



ISSUES IN PREVENTION

Role of Enforcement in Prevention

What the Evidence Tells Us About the Role of Enforcement in Prevention

A number of landmark reports, including *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges* (2002); *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking* (2007); and the *National Drug Control Strategy* (2012), contain recommendations for addressing alcohol and other drug use by college students, emphasizing the importance of implementing policies on campus and in surrounding communities to change the culture of student drinking through environmental management. But it is not enough just to adopt policies or ordinances. A 2011 study, “[Enforcing Alcohol Policies on College Campuses: Reports from College Enforcement Officials](#),” points out that policies need enforcement. “Deterrence theory suggests that to increase compliance with policies, individuals need to perceive that they will be caught, face severe penalties, and that the penalties will be swiftly applied. Perceived certainty of getting caught may be the most important of these three factors for increasing compliance with policies, suggesting that policies must be regularly enforced.”

The researchers surveyed law enforcement directors at 343 U.S. colleges regarding types and frequency of enforcement and barriers to enforcement. They found that 61 percent reported proactively enforcing alcohol policies, most frequently at intercollegiate sporting events and least frequently at Greek social events. About half of the enforcement departments reported working closely with their local law enforcement agencies,

but respondents indicated a greater need for cooperation with local law enforcement. Large colleges and public colleges tended to report greater enforcement levels. They concluded:

“Results from this study are encouraging in that clearly law enforcement professionals on or around many college campuses take enforcement of alcohol-related policies seriously. . . . Law enforcement professionals have taken the lead on addressing alcohol-related issues in many communities, and results from this study suggest that law enforcement professionals are also playing a significant role on college campuses in addressing alcohol-related problems.”

An earlier [study](#) examined enforcement levels and drinking rates at 11 Massachusetts public colleges and universities subsequent to the adoption of a new, more restrictive alcohol policy for all schools under the authority of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. The new policy included eight components: (1) restricting alcohol to specific, supervised locations; (2) requiring advance registration of all social events involving alcohol;

(Continued on page 2)

CONTENTS

What the Evidence Tells Us	1
Campus Briefs	3
Q&A With Charles Cychosz	4
Higher Education Center Resources	6

(3) restricting “legal” possession of alcohol to separate residence halls for students aged 21 or older; (4) providing alcohol education and prevention programs; (5) establishing procedures for enforcement of all federal, state, local, and campus regulations; (6) requiring that colleges work with neighboring cities and towns to enforce alcohol laws; (7) new sanctions on student violators, up to and including expulsion from the college; and (8) parental notification of all alcohol policy violations by underage students.

According to the researchers, the findings of this study suggest that “an aggressive enforcement stance by deans, and other such college leaders, may be an important element of an effective college alcohol policy and be associated with reductions in student high-risk drinking rates over time, perhaps reduced uptake of heavy drinking in college. A unified stance among college administrators of aggressive policy enforcement and action around drinking violations, and greater awareness of and involvement in enforcement by college leaders, e.g., through giving reminders at events and residence meetings, may help to set a tone on campus which discourages underage and heavy drinking by students. . . . While enforcement of alcohol policies may be challenging, colleges’ multi-level efforts to address student drinking, when properly implemented and consistently enforced by college staff working in unison at all levels could eventually help to lower rates of students’ heavy drinking, and therefore lower the morbidity and mortality among our nation’s most important resource—its young people.”

A 2011 [survey](#) of college administrators at colleges in the Southeastern United States examined challenges and recommendations regarding the enforcement of specific alcohol policies. College administrators identified several challenges associated with enforcement related to individual student behavior, including (a) off-campus alcohol use, (b) violating campus alcohol policies, (c) deciding when a friend or fellow student needs medical attention, (d) underage drinking, (e) binge drinking, (f) experience with alcohol prior to entering college, (g) “pregaming,” and (h) “postpartying.” Additionally, student attitudes

were thought to be a challenge, specifically the acceptability of alcohol regardless of age and a lack of concern for related consequences and the campus adjudication process.

