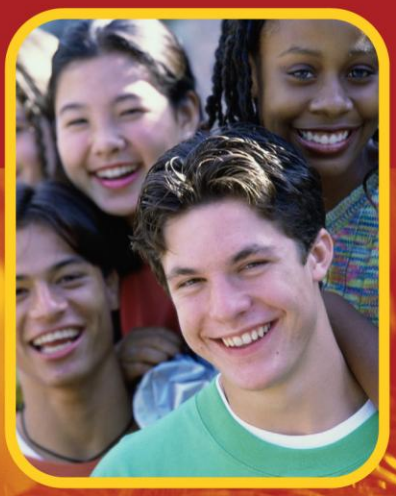
MOST of us®

Youth Survey

KEY FINDINGS

Sweetwater County



Alcohol, Youth, and Wyoming

This report reveals data about underage alcohol use in Sweetwater County high school students. As you will read on the following pages, there are three important conclusions that must be recognized:

(1) Most youth are making good decisions about alcohol;

(2) Many youth drastically over-estimate the prevalence of drinking among their peers and are therefore at greater risk for using alcohol themselves;

(3) Many youth are using alcohol which is both illegal and risky.

All of these conclusions must be addressed in a comprehensive prevention effort.

So, while most high school students in Wyoming are making good decisions about alcohol, the negative impacts for some that do are devastating. Alcohol related accidents among 15-24 year-olds are the leading cause of death. Alcohol use contributes to poor academic performance, violence, property damage, sexual assaults, and other negative consequences.

These data indicate that Wyoming must take action to prevent underage alcohol use. Since most Wyoming high school students are making healthy choices about not using alcohol, they become our greatest ally. We can all work together to increase the majority of youth who are making healthy decisions. One way to do this is to use these data to correct the misperceptions that teens have about their peers and alcohol.

The role of the community is to clearly communicate that while most teens are making the right choice to not drink, any use of alcohol is illegal, dangerous, and unacceptable -- to both teens and adults. Communicating accurate information and establishing clear guidelines will cultivate even stronger positive community norms across Wyoming.

<u>Survey Background</u>

The results presented in this report are based on the 2008 Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA) and the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The PNA is conducted by the Wyoming Survey and Analysis Center (www.uwyo.edu/wysac) and provides state and county level measures of a wide variety of substance abuse behaviors and attitudes. The PNA results are based on 79 surveys of 10th and 12th graders in Sweetwater County. MOST of Us acknowledges Eric Canen for his tremendous support in providing the Wyoming PNA results. The YRBS is conducted by the Wyoming Department of Education (http://www.k12.wy.us/HS/ yrbs/yrbs.asp). The YRBS results are based on 2,227 surveys of 9th through 12th graders from across the state.

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What These Data Tell Us

Positive Youth Behaviors

In 2008, 73% of Sweetwater County high school students reported not using alcohol in a typical week. However, 85% of these same students believed **most students** at their school drink weekly or more often. 57% believed **most students** at their school drink ten or more times per month. *PNA Q49, Q72*

In 2008, 63% of Sweetwater County high school students reported not having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row in the past two weeks. However, 91% of these same students believed **most students** at their school had five or more drinks in a row one or more times in the past two weeks (62% believed **most students** had five or more drinks in a row *three* or more times in the past two weeks). *PNA Q76, Q81*

In 2008, 71% of Sweetwater County high school students had never been drunk or high at school in the past year (12 months). *PNA Q29F*

In 2008, 92% of Sweetwater County high school students had never received a minor in possession charge for alcohol in the past year (12 months). *PNA Q29J*

In 2007, 71% of Wyoming high school students did not ride in a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days which was driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. *YRBS QN10*

In 2007, 84% of Wyoming high school students did not drive a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days when they had been drinking alcohol. *YRBS QN11*

Positive Youth Attitudes

In 2008, 52% of Sweetwater County high school students believed “it is wrong for someone their age to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly.” *PNA Q26F*

In 2008, 58% of Sweetwater County high school students thought “people risk harming themselves if they take one or two drinks of an alcoholic beverage nearly every day.” *PNA Q46D*

In 2008, 75% of Sweetwater County high school students thought “people risk harming themselves if they have 4 or 5 drinks of an alcoholic beverage in a row.” *PNA Q46E*

In 2008, 71% of Sweetwater County high school students said NO to “I ignore the rules that get in my way.” *PNA Q34*

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Families Play an Important Role

Research has shown that parents play an important role in their children's choices about not using alcohol or other drugs.

Youth See Positive Family Influence

In 2008, 83% of Sweetwater County high school students agreed that it was important to be "honest with your parents, even if they become upset or you get punished." *PNA Q98*

In 2008, 82% of Sweetwater County high school students agreed that their parents would know if they did not come home on time. *PNA Q101*

In 2008, 85% of Sweetwater County high school students agreed that the rules in their family were clear. *PNA Q102*

In 2008, 84% of Sweetwater County high school students agreed that "when they are not at home, one of their parents knows where they are and who they are with." *PNA Q103*

In 2008, 84% of Sweetwater County high school students agreed that their family had clear rules about drug and alcohol use. *PNA Q105*

In 2008, 77% of Sweetwater County high school students believed that "their parents feel it would be wrong for them to drink beer, wine or hard liquor regularly." *PNA Q108A*

Protective Behaviors and Beliefs

In 2008, 38% of Sweetwater County high school students reported that "if offered by a friend a drink containing alcohol at a party, would either tell their friends 'no thanks,' just say 'no thanks' and walk away, or make up a good excuse to not drink." *PNA Q30*

In 2008, 62% of Sweetwater County high school students believed "most adults in their neighborhood think it is wrong for kids their age to drink alcohol." *PNA Q91B*

In 2008, 73% of Sweetwater County high school students reported getting mostly A and B grades. *PNA Q11*

In 2008, 68% of Sweetwater County high school students reported trying to do their best at school. *PNA Q17C*

In 2008, 65% of Sweetwater County high school students had participated a few times or regularly on sports teams. *PNA Q94A*

Key Actions

This report reveals both hope and concern when it comes to preventing underage alcohol use in Wyoming. As with all communities, there are still serious problems that must be addressed.

As a community member, your voice matters. Data are only helpful when put into action. Here are key actions you can take:

- Share and discuss this report with coalition members, community leaders, and friends
- Use this information to promote hope for successfully reducing underage drinking
- Promote intervention and treatment options
- Compare these data with other findings in your community
- Use these data to guide policy development
- Frame media and steer public conversations using these data
- Create messages to correct misperceptions among youth

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Visit www.mostofus.org for more information.