

The Consumption and Consequences of Alcohol and Drugs in Allen County: A County Epidemiological Profile 2009

Executive Review of the Findings

We know that the majority of young adults who binge drink between the ages of 18 and 25 have a history of drinking during their earlier teen years. The majority of the data and information that we have available is based upon secondary education. From national studies and personal observations, we know that young adults and youth do not tend to drink casually. They drink for the express purpose of getting drunk. They binge drink. According to our local research, and despite it being illegal, 28.7% of high school seniors report that they binge drink, 29% of the 8th graders drank alcohol in the past year, and 18.3% of 6th graders drank alcohol at some time in their life. Approximately one in every five high school seniors (18.4%) have consumed alcohol more than forty times in their lifetime. One out of every ten high school seniors (11.2%) have consumed alcohol forty or more times in the past year. While 67.7% of high school seniors say that their parents would disapprove or strongly disapprove of one or two drinks occasionally, according to our telephone survey of the community, 87% of the respondents said that parents allowing drinking or providing alcohol for minors for social gatherings in their home is a problem in our community.

According to the 2007 PRC Community Health Assessment sponsored by Parkview Health, in Allen County, 14.2% of the adults are binge drinkers, which represents a significant decrease from the binge drinking rate of 24.2% reported in 2003. Four percent of the total area adults report an average of two or more drinks of alcohol per day in the past month. This is similar to Indiana's state rate of 4.2% of the population who consume two or more drinks per day. In the 2008 DAC telephone survey, more than 10% of those surveyed drank twenty or more drinks in the past thirty days and also drank five or more drinks at a sitting.

The consequences from alcohol abuse are devastating to young brains that have not yet finished the developmental process which continues until age 25. Alcohol can seriously damage long- and short-term growth processes. In addition, short-term or moderate drinking impairs learning and memory far more in youth than in adults. Adolescents need only drink half as much to suffer the same negative effects.

Drug- and alcohol-related arrests account for nearly half (45%) of the total arrests in Allen County. While the number of total crashes declined significantly from 2007 to 2008, the number of alcohol-related crashes slightly increased, the number of fatalities doubled, and the number of alcohol-related fatalities tripled. While this is not good news, the number of alcohol-related crashes was significantly lower in 2007 and 2008 than in previous years. A 2007 review of one hundred hospital-based blood tests conducted on drivers who, according to police-administered breath tests were intoxicated, found that sixty-eight percent were positive for two or more additional drugs as well as to the alcohol that was present in the drivers' systems.

In 2008 compared to 2007, the number of minor consuming investigations/arrests rose significantly; arrest tickets issued for possession/consumption/transporting of alcohol by a minor increased by 54%; and arrest tickets to adults for inducing a minor to possess alcoholic beverages increased 63%.

In 2007, the Excise Police conducted a "Survey for Alcohol Compliance" in establishments where it is lawful for youth to patronize, such as grocery stores, convenience stores and restaurants. The rate of non-compliance statewide was 32%. Allen County's non-compliance rate was 51%. In 2008, the cadets and officers of the Allen County Sheriff's Department conducted 45 compliance checks of liquor stores in the county. Thirty-one percent of those retailers sold to minors. In the first and second quarters of 2009, those cadets and officers conducted checks of 72 liquor stores in the county and 15.3% of these retailers sold to minors.

Let us review a key statistic from our studies. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents said that parents allowing or providing alcohol for minors for social gatherings at their home is a problem in our community. It is one that is highly worthy of our best intervention.

Questions or comments about this report should be directed to:

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