According to the researchers, survey respondents heavily referenced inconsistent enforcement of policies as a barrier to reducing problems. They recommended that administrators need not only to implement policies and strategies that have been shown to be effective but also to follow through with enforcement of those policies. They cited the five major actions that college officials can consider to strengthen their law enforcement efforts contained in the 1998 publication from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention *Environmental Management: A Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Use on College Campuses*. Those strategies include (a) imposing and enforcing a program of responsible beverage service that lays out the requirements that must be met before students are allowed to host a party at which alcohol is served; (b) requiring that Greek houses meet building codes, health regulations, alcohol licensing requirements, and other state and local ordinances before students are allowed to host parties or other events; (c) identifying on-campus locations where underage drinking is occurring and then take meaningful disciplinary action against those who are serving alcohol to minors; (d) establishing a policy of “zero tolerance” for fake IDs that underage students use to purchase or be served alcohol; and (e) taking firm disciplinary steps against students who drive or commit other infractions while under the influence, including probation, fines, community service, suspension, and expulsion.

While driving under the influence (DUI) accounted for an [estimated 1,357 of the 1,825 college student deaths each year](#) in 2005, little research has been conducted on the efficacy of enforcement strategies specifically for DUI prevention among college students. A [study](#) conducted by John Clapp, director of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention and director of the Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies at San Diego State University, and colleagues examined the efficacy

of an enforcement-based environmental DUI prevention campaign for college students. The campaign was designed to raise the perception of risk for getting arrested for drunk driving among other students so that students would believe that if they drank and drove they had a high likelihood of getting arrested. A media campaign to support the interventions was implemented, including having students write letters and editorials for the campus newspaper. Major streets around the San Diego State University campus were blocked off and San Diego and campus police set up several DUI checkpoints. In addition, police drove around with “DUI enforcement” emblems on their vehicles and pulled over people with sirens on to make it appear that a lot of people were getting pulled over for drunk driving, even if it had been for a minor traffic violation. This combined effect of this campaign reduced DUIs at SDSU by 27 percent in one semester.

(Editor’s note: To hear Clapp describe the DUI prevention campaign at SDSU, visit

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEuZXCdv4uA>)

Two research projects included enforcement strategies as key components of a comprehensive approach. The [Safer California Universities study](#) involved 14 large public universities. Interventions included nuisance party enforcement operations, minor decoy operations, DUI checkpoints, social host ordinances, and use of campus and local media to increase the visibility of environmental strategies. The results showed that students were significantly less likely to become intoxicated at off-campus parties and bars/restaurants at the Safer California intervention universities compared with the control campuses. Significantly fewer students at the Safer California intervention schools also reported that they became intoxicated the last time they drank at an off-campus party; a bar or restaurant; or across all settings.

“There’s this mythology about college drinking that nothing works, and that if you do try to increase enforcement, students will just find some way around it. But now we have direct evidence that these kinds of interventions can have a fairly significant impact,” said lead researcher Robert Saltz, senior research scientist at the Prevention

Research Center, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, in Berkeley, Calif.

[Common Ground](#), a media campaign–supported prevention program at the University of Rhode Island (URI), featured increased enforcement, decreased alcohol access, and other environmental management initiatives targeting college student drinking. The researchers found increases at the intervention campus in students’ awareness of formal alcohol-control efforts and perceptions of the alcohol environment, likelihood of apprehension for underage drinking, consequences for alcohol-impaired driving, and responsible alcohol service practices. In addition, police-reported incidents decreased over time.

Commenting on the implementation of the Common Ground interventions, [URI President Robert L. Carothers](#) said, “We have a fundamental obligation to ensure that students know the rules and laws that govern the use of alcohol. I am confident that students will make safe and healthy decisions if they have all the facts in front of them, including the greater certainty of being caught and punished for alcohol-impaired driving.”

Campus Briefs: Enforcement Programs

According to an article in the [Colorado Daily](#), the University of Colorado-Boulder (CU) saw a drop in 2010–11 drug and alcohol violations on campus, which could be credited to new programs implemented by the University of Colorado Police. According to the CU police statistics, during the period of July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2011, there were 381 drug violations and 516 alcohol violations—almost 10 percent fewer than the previous year.

The program, called Responsibility 101, is a class developed by CU police partnered with the Office of Student Conduct that was implemented during freshman orientation in fall 2009. In addition to offering basic safety tips, the class includes an overview of university policies focused on drugs and alcohol and information about the Office of

Student Conduct, which evaluates student offenses and gives disciplinary action, in addition to court-ordered fines and community service.

