

PUTNAM COUNTY COMMUNITIES THAT CARE COALITION

The Truth about Binge Drinking

The **Putnam County Communities That Care (CTC)** Coalition is an anti-drug coalition that works to build a safe and healthy family-oriented community, which includes reducing the use of harmful substances by our adolescents. It is composed of individuals from all sectors of the community who work together to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors through education, enforcement and policy initiatives.

Underage alcohol consumption is a major public health problem in the United States. According to the Surgeon General, alcohol is the drug of choice for youth and is used more than tobacco and illicit drugs combined. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism report that each year about 5,000 people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking. **According to a 2008 student survey in Putnam County, approximately 70% of students in grades 8 -12 report using alcohol, and 45% of 12th graders in Putnam reported binge drinking.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), binge drinking is defined as consuming 5 or more drinks in a row for males and 4 or more drinks in a row for females in a two hour period. The CDC also indicates that binge drinking is associated with many health problems, including but not limited to: unintentional injuries (car crashes, burns, drowning); intentional injuries (sexual assault, domestic violence); alcohol poisoning (vomiting; unconsciousness; cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin; slow or irregular breathing – less than 8 breaths/minute or 10 or more seconds between breaths), sexually transmitted diseases; unintended pregnancy; cardiovascular disease (stroke, high blood pressure); liver disease; and neurological damage.

The Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) reports that young people who begin drinking alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who wait until they are 21.

To reduce the prevalence of binge drinking, it is important for parents to discuss the dangers of binge drinking with your kids (make it short and simple and be direct); create a plan with your kids, so that if they are faced with a situation in which binge drinking is occurring (assure them that you will not embarrass them in front of others, create a ‘code-phrase’ that indicates your child would like to be picked up if he/she calls and uses it); inform youth of what to do in case of a medical emergency (i.e. get help if a friend is in trouble – call 911 or POISON and immediately find an adult if someone is unconscious). It is important to remember that underage drinking is not a rite of passage, and is a widespread problem with dangerous health, social and economic consequences.

Members of CTC are available if you have any questions or would like for us to do a presentation to your organization on this or any other substance abuse trends that affect our children. Please call the Putnam County Youth Bureau at 845-225-6316, Ext. 1117 or the National Council on Alcoholism/Putnam at 845-225-4646, Ext. 11 for further information.

Always remember that *Allowing Underage Drinking at your Home is No Party.*

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