

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact:
Adrienne Gallant
Knox County Community Health Coalition
236-6313, ext 3 or adgallant@myfairpoint.net

Surveys of Parents and Teens Show Perception Gap

Recently Released Survey Data Shows Parent Perceptions of Teen Drinking Don't Match Reality of Teen Alcohol Use and Abuse

Knox County—Maine parents of high school students appear to underestimate their teen's alcohol use as well as the amount they drink. Recently released survey results of the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey (MIYHS) and a corresponding parent phone survey show a large gap between what parents believe about their teen's alcohol use and what teens report. The Knox County Community Health Coalition (KCCHC) is joining forces with the Maine Office of Substance Abuse to raise parental awareness about the realities of underage drinking and to provide them with back to school tips and tools to help keep their kids safe.

In the statewide phone survey of Maine parents, only 26% believed their high school age child had ever had more than a few sips of alcohol, and less than 2% believed their child had engaged in binge drinking. However, according to the recently released MIYHS results, 65% of Maine high school teens said they have had at least one alcoholic drink, and more than 20% say they have had more than 5 drinks in a row, defined as binge drinking. KCCHC and the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, a division of the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, aims to inform parents of the extent of teen alcohol use.

"We look forward to continue working with local schools and parent groups this year in support of their effort to reduce teen alcohol use", says Adrienne Gallant, Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist for KCCHC. "If parents or school personnel have questions or would like to arrange for a presentation they can contact me at 236-6313, ext 3 or adgallant@myfairpoint.net"

KCCH and OSA offer five simple, time-proven tips for preventing teen alcohol use through increased parental monitoring.

1. Limit your teen's access to alcohol. Keep track of what and how much you have in your home, and keep it where it's not accessible to teens.
2. Network with other parents. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents and let them know where you stand on underage alcohol use.

3. Enforce your rules consistently. Make sure your teen understands your rules and the consequences if they are broken.
4. Check in often with your teen. Be sure you know how to reach them. Ask them where they're going, if anyone will have alcohol and if adults will be present.
5. Be up and ready when your teen comes home. Ask them about their night and be prepared for what you will say or do if you discover they've been drinking.

Parental monitoring is critical in preventing underage alcohol use. In fact, high school students who don't believe they would be caught by their parents are three times as likely to drink alcohol.

For more detailed tips and information about how to prevent underage drinking, call KCCHC at 236-6313x3, visit www.mainparents.net, or contact OSA toll free at 1-800-499-0027.