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## Best Practices: Suicide Prevention & Alcohol Education



Suicide is a preventable problem that impacts both individual and public health. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center aims to address suicide prevention from a public health perspective by taking a broader approach to the issue. The public health approach to suicide prevention is unique in that it identifies suicidal patterns and behaviors at the population level and utilizes a five-step process which includes: (1) Defining the problem: Surveillance, (2) Identifying causes, (3) Developing and testing interventions, (4) Implementing interventions, and (5) Evaluating effectiveness. Suicide prevention programs that address more than one risk or protective factor are more likely to reduce the suicide rate than those interventions that address only one risk or protective factor (SPRC, 2014).

Because increased use of alcohol or drugs is considered one of the warning signs of suicide, it is important to make sure these risk factors are being addressed through comprehensive suicide prevention education that includes alcohol education on college campuses. A comprehensive effort to promote mental health and prevent high-risk drinking behaviors among college students requires collaboration among different entities campus-wide in order to be most effective.

### Reference

Suicide Prevention Resource Center (2014). Introduction to the public health approach. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc. <http://www.sprc.org>

## Conference Call Update: April 24, 2014 at 9:30am

**SAMSHA Town Hall Meetings:** Please consider hosting a SAMSHA Town Hall Meeting on your campus to address the issue of underage drinking. There are \$500 stipends available from SAMSHA to help with the cost of printing and space reservation (funds cannot be used for food or door prizes). This is an opportunity to invite your community to come together and also to build relationships that may lead to future funding opportunities.

**Suicide Prevention Continuing Education:** A Strategic Planning Approach to Suicide Prevention online course by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC). Free course designated for Certified Health Education Specialists (CHES) and/or Master Certified Health Education Specialists (MCHES) to receive up to 5.5 total Category I continuing education contact hours. Visit <http://training.sprc.org/> to register and for more information.

**Announcement about grant possibility:** A Mississippi agency has proposed \$30,000 to MCPP to implement a media campaign to address alcohol and drug abuse on each campus, a two-day summer workshop on EBP for reducing alcohol abuse in college populations, the publication of MCPP vision and mission statements and procedures, a suicide prevention webinar, and a mental health and drug abuse one day workshop. If fulfilled, the funding would become available July 1. A committee is needed to lead the grant and distribute funding. Please e-mail Kären Brandon at [keb90@saffairs.msstate.edu](mailto:keb90@saffairs.msstate.edu) if you would like to be on the committee.

## Timely Topic: Gender expectations for alcohol use

By Kären Brandon, Graduate Assistant at Mississippi State University



In a recent webinar hosted by *Screening for Mental Health* entitled “Gender, Tolerance, and Expectations: What Really Goes on at the College Party,” Annie Eaton from Notre Dame’s Center for Alcohol and Drug Education spoke about the importance of offering college women gender-specific and sex-specific information in alcohol education programming (Screening for Mental Health, 2014).

Eaton proposes that women may drink to find a feeling of social acceptance (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). This desire to be socially connected is a key component of healthy psychological development for women who are emerging adults (Pompeo, Kooyman, & Pierce, 2014). Unfortunately, college women may drink heavily in an attempt to be more accepted by peers (Pompeo, et al., 2014). Eaton suggests that educators discuss the issue of looking to others for self-evaluation, first in situations that do not involve alcohol and then in “party” situations (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). Another relevant issue to discuss is how college women friendships are affected by experiences with alcohol (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). Often, the perception of or expectation of rejection by peers can cause as much psychological harm as rejection itself (Pompeo, et al., 2014). Consequently, college women may be more concerned than college men about threats to friendships that happen in the party environment, and this topic could easily lead to a discussion of how alcohol abuse contributes negatively to social relationships. Eaton also briefly touched upon how the environment of the “hook-up” can also be a valuable topic of discussion when educating college women about increased risk-taking associated with binge drinking (Screening for Mental Health, 2014).

It is widely known that alcohol affects female bodies differently than male bodies due to differences in weight, percentage of body fat, and the presence of alcohol dehydrogenase in the body (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). What may not be realized is the effect that hormones have on the body’s ability to metabolize alcohol; for example, in the days leading up to and during a female’s menstrual cycle, her body may be less equipped to process alcohol, which can lead to higher BAC (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). Adding to the difference between male and female intoxication rate factors, there are more females than males who intentionally drink on an empty stomach in an attempt to restrict overall caloric intake, leading to higher BACs and an increased risk of blackout (Screening for Mental Health, 2014).

In conclusion, Eaton cited these differences in drinking behaviors, motivation for drinking, and processing of alcohol in the body as good reason to tailor education and interventions based on the audiences’ gender (Screening for Mental Health, 2014). Notre Dame utilizes this strategy by offering alcohol education through its residence halls, which are single gender; other institutions may choose to pursue opportunities to reach out to women specifically, such as through sororities or by focusing marketing on women students.