“Students are surprised to hear, if they’re on spring break and they get into a fist fight and break someone’s jaw and get arrested or that something that occurs in Vegas or Mexico or Florida can affect their experience in Boulder,” Bronson Hilliard, spokesman for the university, told the *Colorado Daily*.

In an interview with *Campus Safety*, Carey Drayton, executive director/chief of public safety at the University of Southern California (USC), outlined how he and his department successfully handle the wide variety of events that take place on or near the USC campus, which is located in the city of Los Angeles.

Drayton believes that being proactive when it comes to enforcement is key. “I tell the staff I don’t want to be called when there’s a problem. I want to be called before the problem ever exists. Prevent the problem from occurring. Why should we do firehouse policing? The firefighters are there waiting for the alarm to go off. We should not police in that fashion. If there is a group of people having an event, the likelihood of where the next problem will occur is going to be at that event. So why not be there, prevent it, and not be needed?” he told *Campus Safety*.

Q&A With Charles Cychosz

Charles Cychosz, Ph.D., is currently the chief of police in Ames, Iowa. He also served five years as support services manager for Ames Police Department and four years as crime prevention, research, and training manager in the Iowa State University Department of Public Safety. As a former faculty member at Iowa State and assistant to the vice president for Student Affairs at Iowa State, he has been involved in a variety of programs affecting young people—particularly in higher education and student life. In addition, he has managed and evaluated several local and regional substance abuse prevention and health promotion activities, and published research findings on health education and violence prevention. He is active in the

Ames City Manager’s Executive Leadership Team, the Iowa Police Chiefs Association, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Cychosz is a Center Fellow at the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Violence Prevention.

Q: As someone who has worked in law enforcement and public safety, both on campus at Iowa State University and in Ames, Iowa, what do you think is the most important role of enforcement when it comes to preventing problems related to alcohol and other drug use and violence among college students?

A: We have to overcome the “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” nature of alcohol and drug problems. Many people who live in our community have not recently been in bars, to a house party, or on the streets (in Ames) at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Absent that firsthand experience, they really don’t know what it looks like out there. Their point of reference is what somebody has told them or maybe something they remember from 10 or 20 years ago. In Ames we have tried to open people’s eyes to what that late-night social alcohol environment looks like. Even those who have been out there often are intoxicated themselves, so their perception is impaired and their view is biased. Getting the community at large to really see this environment has been very important. To that end, we arrange late-night ride-alongs with city council members, student leaders, neighborhood representatives, and average citizens. We actively encourage a cross section of the community to go with officers and see those settings firsthand. The vice president of student affairs, the dean of students, and other university officials who have a stake in this have all seen these environments as well, so we are all talking about the same concerns.

Law enforcement has an advantage in making these problems visible. Arrests are a matter of public record. Our incidents generally are accessible to the media and can become a basis for discussion in ways that the medical and health-care providers cannot do because of regulatory limitations. Similarly, the university has limitations on information it can release. Nevertheless, it is

very important to publicly make the connection between alcohol consumption and the downstream consequences, including injuries, assaults, academic problems, roommate problems, and even fatalities. We have to seize opportunities when they occur and be able to speak about it with students, the city council, parents, and citizens at large so they can make that connection.

Law enforcement has a unique ability to convene stakeholders. For example, we hold a quarterly meeting with Ames bar owners to make our expectations clear and talk about enforcement and other concerns. We report on last-drink and citation data and let them know if we are doing enforcement initiatives. I am not sure that anybody else in the community could convene such a group. These conversations help bar owners, as well as their patrons and the community.

Q: How important is it to have both campus and community law enforcement collaboration and what is the best way to go about getting that collaboration?

A: In Ames we have found ways to work together, and as a result we both do a better job of protecting and promoting safety in the community. It is important to respect the unique mission of the other agency and respect the people pursuing that mission, whether it is the campus police or county sheriff. Part of my responsibility as police chief is to cultivate that respect. We also need to create opportunities for our agencies to work together at the operational level. It could be simply traffic enforcement and pedestrian safety projects and outreach campaigns, which gives officers a chance to get to know each other and the strengths that each brings to the table by developing that working partnership during the easy times. That makes it easier in the difficult times. It is not a “one and done” phenomenon, but rather something we have to cultivate on a regular basis. The leaders of the other law enforcement agencies in Ames get credit for making a commitment to work together and develop that partnership and respect one another’s strengths.

