



# Portage Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (PSAP)

## Overall Project Description

Our project target population is 18 - 25 year old students attending Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Our data shows a reported alcohol consumption including binge use at a rate much higher than state average. Kent State is a major state university and has over 22,000 undergraduate students and 5,000 graduate students on its main campus. Of particular concern are the house parties held by students off campus, the number of businesses that sell alcohol within walking

distance of campus and heavy drinking done in bars. PSAP has developed a Policy strategy and a Media strategy to address these issues. The policy strategy will include reviewing appropriate policies at the university and city levels, informing students of the policies and to track enforcement of the policies. The media strategy will promote to students, through the use of a various age-appropriate media, a variety of choices for a healthy lifestyle that do not include consuming alcohol.



## Assessment

Kent State University has conducted an alcohol survey among its students annually for the past several years. This survey provides evidence that KSU students consume alcohol at a higher rate than state average including the rate of binge drinking. 86.7% of 18-25 year old KSU students reported alcohol consumption during the past 30 days, which is 21 percentage points higher than the reported rate of consumption by 18-25 year olds in the state of Ohio (65.4%). 50% of 18-25 year old KSU students reported binge use of alcohol during the past 2 weeks. Additionally, 82% of KSU students who drink alcohol have not been thinking about reducing the amount of alcohol they personally consume, 52% agree that it is acceptable for them to get drunk, and 71% do not perceive great risk of harm due to binge drinking.

## Planning

The PSAP coalition conducted a Needs Assessment in 2012. The Community Readiness component showed that the city only had a vague awareness of the problem of alcohol consumption. The data from the ongoing KSU annual alcohol survey confirmed that there was indeed a problem. The consumption of alcohol among KSU students 18-25 years old was considerably higher than state average. Within the PSAP coalition there are partners who already have ongoing programs, which have contributed to the capacity of our coalition and our prevention efforts. There are several offices within KSU that are concerned about the issue, such as Residential Life, KSU police, Athletics, and the Health Center. There is also an initiative called Healthy Kent that is cooperative effort between the community and the university. The coalition determined that if there is a combined effort of the use of media to communicate a consistent message of choosing a healthy lifestyle and of educating the students population about already existing policies and enforcing them, then there will be a decrease in the consumption of alcohol at the current dangerous level.

## Evaluation

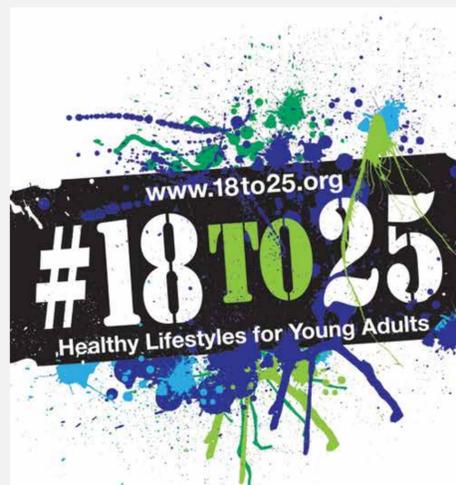
The main emphasis of our project is to encourage healthy choices to the many students who feel they are expected to behave in a certain way because of their age and their role as a college student. It is understandable that there is much peer pressure at this stage but students need to know that there are still important social rules (policies and practices) that if followed, will make their experience at KSU a better one. We also want to change the mindset of a majority of the students so that they know that binge drinking really is quite risky to their health and safety. Through our consistent use media that reaches this age group we want to see a 10% reduction in the number of students who feel it is acceptable to binge drink. We also want to see a reduction in the number of days during the past 30 days a student drank one or more drinks of alcohol. When students are educated about the policies in place concerning behavior associated with alcohol abuse and the policies are enforced consistently, we plan to see a reduction in arrests and campus-related consequences.

## Capacity

For high-risk alcohol use, the coalition determined that the community was in the Vague Awareness stage of community readiness. Having gained this knowledge, we moved forward by implementing strategies that are timely and hopefully effective for our community. We are currently working with our coalition to improve the level of awareness within our community. To increase readiness in the KSU community, we have established a social media center to communicate healthy lifestyle information and alcohol awareness among 18-25 year olds. This resource center is designed to build capacity and is culturally competent to the millennial generation. There is Twitter, Facebook, and a website, www.18to25.org; both Facebook and Twitter can be accessed through the website. We will also be continually gathering data to provide information and resources to community members, groups and our coalition.

## Implementation

The policy strategy involves a review of policies by Healthy Kent (comprised of KSU faculty/students and the PSAP Coalition). To develop this strategy members of PSAP have attended several meetings with Healthy Kent reviewing KSU alcohol related policies. Recommendations were made to the Dean of Students; after approval, Healthy Kent will then make a priority list and action steps to be taken to enhance KSU alcohol related policies and issues. Students will be notified of the policies. Media: The use of media is to promote choices for a healthy lifestyle, in the form of an Internet website, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as media on the KSU campus. Different modalities will be used to direct students to the social media sites. Members of PSAP will recruit blog writers and will review blogs before posting. To develop this strategy PSAP has spent time promoting www.18to25.org at various community events and various advertisements. PSAP members have also been seeking bloggers.



18to25.org  
Social media  
with health  
information for  
young adults!



## Sustainability

Both our media and policy strategies will continue on after the grant period is over under the guidance of Prevention staff at Townhall II with the assistance of interns. During the SPF process, our coalition has developed some great partnerships and we intend on continuing those. PSAP members will continue working with KSU and Healthy Kent to address alcohol related policies and alcohol issues among the 18 to 25 year old population at Kent State. PSAP members will also continue to work with bloggers for appropriate Healthy Lifestyle and alcohol awareness content for www.18to25.org.

## Cultural Competence

Among the millennial generation, our main gap (and concern) is the lack of programs and resources that bring awareness to high-risk alcohol use. To close gaps among the millennial generation we have a social media center that was established to communicate healthy lifestyle information. The media center is welcoming to diverse ethnicity, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and disability. The media center consists of Twitter, Facebook, and a website, 18to25.org, with blogs for and by 18 to 25 year olds. The millennial generation is able to relate to social media and we are trying to bring awareness to high-risk alcohol use with this tool. Healthy lifestyle blogs will be relatable to the techno-savvy millennial generation.