



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Humboldt County Promotes Alcohol Awareness Month

At its meeting April 19, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors proclaimed April as Alcohol Awareness Month in Humboldt County.

This year's theme "Talk Early, Talk Often: Parents Can Make a Difference in Teen Alcohol Use," supports parent-teen communication about the health consequences of alcohol use. Here in Humboldt County, there has been an added focus on educating parents and teens about local laws that address underage drinking at home parties.

Humboldt Allies for Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP), a community coalition, is helping spread the word this month with mailers and public service announcements to raise awareness that if you host, you pay. Eureka has joined a list of other communities across the county that have passed social host ordinances which impose fines and other costs on adults who allow gatherings where alcohol is available to people under 21 years old.

Alcohol is the leading drug used on a regular basis by teens in Humboldt County. One in three 11th-graders surveyed reported binge drinking during the last 30 days, as measured by the California Healthy Kids Survey.

It can be difficult to talk with children about drinking and drug use, but it is well worth it. The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence states that kids who talk with their parents and learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are half as likely to use these substances than those who don't have such conversations.

According to the California Healthy Kids Survey, 40 percent of Humboldt County high school students said they had not talked with a parent or guardian about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco or drug use.

Some tips for good communication include:

- Talk to your kids before they're teenagers (as early as age 9)
- Be a good listener
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be open and honest.

Teen alcohol use in any setting can be dangerous, and drinking at home is not safer. The brains of adolescents are developing, and when teens start using alcohol before age 15, they are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or alcoholism later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21. Alcohol consumption by adolescents can result in brain damage—possibly permanent—and impairs intellectual development. Drinking can also put teens at risk for alcohol poisoning and injury, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Community members can do their part by not providing alcohol to anyone who is underage, securing liquor cabinets, and reporting unruly parties and underage drinking to law enforcement," said DHHS's Health Education Specialist Beth Wells.

To learn more about local alcohol and other drug treatment, contact 707-476-4054. To learn more about alcohol and other drug prevention efforts, contact ASAP at 707-445-6023. ASAP's next meeting is Wednesday, June 8 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. at the Community Wellness Center, 908 Seventh St., Eureka.



Cutline: Fifth District Humboldt County Supervisor Ryan Sundberg and ASAP Vice Chair David Young.

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