Q: Often enforcement strategies are seen by students as “cracking down” on students. What are ways to shift that perception and enlist students as allies in enforcement efforts?

A: We try to avoid a crackdown mentality in order to make sure that students do not have that perception. Consistency in expectations is important. For example, students entering a bar in Ames should expect to get their IDs checked carefully. They should expect to see officers walking through the bar on the weekend. It should be an expected part of routine enforcement strategy. Our dialogue with students focuses on safety. We do invite community members and students to join us each year for a safety walk. That event focuses on lighting, vegetation, and other unsafe environmental factors. That mind-set then extends to reasonable limits on alcohol use, police patrols, and prompt intervention in fights. We are looking for a stronger partnership in promoting student safety.

Our efforts to try to work more effectively with the student community go back to the development of a party response team strategy. We have an area where we used to encounter a lot of house parties and we have a concentration of bars. Because that is the genesis of much of our alcohol-related activity at night, a number of years ago we started sending in a team to respond to noise complaints, party calls, and neighborhood disruption. Then we started sending those officers out at about 6:00 at night prior to a problem to establish some rapport with the property owner or the resident while everybody was sober and things were just getting started. Officers educated them about ordinances and community expectations.

They made it clear that they would come back to assist them if their party got invaded by people they did not invite and if it was getting out of hand and their property was being damaged. If neighbors called, we would come as well. We developed a sense of partnership and collaboration and started getting called back to many of the parties, which shifted the dynamic a little bit in those neighborhoods. It was no longer the police against the party. It was the police

assisting those social hosts to manage a safe environment.

We also use this approach when we deal with individuals. Officers make an assessment out there based on the philosophy that we are here to help you. We make an assessment about your level of intoxication, the nature of your behavior, the environment you are in, the people you are with and judge what is downstream for you. We cannot arrest every intoxicated person. Sometimes we just have to trust that their friends will take care of them. In some cases, the friends are in no condition to either control the behavior or to manage them for safe outcomes, so officers just need to arrest some people to keep them safe. The priority is safety. The way that we make those decisions has become pretty consistent throughout the organization, but we have to educate students on our approach each year.

Q: Why is enforcement an important component of alcohol and other drug problem prevention?

A: Enforcement and police agencies play a unique role. We have the authority and the responsibility to be involved in these situations, whether it is about liquor licenses, intoxication, or safety in entertainment districts; it is our business and responsibility. We have a statutory stake in all of this while many others are just observers. We are in the thick of it because the law puts us there, but we cannot do it alone. One of the contributions that police make to society, whether it is related to traffic enforcement or alcohol-related problems, is to introduce some accountability for those who might otherwise push the behavioral limits agreed to by the community. Since many of these rules are intended to ensure the safety of a person or those around them, this accountability contributes to a safer community. If people learn from those interactions, their behavior change can make them

safer. That is why I think enforcement is a critical component, although certainly not the only component, in working with young people on these issues. Their mind-set is exploring the world and pushing back boundaries in all the facets of their life. When alcohol is involved there is a great deal of risk associated with certain kinds of behaviors. It is important for us to step in and help them see those boundaries and understand why they are there and the consequences of crossing over them.

Higher Education Center Resources

Case Studies

- [Missouri Partners in Prevention: Missouri Partners in Prevention \(PIP\) Coalition](#)
- [Missouri Partners in Prevention: A Statewide Initiative: Missouri Partners in Environmental Change \(PIEC\)](#)
- [University of Massachusetts Amherst: Campus and Community Coalition to Reduce High-Risk Drinking \(CCC\)](#)

Prevention Updates

- [Controlling Rowdy House Parties Through Enforcement](#) (December 2009)
- [The Role of Law Enforcement in Prevention](#) (October 2011)
- [Social Host Ordinances and Policies](#) (January 2011)

Publications

- [Catalyst](#) (Winter 2007) Vol. 8 No. 2: Law Enforcement
- [Law Enforcement and Higher Education: Finding Common Ground to Address Underage Drinking on Campus](#) (2001)
- [The Off-Campus Environment: Approaches for Reducing Alcohol and Other Drug Problems](#) (2008)

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