



Dealing with Underage Alcohol Use in WV

A Discussion Guide

The Underage Drinking Prevention and Social Marketing Project

Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws through a Statewide Marketing Campaign

- ➔ Note: This discussion guide can be used with the Underage Drinking Prevention and Social Marketing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for middle & high school students. This discussion can take anywhere from 30 minutes to ??? depending on the size of the audience and the information you want to cover. Use it as a reference and feel free to tailor it to your audience. Below you will find a basic script and actions, which are highlighted with arrows. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Stephanie Southall at 304-766-6301 ext. 25

Welcome! We are here today because of a growing concern about the use of alcohol by underage youth in West Virginia and how it affects individuals and communities.

- ➔ Introduce yourself. Tell the audience why underage alcohol use concerns you.
- ➔ Depending on size of group & if time permits, have everyone introduce themselves and tell why underage alcohol use concerns them.

About 10 million current drinkers are between the ages of 12 and 20 (SAMHSA, 2005). Alcohol is the most frequently used drug by high school seniors (Johnston et al, 1996). Alcohol is the #1 drug of choice among youth in West Virginia. According to the *2005 WV Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, 31% of youth had their first drink of alcohol before age 13. Also, 41.5% of West Virginia students had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days.

It is clear that young people drink – and their drinking all too often results in serious health and social problems (NIAAA, 1997).

- ➔ Ask audience to give examples of health and social problems of underage alcohol use.
- ➔ Pass out a 1 page handout with some statistics – use the information from Underage Alcohol Use enclosed along with any other source you may have.

So, what can we do to keep youth from drinking?

Today we are going to look at some information, watch some commercials that were created, written, and produced by West Virginia high school students, and talk about the choices we can make.

- ➔ Show PSAs and highlight particular statistics on the handout.

Now we are going to talk about some choices we can make to address underage alcohol use by youth in West Virginia. *** (look at notes below) *** Everyone stand up! I'm going to read some statements. If you agree with the statement I read, move to the right side of the room. If you disagree, move to the left side of the room. You have to make a choice and have a reason for your choice. Does everyone understand?

- ➔ Note: You can also play 4 –corners = strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree – depending on time and size of group. Have members share with each other why they selected their choice and then pick 1 person from each group to make their statement about their choice. Alter this activity as you see fit for your audience.
- ➔ Note: Instead of using the list generated below, have youth record statements that they think will reduce underage alcohol use in WV on individual sheets of paper. Collect the sheets and read those statements. Have the youth agree or disagree (or 4 corners) with discussion of the reason for their choice. Then match their ideas with the list below which was generated by nearly 500 West Virginia citizens.

These statements were generated from information collected from nearly 500 interviews of youth, parents, law enforcement officials, teachers, government officials, prevention professionals, bar owners, and church officials in West Virginia.

- ➔ Note: Select ones appropriate to your audience. You may need to repeat the rules a few times. Signs are also helpful to mark the sides of the room.

We need to provide healthy activities for youth close to where they live.

We need to recognize and reward professionals who work with youth.

We need to provide leadership development opportunities for youth.

We need to educate parents to be involved, set standards, and build trust.

We need to link parents with support systems.

We need to involve more elders in mentoring youth.

We need to educate the public about existing laws.

We need to hire more police officers/agents to enforce current laws.

We need to elect officials who take a tough stand on underage drinking.

We need to enforce & increase penalties for adults who provide alcohol to youth.

We need to require purchasers of kegs to register identification (keg registration).

We need to support zero tolerance legislation – .00 Blood Alcohol levels for youth.

We need to call attention to intentional marketing of alcohol to youth.

We need to educate parents about the hazards of drinking & local problems.

We need to publicize alcohol-free messages and statistics that reveal non-drinking.

We need to increase victim impact education.

We need to increase alcohol-free activities.

We need to showcase highly respected non-drinkers (youth and adults) who talk about their choice.

- ➔ Don't forget to ask people why they selected the choice they made. Let people hear each other's views on the issue.
- ➔ Refer to research if arguments for a choice are unclear. For example, if someone says "I disagree. We don't need to hire more police officers/agents to enforce current laws. There's no law against underage drinking." you can reply with "According to Section 60-7-12a: A person under 21 may not order, pay for, share the cost of or attempt to purchase, consume, or possess any beer, wine, or alcoholic liquors from a licensee. Any person violating this law is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction may be fined up to \$500 or imprisoned in the county jail for up to 72 hours or both and in addition for the first offense may be placed on probation for up to 1 year."

Thank you all for sharing your views on underage alcohol use in West Virginia! Today we looked at information, saw an example of choices others are making, and made some choices about actions you can take. Of the examples of things you can do to impact underage alcohol use, which one do you think could work best in this community? Is this something we can all agree to work on together?

By addressing the growing concerns about the use of alcohol by underage youth in West Virginia and how it affects individuals and communities, we are beginning to make a difference. What do we need to do now?

- ➔ Note: This closing allows the group to make a plan of action. You may need to tailor the closing according to the audience.
- ➔ Thank everyone for coming and wrap up.