

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - August 11, 2008

Contact:

Jeff Stewart

513-751-8000, x. 18

513-490-1858

JStewart@DrugFreeCincinnati.org

SPECIAL REPORT: UNDERAGE DRINKING IN GREATER CINCINNATI

CINCINNATI - 20% of Greater Cincinnati youth, 7th – 12th grade, drink alcohol on a regular* basis, according to the recently examined alcohol-specific results from the 2008 Student Drug Use Survey. This represents a 33% decline since 2000. The good news is most kids, 80%, are not drinking regularly.

On average, youth in greater Cincinnati take their first drink at 13 and a half years of age. While this is alarming, it is a significant improvement over 12.7 years reported in 2006. This is an encouraging trend because the later youth start drinking, the less likely they will become harmfully involved with alcohol.

There are many factors affecting underage drinking. The 2008 survey continues to provide data on what factors help keep kids safe and those that place them at risk for harmful involvement with alcohol. The Coalition uses this data to design programs and policies that keep kids safe.

Keeping Kids Safe

The biggest factor that helps our kids stay safe from alcohol use and abuse is positive communication with parents and other caring adults. ‘Parents Talking’ is a well established practice and continues to be a positive influence on youth choices to drink. The 2008 survey shows that 87% of students who have teachers that talk to them often about alcohol and drugs do not use alcohol regularly.

Youth who have opportunities for meaningful involvement with positive youth development activities are also protected more from using alcohol. This includes school sports and clubs, community, and religious activities which reduces regular alcohol use.

Youth respond to boundaries and expectations. The survey again showed that youth are less likely to drink alcohol when their parents set clear rules about alcohol and enforce consequences. Students who attend schools that set clear rules about using alcohol are also less likely to be harmfully involved in underage drinking. “The survey shows us that great progress is being made, but there is more work to do. It will take a continued community effort to protect our youth,” says Jim Kennedy, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Coalition.

What Puts Kids At Risk?

For the 20% who do use alcohol regularly, the 2008 survey continues to highlight the risks that youth are exposed to that increase their alcohol use. One of those factors is alcohol availability and accessibility. Nearly half, 47%, of all students felt it was easy to obtain alcohol. Those students were 7 times more likely to use alcohol regularly.

80% of all underage drinking takes place in a private residence, either at home or at a friends house. 56% of all alcohol use occurs on the weekends. These situations present an opportunity for parental vigilance to prevent underage drinking. “Reducing the harms associated with underage drinking is not just taking the keys away, it is preventing alcohol use from ever starting with teens,,” says Mary Haag, interim President of the Coalition.



2008

Student Drug Use Survey at a Glance:

- 54,366 surveyed
- 7th - 12th grades
- Ohio Counties:
 - Brown
 - Butler
 - Clermont
 - Hamilton
 - Warren
- Kentucky Counties:
 - Boone
 - Campbell
 - Kenton
- Conducted between October 22, 2007 to December 7, 2007
- * “Regular Use” defined as drinking in the last 30 days
- 20% of youth, locally, drink regularly
- 21% of youth, nationally, drink regularly
- Regular use by grade:
 - 7th: 4%
 - 8th: 9%
 - 9th: 15%
 - 10th: 24%
 - 11th: 31%
 - 12th: 40%
- Males were more likely than females to use alcohol regularly, 20.8% to 18.5%
- 71% of students felt that alcohol use is harmful
- 81% of students report that their parents feel alcohol use is wrong

Student Drug Use Survey at a Glance:

- **51% of students report that their friends feel that alcohol use is wrong or very wrong**
- **As grade levels increased, perceived harm of alcohol, peer disapproval and parental disapproval decreased**
- **Nearly half, 47%, of all students felt that alcohol was easy to get**
- **80% of all underage drinking is done in a private residence (at home or a friends house)**
- **56% of all underage drinking happens on the weekends**
- **18% of regular drinkers drink before school**

Topic summaries and regional key findings from 2000 to 2008 are available at www.Drug-FreeCincinnati.org.

Aggregate raw data in SPSS format is available on OASIS through www.OASIS.uc.edu.

Special Thanks to:

- School Participants
- The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati
- Greater Cincinnati Foundation
- Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services
- PRIDE Surveys, Inc.
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA/CSAP)
- University of Cincinnati, Institute for Policy Research
- The many local groups and organizations who facilitated the implementation of this survey in their school districts

Underage drinking is also correlated with other high-risk behaviors studied in the survey. Elevated rates of regular drinking can be associated with students who get in trouble at school, skip school, get in trouble with police, take part in gang activities and have friends who use alcohol regularly. Peer influence has great impact during adolescent years, and the survey demonstrated that as grade level increases, peer perception of harm decreases, and regular alcohol use increases.

Research continues to show that underage alcohol consumption is harmful to the developing adolescent brain. Beyond any legal age guidelines, the areas of the brain responsible for decision making are damaged by alcohol even past the age of 21. Regular use of alcohol while the brain is still developing increases the risk of life-long harm and dependency.

12% of the students report high-risk drinking often. This is defined in the survey as having 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a few hours. Binge drinking adds a new dimension of harm to underage drinking, and increases the risks of long-term addiction and harmful behaviors associated with underage drinking including poor school performance, being the victim of or carrying out a sexual assault, violence, injury and acute alcohol poisoning.

Keeping Youth Alcohol Free

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati uses the data from the Student Drug Use survey to identify trends and design targeted initiatives to reduce the risk factors that contribute to underage drinking. The Coalition works to enhance the protective factors that help keep kids safe from the harms of underage alcohol use.

In the schools, the Coalition recently sponsored a School Policy Summit where administrators and policy makers from schools covering the 10 county region of greater Cincinnati gathered to discuss their anti-drug and alcohol policies, and learned about new evidence-based programs and practices to assist students. School officials are able to use this information in the districts to implement effective policies that keep students safe from drugs and alcohol.

Students who participate in school sports are 54% less likely to use drugs and alcohol on a regular basis. The Coalition and the University of Cincinnati along with Northkey RPC will host the *Coaches, Kids & Chemicals* workshop on September 15th. The event, at the Lindner Athletic Center on UC's main campus, will be a day long event for coaches, athletic directors and student athlete leaders. Coaches and administrators will learn how to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities they have to positively affect the choices of youth. Student athletes will learn the importance of positive peer pressure and creating a "culture of no-use."

Also, the Coalition is working with individual schools and school districts, as well as its network of 24 neighborhood coalitions, to use localized Student Drug Use survey data to identify opportunities to address key areas of risk and protection in their own community.

About the Student Drug Use Survey

The student drug use survey is a project of the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati that provides in-depth analysis of the self-reported drug use patterns of area youth. Every two years, the Coalition implements this survey to collect youth drug use data from seventh through twelfth graders throughout the 10-county Greater Cincinnati area. The Coalition is leading the nation in collecting and disseminating current, reliable adolescent regional drug use data. This survey is recognized across the region and nationally as the most current and reliable source of validated information on local youth substance abuse.

About the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati (CDFGC), established in 1996 by former U.S. Congressman Rob Portman of Ohio, has become a model for community coalitions nationwide. The Coalition serves communities throughout the 10-county, tri-state region by promoting drug-free environments for youth by enhancing partnerships to educate, advocate and support locally-based community mobilization. This is accomplished through partnering with business leaders, parents, schools, youth, faith-based leaders, law enforcement, community groups, media and other partners in local communities to implement comprehensive, community-wide, anti-drug initiatives with a goal of reducing substance use and abuse through prevention education.