra effort to get to the summit. They should get a personal call from you as soon as possible (or from someone in your coalition that knows them personally) inviting them to the summit so they “save the date”. They should also get a written invitation and a reminder call a few days before the event, and a personal written thank you after the event. If you can give them a speaking slot and/or make it an opportunity for positive publicity for them that may also increase the chances that they will come. If you need the contact information for your state legislators, please e-mail Malory Shaughnessy of the Alliance to Prevent Substance Abuse at mshaughnessy@masap.org or you may find this information off the State of Maine website: www.maine.gov/portal/government/edemocracy/lookup_officials.php

✓ **Plan on having food! (especially if your meeting time is during a mealtime)**

Make sure the invitation/announcement mentions that food will be provided.

✓ **Consider providing childcare or transportation** to the event, if that would give more people the opportunity to attend (Your High School Key Club or other service club can assist with this effort).

✓ **Advertise and promote your summit:**

- Newspaper

- Pitch the story personally to local reporters: Suggest doing a series of stories on underage drinking prior to the event, or highlight some local action.
- Invite reporters to attend your event.
- **Radio (call in to local talk programs and announce it in advance)**
- **TV**
 - One community's announcement will run at the bottom of the screen during their local weather broadcast for the days prior to their event.
 - Invite local news stations to cover your event.
 - Don't forget cable access stations
 - Make a recording of the event to submit for broadcast later on your local access.
- Send a **Press Advisory** a few days before the event with the list of speakers and timeframe (see draft provided in materials packet).
- **Send a Press Release** the day of the event (see draft provided in materials packet).
- **Personal phone calls**
Once people RSVP, set up a phone tree. The night before the event volunteers can make reminder calls.
- **E-mail:** Take advantage of all of the e-mail lists you and your coalition members may be on to spread the word
- **Snail Mail:** Send an invitation to your mailing lists.
- **Fliers:** Place fliers in common gathering places or "high traffic" areas of your community. You can also send a flier home to parents from the school or place them in church bulletins or organizational newsletters.
- ✓ **Other things to remember:**
 - Make sure you have sign in sheets the night of the summit so that you can create a database for future meetings and activities (See example)
 - During introductions, make sure you recognize elected officials (and other key leaders) that are in attendance.
 - Have flip chart paper and markers for breakout session or to track key points made during the discussion.
 - Make sure you have a way to show the videos/DVD's and Power Point presentation (if using). Note: If you do not have access to a power point projector, please let us know. Someone from OSA may be able to bring one to your event. DVDs can also be shown on a laptop with a projector, if you have a laptop equipped with a DVD drive. Be sure to test all your equipment first. In this case you may need extra speakers.

- Identify a facilitator – someone who has a strong enough personality to keep the agenda moving and treat participants with respect.
- Create a poster display focusing on the work your coalition has been doing. Invite other community organizations to do the same.
- ✓ **Follow-up and action plan.** Your summit will not be complete unless you follow-up with information and provide opportunities for involvement to those citizens who took time to participate!
 - **Plan and announce a follow up meeting to determine next steps, create action teams, etc. (it is good to have a date set up in advance).**
 - For those communities that held an event in 2006, this year's event is a good time to share the steps you have taken since then. Updates on data, new policies, action team work can be shared and discussed.
 - **At the MAPSA Second Annual Prevention Convention in November 2008 an opportunity will be available to share with your peers across the state the success stories of the work done after your Town Hall event. Presentations on the work done will be shared at our own "Town Hall" meeting.**

⇒ Save the date of November 13/14, 2008 for the Convention.