



LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

No. 4

Parenting for Prevention March 2009

Data shows that Livingston County youth are using alcohol and other **drugs at rates higher than national averages**. In an attempt to understand why use is so high, focus groups with youth, adults, and professionals were conducted. Middle school participants reported peer pressure, boredom, lack of supervision, and accessibility as main reasons for alcohol and other drug use. High school students reported having money and transportation made accessing alcohol and other drugs easier for them. They also talked about the problems of mixed messages and inconsistency in response to kids who are caught using. Adults and treatment providers stated that lack of supervision, isolation, inconsistent messages, and inaction of adults are contributing to the problem. It was reported that it is not uncommon for parents to allow kids to have friends over to party and drink as long as they spend the night and do not drive.

Maryanne, a local mom who struggled with her son's substance abuse, reports she was stunned at how her son's use was normalized by other parents.

I was horrified at the 'head in the sand' attitude that clearly dominates parents. The sad fact is that drugs and alcohol are killing our kids . . . and yet we are not outraged, we are not mobilized as a community to fight to save our kids. In fact, we hear stories of parents 'hosting' parties at their homes, allowing kids to drink 'safely' and pride themselves that "at least they are not drinking and driving".

She refuses to be a "head in the sand" parent. Maryanne is challenging every parent and adult to "do whatever it takes" to keep teens from using alcohol and other drugs.

Research shows that parents are central to preventing the use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs by teens.

In fact, kids themselves say that losing their parents' trust and respect are the most important reasons to not use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Communication is important – both talking and listening. Start early and keep it going. As a parent, your actions matter. Be a positive role model. State clearly that alcohol and tobacco use by minors is never acceptable, that the use of illicit drugs is never acceptable, and that the misuse of prescription drugs and over the counter medications is never acceptable. When you suspect or know that your child has been drinking, smoking, or using other drugs, take action to stop it as soon as you can.

Many well-meaning parents think that it is enough to take away car keys at their teens' parties so the teens can't drink and drive. Parents provide the alcohol or allow alcohol to be consumed based on the false belief that it's a rite of passage, especially at prom & graduation parties.

The Parents Who Host, Lose the Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking public awareness campaign

was developed by Drug-Free Action Alliance in 2000 to educate parents about the health and safety risks of serving alcohol at teen parties and to increase awareness of and compliance with Underage Drinking Laws and Social Host laws. Locally, the Livingston County Community Alliance (LCCA), the Pinckney Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, along with the Project SUCCESS Counselors of the Livingston Community Prevention Project are collaborating to implement this campaign. The campaign will launch this month and concentrate its efforts in March, April, May, and June. If you are interested in volunteering for any part of the awareness campaign, contact Kris Nelson at knelson@keycenters.org.

Changing the substance abuse picture in any community requires us to "parent for prevention". This involves looking at ourselves individually and working with other parents in the community.

What You Can Do

- Become educated about addiction, risk factors, environmental influences, and real facts.
- De-myth your thinking.
- Examine your own attitudes and role modeling.
- Learn the signs that a young person is using and seek help when needed.
- Take parenting instruction classes.
- Help children develop resilience.
- Become involved in providing alternative activities for youth.
- Network with other parents.
- Create and participate in community coalitions that work for healthy community norms.
- Safeguard your medications – both prescription and over the counter.
- Lock up your alcohol.
- If you are a business owner, you can help support prevention efforts by partnering with your local coalition, sponsoring an activity, or distributing parenting materials to your employees.
- **Respond to Maryanne's challenge and "do whatever it takes" to keep youth from using alcohol and other drugs.**





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Community Resources

There are many prevention and treatment specialists within Livingston County who are trained in working with alcohol, tobacco, & other drug problems in teens; they can guide & inform you.

Health Services ACCESS

517.546.4126

Telephone screening, information on community resources, and referrals for substance abuse services for Livingston County residents with Medicaid or no insurance

2-1-1 Central Michigan Help Line

2-1-1 or 866.561.2500

Provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for every day needs and in times of crisis; offers access to basic human needs resources, physical and mental health resources, employment supports, support for older Americans and persons with disabilities, support for children, youth, and families, as well as many other local resources.

Brief Strategic Family Therapy*

517.546.4445

A trained counselor delivers 8 to 12 weekly sessions either in the family's home or at Complete Counseling Center. The FREE sessions focus on parental leadership, family communication, problem solving, nurturing, and shared responsibility.

Creating Lasting Family Connections*

810.231.9591 or 517.548.2200

FREE 8-week series designed to help parents gain knowledge about alcohol and other drug use among adolescents and improve their relationships with their teenagers. The 4 key educational components are adolescent substance use patterns, adolescent brain and physical development, parenting techniques with adolescents, and improved family communication. Individual family counseling sessions are available during the 8 weeks or as a follow-up.

Livingston County Community Alliance*

517.545.5944

A non-profit organization that mobilizes members of our community to take action to address substance use issues; promotes healthy community norms regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use as well as advocates for the development of a comprehensive, outcome driven, substance abuse service delivery system.

Pinckney Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking

734.544.2973

A group of individuals, schools, prevention & treatment experts, law enforcement, businesses, youth and adults with a common goal: to reduce underage drinking by creating a healthy community environment with policies, practices, and attitudes that support the alcohol-free development of all youth.

Project SUCCESS (Schools Using Coordinated Community Efforts to Strengthen Students)*

A Project SUCCESS Counselor (PSC) is in each public middle and high school (except Howell Public Schools) and in Renaissance Alternative School and LEGACY Alternative School about 10 hours a week. The PSC is a resource for students, families, and staff to remove barriers to learning by connecting them to school and community resources. Services include educational support groups, school-wide awareness activities, referral, case management, and follow-up, individual support services, information dissemination, parent and community education, and staff training and support. Services are provided by Complete Counseling Center, Karen Bergbower & Associates, Key Development Center, and Women's Resource Center.

**For more information or to get involved, contact Karen Bergbower at:
810.225.9550 or karenbergbower@att.net**