

College Drinking: DUIs And The Power Of Alcohol Education Programs

Sara Williams March 04, 2016



Colleges are addressing the joint problems of underage drinking, binge drinking, and drunk driving on campus by instituting alcohol education programs.

([Newswire.net](#) -- March 4, 2016) -- With attention to social issues on campus growing each year, many colleges are addressing the joint problems of underage drinking, binge drinking, and drunk driving on campus by instituting alcohol education programs. Though these programs vary by campus, all of them aim to address the very real physical and social consequences of dangerous drinking choices. Administrators, students, and parents like Mary Ciammetti, whose son [died from alcohol poisoning](#), are all active participants in this education process.

Alarming Alcohol Abuse

College students seem to be taking a nonchalant attitude regarding the dangers of alcohol use and the statistics show their disregard for these safety issues. [According to studies](#) by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), binge drinking, driving while intoxicated, and alcohol related deaths among college students are on the rise. In another study, as many as 1 in 5 college students [admit to drunk driving](#) and nearly half have taken a ride from a drunk driver, putting their lives and the lives of others at risk.

Cataloguing The Consequences

Although more students actually drive drunk after reaching the legal drinking age, those under 21 are more likely to face extreme consequences if caught. In California, for example, where zero tolerance laws trap underage drunk drivers in a double bind, [staggered consequences range](#) from a suspended license for those with very low BAC levels to fines, required participation in a DUI school, impounding of their vehicle, and as much as six months in jail and five years of probation even for first time offenders.

While legal consequences vary by state, DUI charges, especially for those who are underage, are serious business.

Assessing Education's Impact

Educational undertakings addressing social issues are increasingly popular – there are [ad campaigns about sexual assault](#), programs like D.A.R.E. that educate youth about drug use and gang violence, and many others. When it comes to alcohol education, one of the most popular is AlcoholEdu.

AlcoholEdu is an online alcohol education program that many college students are required to complete, often before they even enter college. As a kind of entrance requirement, students watch videos, take quizzes, and are required to pass the program and submit a certificate to their school stating that they've completed the course successfully. Compared to many others, AlcoholEdu is an extensive course that can take several hours to complete, though students do the program from their home computer, allowing for some flexibility.

Still, with alcohol education often starting in middle school health classes, do programs like AlcoholEdu benefit students? In a 2010 assessment, Stanford University looked at the results from the program over four years of use. And while college students may not enjoy the program much, [71% dubbed the program](#) at least somewhat effective and 77% said they learned something from the course.

What does it mean, though, for this kind of program to be effective? Is learning something enough to consider AlcoholEdu effective? Over 60% of students believed the program should be used with future freshman classes but only 41% said they behaved more responsibly with alcohol because of what they learned. This seems to suggest that AlcoholEdu has mixed results overall.

As more colleges experiment with different education programs, both professionally produced like AlcoholEdu and homegrown ones that may be more specific to their home institution, colleges will need to continue to measure the

effectiveness of these programs. Based on increasing rates of negative behaviors like drunk driving, programs may also need to refocus their emphasis from alcohol education more generally to risk reduction programming. With alcohol posing many risks for experimenting college students, it may take more than education to change these behaviors.

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