### References

- Pompeo, A. M., Kooyman, L., & Pierce, G. (2014). Counseling college women: The interplay of psychological development, social factors, alcohol, and sexual risk-taking. *Adulthood Journal*, 13(1), 15-29. doi:10.1002/j.2161-0029.2014.00023.x
- Screening for Mental Health, Inc. (2014, April 8). *Gender, tolerance, and expectations: What really goes on at the college party* [Webinar].

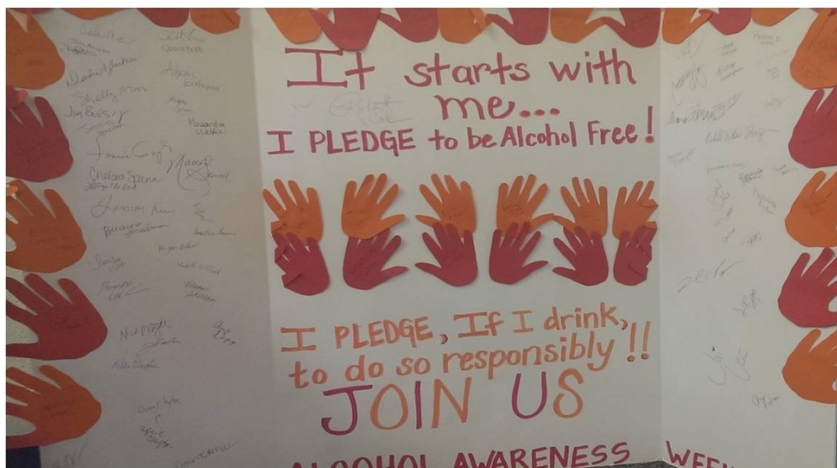
## What's Happening at Your School?

### What's Happening at Mississippi University for Women

The W's Department of Health & Kinesiology Public Health Education interns planned a week of events to increase awareness about the dangers of alcohol use and abuse and the common misconceptions surrounding alcohol use. During the week prior to MUW's Spring Break (March 11th-14th), interns planned and implemented events focusing on motivating behavior change, resetting unrealistic expectations about the effects of alcohol, establishing a link between the individual's choice to drink to academic and personal success, and providing students assistance in practicing healthier and safer decision-making skills.

Events included:

- ◆ Pledge to drink responsibly or be alcohol-free sign in
- ◆ Guest speaker discussing the effects of alcohol consumption
- ◆ Alcohol Awareness Skit "Alcohol Does Not"

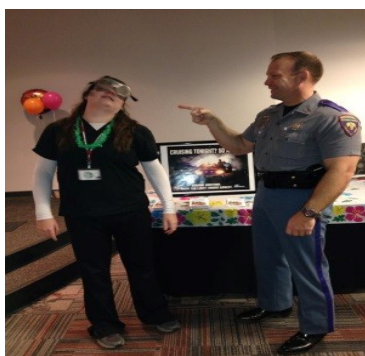


The pledge board.

### What's Happening at Mississippi State University

#### Spring Break Expo – March 4, 2014

Mississippi State University's Health Education & Wellness hosted another wildly successful Spring Break Expo on March 4 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Union to promote healthy choices in all areas during Spring Break. Alcohol & Drug graduate assistants, Kären Brandon and Ryan Burrage, hosted "The Game of Spring Break Life" in which participants moved around a life-sized game board. Each tile featured an alcohol or drug-related situation students might be faced with on Spring Break and were instructed to move forward or back depending on the outcome. Next to the game, a local law enforcement officer, Sergeant Turnipseed hosted a display on the perils of impaired driving, including an opportunity to experience "drunk goggles." All areas of health were represented at the Expo, including mental health, tobacco, sexual assault, skin cancer prevention, sexual health, and nutrition. Participants were given a passport to be stamped at each station in order to enter to win doorprizes, including an iPad mini! Approximately 300 students attended.



Impaired driving display.



The photo booth.



## What's Happening at Mississippi State University (continued)

### *Impaired Driving Simulator – April 23, 2014 – National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Month*

The MSU Health Education and Wellness Department, in partnership with the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol and the MSU Police Department, hosted an impaired driving simulator event on Wednesday, April 23, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. between the Colvard Student Union and the YMCA Building on the MSU campus. The objective of this event was to increase awareness of the dangers of impaired driving. At the event, MSU students had the opportunity to drive the SIDNE (Simulated Impaired DriviNg Experience) go kart on a real course while wearing impaired driving goggles. Helpful information on reducing impaired driving and risky drinking behavior, the opportunity to sign a pledge not to drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs, and popsicles were provided to participants.



*Informational pamphlets.*



*Impaired driving course.*



*Student drives the SIDNE go-kart.*



*A field sobriety test is administered with student*

## Suggestions?

If there is a specific topic you would like us to address in the next edition of this newsletter, please email Katie at [klcranston@muw.edu](mailto:klcranston@muw.edu).

We want to use this newsletter as an informal way to share ideas with one another, and we'll publish your feedback (anonymously) in the next edition!

**Have a good summer!**

