

Community Partnership Meeting on Underage Drinking
April 21, 2010
Minutes

Welcome—Benjamin Jojola

Benjamin welcomed attendees and offered words of inspiration.

Introductions—Linda Nelson

The Skagit County Child & Family Consortium seeks to ensure we understand what the issues are for children/families in Skagit County and to develop a seamless continuum of services to meet their needs. Linda reviewed materials in packet, invited all to attend regular consortium meetings. SCCFC plans to have quarterly meetings like this on relevant topics. Appreciation was given to RUaD for funding and to board member Wenda Cross for arranging the food/beverages.

Scope of the Problem—Lyndie Case

Lyndie reviewed Healthy Youth Survey results pertaining to alcohol in a fun, “game show” style. She distributed handouts from www.askHYS.net where you can develop useful data charts from the Healthy Youth Survey. She also provided charts produced by Jan-Olov Johansson, evaluator for the Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant.

Facilitated Discussion—Linda Nelson

The purpose of today’s discussion is to consider ways to lower underage drinking in Skagit County and address gaps. Attention was directed to the handout on the Institute of Medicine’s Substance Abuse Continuum of Care: Prevention, Intervention, Treatment & Aftercare. Participants were asked to write their organization’s name under the areas they address. Participants were then invited to share their perspectives on underage drinking

Issues:

Barriers to treatment:

- Parents unable to send youth to treatment without youth’s consent. Youth may see treatment as foisted upon them by adults, becomes a control issue.
- Kids’ sense of invulnerability, don’t feel the immediate pain that adults may feel that might drive them to seek treatment.
- Kids with mental health issues—can’t stabilize because mental health/substance abuse systems don’t work well together. It was noted that this is improving in recent years due to more cross-training.
- Accessibility to treatment, ranging from transportation, schedule conflicts with school/work, cost, parents not wanting youth to obtain treatment because they don’t want family “exposed”, undocumented families with fear of deportation.

- Most treatment is billed per individual per hour, doesn't work with the entire family. Treatment should occur in context of family.
- **Strengths:**
 - Good agencies in our area that are willing to accommodate needs.
 - Treatment on demand is available in Skagit County

Community norms/perceptions:

- Early initiation of alcohol use related to perceived norms of community. Alcohol is legal, "OK", been "OK" for hundreds of years. Norms have changed over the years. Will it take lawsuits to change norms?
- Parents feel alone and isolated when they are going through these issues with their kids. Need help for parents in dealing with this.
- Some parents condoning underage drinking.
- Majority of parents are doing proactive things but feel alone in this.
- Youth believe that "everyone" drinks.
- Latino families feel a disconnect with services which are more anglo-based. Issue of culture more than language. Families still trying to figure out culture for themselves, if kids say drinking is the norm, difficult for families who want their kids to assimilate.

Social access:

- Focus groups have shown that young adults age 18-25 who are still connected with younger kids furnish alcohol.
- Access to alcohol from parents' supplies at friends' homes is also common.

Pro-social activities:

- Limited choices for youth to have safe, structured, appealing place to do things.
- Accessibility is another issue even when these things are available. Soccer, dance, etc. activities are available, but cost, transportation, parent availability, "eligibility" for subsidy, etc. prohibit participation.
- Also need to develop healthy activities that jaded kids would be drawn to.
- Kids need positive adult role model and they need hope and vision for a better future for themselves.
- **Strengths:**
 - Lots of events available for people in recovery. Information will be shared more broadly.
 - Lots of healthy activities/opportunities do exist.

Motives for drinking:

- Boredom
- dealing with pain/trauma, wanting to feel better.
- Gives sense of relief and peer acceptance for those who have been victimized and feel bad about who they are.

Generational issues:

- Cycle of history. Family patterns of alcohol/substance use, pain, trauma
- Kids want someone to talk with them honestly about these things and give them hope.

Media messages

Linda asked how well participants know about what others are doing in the four areas in the continuum and if there is a need for further connection. Resource groups exist in Skagit County by geographic area, population, county-wide. Need to make sure that those who are not tied in are invited to participate in these groups. Sometimes organizations won't release staff for meetings.

It was noted that the prevention list only includes social services agencies, does not include the opportunities in the community for positive activities e.g. camps, arts, work with animals, volunteer opportunities, etc.

What else would participants like to see happen to address the issue of underage drinking?

- Aim younger in schools. Problems already developing in 6th grade.
- County-wide social norming work. What are acceptable behaviors? Sedro-Woolley schools are taking positive spin on HYS results and advertising that majority of kids not drinking, smoking, etc.

Wrap-Up—Jenn Angelis

Purpose was to start a conversation, not get to next steps. Asked participants to think about anything that jumped out at them today and consider one specific action they might do as a result of this discussion. Ideas shared: How to promote activities that don't feel too "goody-goody", maybe put up posters; Find a way to capture parents to share HYS results; Huge need downtown MV for AA and Alateen. Looking for space; Clean and Sober dances are an example of activities to get more info out about.

Lyndie will send out survey monkey online survey to solicit further feedback, also feel free to contact a board member with ideas and suggestions for future forum topics.

Attendance

Linda Nelson, SCCFC President, semi-retired
Wenda Cross, Skagit Islands Head Start
Jonna Zeiber, Catholic Community Services
Evelyn Turner, Launching Success
Jessica Chadwick, Youthnet
Trudi Sathern, Follman Agency
Marta Hammond, UW Bothell RN-BSN program
Ray Soriano, Skagit Islands Head Start
Jennifer Walton, SCCFC Secretary, Skagit County Public Health
Janice Condrin, SCCFC Treasurer, Youthnet/Emerson
Mick Rasch, Skagit County Community Services/ARIS
Jocelyn Palmer-Perry, Skagit County Community Services/ARIS
Timm Fortune, Skagit Prevention Council
Rex Dudley, Big Brothers/Big Sisters
Sarah Hinman, Skagit County Community Services
Bob Hicks, Skagit County Community Services

Jean Champagne, Mount Vernon School District
Emily Elde, Mount Vernon High School
Genevieve, Oasis Teen Shelter
Jennifer Milton, Skagit County Community Action Agency
Colleen Bows, Skagit County Youth & Family Services
Benjamin Jojola, Samish Indian Nation
Joe Ruiz, Samish Indian Nation
Robin Hoover, Skagit Islands Head Start
Jenn Angelis, Sedro-Woolley School District
Melanie Coyne, Skagit Literacy
Lyndie Case, United General Hospital
Eric Hall, NW ESD