

# MEMORANDUM

Office of Dennis Graham, Chief of Police

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**To:** Honorable Mayor Robert Livengood  
**Through:** Thomas C. Williams, City Manager  
**From:** Dennis Graham, Chief of Police *D. D.*  
**Subject:** Teenage Binge Drinking  
**Date:** December 28, 2009  
**Copy:** City Council

## Introduction:

Binge drinking is a common pattern of excessive alcohol use in the United States, and is defined as a pattern of drinking which raises a person's blood alcohol concentration in a short period of time. Generally, consuming five or more drinks of alcohol within a two-hour period for men, or four or more drinks for women, is considered bingeing. Binge drinking is associated with many health problems, including but not limited to intentional and unintentional injuries, alcohol poisoning, and death.

## Statistics:

According to national surveys, about 90% of the alcohol consumed by minors in the United States is in the form of binge drinking.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of current drinkers that binge is highest in the 18 to 20 year-old group (51%).<sup>2</sup> Heavy episodic or "binge" drinking is common among adolescents, with 55% of high-school seniors reporting having gotten drunk, and a quarter of them reporting having consumed five or more drinks in a row during the previous two weeks.<sup>3</sup>

Specifically to the State of California, more than 6% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders had participated in binge drinking within 30 days of taking the survey. For 11<sup>th</sup> graders, about 26% had also experimented with binge drinking within the same time period. In 2007, there were 14 alcohol poison related deaths among young people between the ages of 13-20.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last two years, there were fifty-four arrests for juveniles being drunk in public and thirteen juvenile DUI arrests in the City of Milpitas.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.learn-about-alcoholism.com/teenage-binge-drinking.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/quickstats/binge\\_drinking.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/quickstats/binge_drinking.htm)

<sup>3</sup> <http://health.ucsd.edu/news/2009/4-22-teen-binge-drinking.htm>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci\\_13980765?source=email](http://www.mercurynews.com/bay-area-news/ci_13980765?source=email)

## **Milpitas Police Programs:**

The Milpitas Police Department is committed to the prevention of alcohol abuse and participates in several programs which are related to alcohol education and alcohol-related activity. The department also networks with outside agencies that are also committed to the same cause.

### **Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)**

The DARE program is a cooperative effort between the City of Milpitas, the Milpitas Police Department and the Milpitas Unified School District. Uniformed police officers present the formal 10-week, 5<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum at nine public and three private elementary schools. Although binge drinking is not a main topic of the curriculum, alcohol poisoning and the negative effects of alcohol in general are discussed at length.

### **Sober Graduation:**

This program was established in 1985 and has been recognized internationally as an effective anti-DUI program targeting high school seniors and raising their awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving. Each year, officers, along with high school students, work with the high school to stage a mock DUI traffic stop and trial. Students are given the opportunity to wear impairment glasses and undergo sobriety tests. Some students are given a tour of the jail, courthouse and coroner's office to give them a sense of reality to the negative consequences of alcohol abuse.

### **Driving Under the Influence (DUI) Enforcement:**

The Milpitas Police Department joins law enforcement agencies across the state by deploying DUI checkpoints during the winter and summer holiday seasons. Funding for some of these special enforcement campaigns come from federal grants. Besides the checkpoints, additional officers are deployed with the specific mission of arresting drunk drivers to ensure the roadways of Milpitas are safe for the rest of the community.

## **School and Law Enforcement Connecting Kids to Schools (SALECKS):**

The Milpitas Unified School District holds monthly meetings, at the police department, involving several agencies, which deal with the school district. Members of the Police Community Relations Unit, including the School Resource Officers, attend these meetings and discuss various issues including alcohol related issues. There are two outreach groups, which specifically deal with drugs/alcohol in the high schools. They are the Department of Alcohol and Drug Services and the Asian American Recovery Services.

### **Department of Alcohol and Drug Services (DADS)**

DADS is an outreach group and has counselors at the Milpitas High School. The mission of DADS is to develop and operate a seamless "Continuum of Care" for the prevention and treatment of substance abuse problems, including alcohol, to the students. According to counselor Justin Sunseri, the students are self-committed, referred by school staff or assigned by the Probation Department. Binge drinking is a topic discussed in peer group counseling sessions or individual counseling sessions as needed. Meetings occur on a daily, weekly or monthly basis dependent on the student(s) needs. Sunseri also gives several presentations during class times, which include alcohol-related issues but not specifically binge drinking per se. On average, the DADS program counsels fifty students per school year.

### **Asian American Recovery Services (AARS)**

The purpose of Asian American Recovery Services, Inc. (AARS) is to reduce the impact of substance abuse in the Asian and Pacific Islander neighborhoods as well as other affected communities of the San Francisco Bay Area. The program is offered to all students, regardless of ethnicity at Milpitas High School and Calaveras Hills Continuation High School. They accomplish this by providing prevention, outreach, intervention and treatment services, as well as, engaging in education, research and advocacy. According to counselor Caulette Marriner, students at the high school are referred to her program when there is a substance abuse problem including alcohol. Group sessions are held once or twice a week and specific units (topics) are discussed. Alcohol is a unit of discussion; however, due to the recent surge in binge drinking, Marriner has created a unit specifically addressing the dangers of binge drinking. She also discusses current events when they occur and recently discussed the Gilroy binge drinking tragedy. The AARS program enrolls approximately 30 high school students a year.

## **Considerations:**

### **“Every 15 Minutes Program”:**

“Every 15 Minutes,” is a dramatic, compelling 2-day program for students sponsored by Students Against Drunk Drivers (SADD) and Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD). This program is presented in real time during school hours. One student is removed from the classroom every 15 minutes to simulate a death during that time frame. Students and parents participate by writing letters to each other regarding their early demise and express their feelings. Mock accidents scenes are created at the school including responses by the fire and police department. Students participate in role-playing at the accident including a fatality in front of the entire school board. Afterwards, parents and students, who had participated, express the emotions and experiences with the student body in an assembly.

### **School Presentations:**

The Police Community Relations Unit offers several presentations to the community including drug awareness. An alcohol specific presentation could be created including binge drinking as a topic. Informational flyers could also be created containing information regarding the dangers of alcohol poisoning and binge drinking. Outreach programs such as DADS and AARS could be listed on the flyers as well.

### **School Policies:**

The Milpitas Unified School District may consider including alcohol poisoning and binge drinking education as part of their orientation at the beginning of each school year. School Resource Officers could give these presentations as part of their orientation speeches to each one of the classes (Freshmen, Sophomore, Junior and Senior).

### **“Social Host” Municipal Laws:**

There are currently 29 cities in California that have incorporated “Social Host” ordinances, which prohibits adults from hosting gatherings which furnish alcohol to minors. Some cities have made it a crime (infraction) and others have made it a civil nuisance to recover costs for emergency responses. Within Santa Clara County, the cities of Morgan Hill, Gilroy, Los Gatos/Monte Sereno and Palo Alto have such ordinances.

### **Community Presentations:**

Officers could provide informational presentations and provide flyers/handouts to community groups, youth groups, parents, retail establishments that sell alcoholic beverages, etc. The fliers would include information on the effects of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning, local statistics, penalties for law violations, retail establishment responsibilities, etc.

**Media Coverage:**

The "Traffic Matters" column in the Milpitas Post could include a series of articles specifically addressing alcohol intoxication, binge drinking, alcohol poisoning and juvenile DUI issues. Additionally, the local access channel could be utilized to provide a video presentation for those residents who are unable to attend a community presentation.