

## **Community Interventions for College Drinking: The Safer California Universities Study**

The Safer California Universities Study (Saltz et al., 2010) examined the effectiveness of community prevention efforts in reducing heavy drinking among college students. This kind of prevention effort involves cooperation between the university and the college community to enforce policies and laws concerning drinking behavior. The study combined two strategies: 1) use of community deterrents that have been successful in the general population (for instance, checks on alcohol sales to underage customers) and 2) publicity concerning the use of these deterrents.

Fourteen university campuses were involved in the study. Half participated in the intervention condition and half did not. Large random samples of students (at least 1,000 per school) completed online surveys about drinking habits and settings where drinking occurred. Surveys were collected once a year for four years from 2003 to 2006. As the samples were chosen randomly each year, they were not followed across time. The drinking settings evaluated included residence hall parties, fraternity or sorority parties, campus events, bars and restaurants, off campus parties, and outdoor settings such as in parks.

Community interventions varied by campus but included roadside DUI checks, enforcement of underage alcohol sales laws by using decoys, and “party patrols” to enforce laws on disturbing the peace and providing alcohol to minors. The number of times each strategy was used at each campus was tracked to gauge the effect of the amount of intervention. Enforcement efforts were publicized as part of the intervention to increase student awareness.

Results showed the interventions were related to significant decreases in risk for intoxication for off-campus parties, bars and restaurants, and the overall analysis for risk of

intoxication in any of the settings. Campuses that had implemented the highest levels of intervention showed greater reduction in risks for heavy drinking among the students there. According to Saltz et al., “these findings should give college administrators some degree of optimism that student drinking is amenable to a combination of well-chosen, evidence-based universal prevention strategies (p. 499).”

References:

NIH-Supported Study finds Strategies to Reduce College Drinking. In NIH News, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), November 11, 2010.

<http://www.miaaa.nih.gov/NewsEvents/NewsReleases/NIH-SupportedStudyfindsStrategiestoreducecollegedinking>

Saltz, R.F., Paschall, M.J., McGaffigan, R.P., & Nygaard, P.M.O. (2010). Alcohol risk management in college settings: The Safer California Universities Randomized Trial. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 39 (6), 491-499.

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