



Uniting the communities of Southeastern Connecticut in order to reduce the impact of substance abuse and other addictive behaviors.

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Take Action

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Debate About Lowering the Drinking Age Continues

In 1984, Congress passed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act which imposed a penalty of 10% of a state's highway appropriations on any state which set its drinking age lower than 21. In July 2008, a group of college and university presidents and chancellors from across the United States launched the Amethyst Initiative. Although they do not specifically advocate for a particular policy change, they contend that the current policy is not working as well as some might think or hope and that it is having unintended consequences which put young people at risk. They say that a "culture of dangerous, clandestine binge-drinking" exists on college campuses across the country and they point out that although individuals "...under 21 are deemed capable of voting, signing contracts, serving on juries and enlisting in the military,...(they) are told they are not mature enough to have a beer." They call on elected officials to consider open debate about the effects of the "21 year old drinking age" and whether it is the best way to "prepare young adults to make responsible decisions about alcohol use."

Another organization promoting a reduction in the drinking age is the National Youth Rights Association which is dedicated to "defending the civil and human rights of young people in the United States." In their position paper they argue that "...alcohol policy should recognize the inevitability of alcohol consumption among youth and should seek to reduce the harm of that alcohol use...."

Lawmakers in several states have introduced legislation that would lower the minimum drinking age to 18. In 2008, lawmakers in Missouri, South Dakota, Vermont and Minnesota introduced legislation to lower the drinking age to 18 for everyone while bills to lower the drinking age to 18 for members of the military were introduced in Kentucky, Wisconsin and South Carolina.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) says that lowering the drinking age would lead to more fatal car crashes. It accuses the college officials of "looking for an easy way out of an inconvenient problem" and urges parents to think carefully about the safety of colleges whose presidents have signed the initiative.

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Most people agree that drinking among US college students is a problem. Some research has shown that as many as 40% of college students report at least one symptom of alcohol abuse or dependence and an AP analysis of Federal records found that 157 college-aged people (18-23) drank themselves to death between 1999 and 2005. However, some argue that statistics often quoted in favor of the 21 drinking age are questionable. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study found that between 1975 and 2003, more than 22,000 lives were saved by the higher drinking age. Proponents of lowering the drinking age dispute the estimate and question how NHTSA arrived at the number. Some point out that the alcohol related traffic fatalities among “minor drivers” were already declining before the law was passed in 1984.

The debate is likely to rage on but proponents of lowering the drinking age will probably face an uphill battle with the American public. A Gallup Poll released in August showed that 77% of Americans were opposed to lowering the legal drinking age to 18.

Sources:

- 1) www.jointogether.org/news/headlines/inthenews/2008/bills-to-lower-drinking-age.html
- 2) www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26271328/
- 3) www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20249460/page/2/
- 4) www.amethystinitiative.org
- 5) www.youthrights.org/whatwebelieve.php

Proper Disposal of Unused Prescription Medications

When you get a prescription you should always follow your doctor’s orders on how to use it. That usually means you should use all of the medication up. However, in some cases people do find themselves with “extras” and some may wonder how to properly dispose of them. Improper disposal of unused or expired prescription medications can contribute to abuse, accidental ingestion and environmental contamination. The US Food and Drug Administration and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy have worked together to develop a guide for the proper disposal of unused or expired prescription medications. Here is a brief summary of the guidelines:

Follow any specific disposal instructions on drug label or patient information packet.

Some medications, like fentanyl patches specifically say they should be flushed down the toilet

If no specific instructions are given, you can throw them in the trash **BUT FIRST** take them out of their original containers and mix them with undesirable items like used coffee grounds or cat litter then put them in a sealed bag or other container.

Check to see if your community has a drug take-back program which allows residents to bring unused drugs to a central location for proper disposal.

For more information about proper disposal visit the FDA website at: www.fda.gov/consumer/updates/drug_disposal062308.html

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National Problem Gambling Awareness Week

The 7th Annual National Problem Gambling Awareness Week will be held during the week of March 1-7, 2009. This public awareness and outreach campaign is sponsored by the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). The goal of the campaign is to educate people about the warning signs of problem gambling and to raise awareness about help that is available locally and nationally.

Opportunities to gamble have never been more available. For most people high stakes gambling websites are just a mouse click away. Recently, some restrictions on advertising have been loosened or lifted completely. According to the NCPG, 2-3% of the US population (6-9 million people) will have a gambling problem in any given year. Problem gambling should be a concern of all community members. Research has shown associations between gambling behavior and smoking, property crime, and abusive, violent or neglectful behavior. Although resources are available to help problem gamblers, only a small number of them will seek services like treatment of self-help recovery programs.

To learn more about NPGAW or available resources you can visit the following:

National Problem Gambling Awareness Week website:

www.npgaw.org

National Council on Problem Gambling:

www.ncpgambling.org

Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling:

www.ccpg.org

To get help with a gambling problem, call the **HELPLINE** at **1-800-346-6238**.



CEUs Now Available

SERAC has recently become certified by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) as an Approved Provider of Continuing Education Units (CEUs). That means that you can now receive CEU credits (for a small fee) when you attend one of our many free trainings on a wide range of prevention topics.

As required by CSDE, CEUs can only be awarded to individuals who attend the entire training session. The number of CEUs awarded is determined by the length (in hours) of the session.

Eligible participants will receive official stamped certificates upon completion of the session.

If you have questions about how you can get CEUs for attending one of our trainings, please contact us in the office at (860) 848-2800.



What is Happening?

January

22 Prevention Committee Meeting

23 Training: Energy Drinks—The New Addiction (SERAC, 9-11am)

February

5 Prevention Committee Meeting

22-28 National Eating Disorders Awareness Week
www.nationaleatingdisorders.org

March

1-7 Problem Gambling Awareness Week
www.npgaw.org

15-21 National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week
www.inhalants.org

20 Training: Building Resiliency—Risk and Protective Factors (SERAC, 9-11)



We're on the web!
www.sectrac.org

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