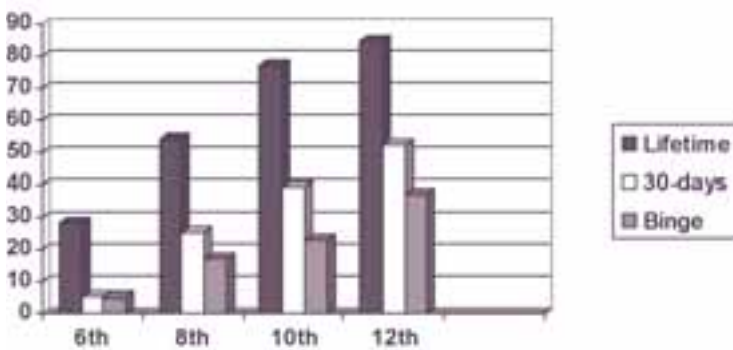


# FACTS

## What you should know about teen alcohol use in southeast Wyoming

To support Wyoming parents and their children, the Wyoming Department of Health, Substance Abuse Division, recently researched alcohol use and abuse among adolescents in grades 6-12. In addition to the 2004 Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA) and the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Peak Wellness Center recently completed a random telephone survey<sup>1</sup> of 445 parents across Albany, Goshen, Laramie and Platte counties asking what parents believed was happening in their households regarding underage alcohol use. The results are enlightening:

### Actual Use in southeast Wyoming<sup>1</sup>



- Lifetime—students reporting use of alcohol (more than just a few sips on at least one occasion)
- 30-day—Students reporting use of alcohol on at least one occasion in the past 30 days
- Binge—Students reporting having five or more alcoholic drinks in a row on at least one occasion in the past two weeks

## The truth in southeast Wyoming: What parents believe is not what teens say!

PARENTS: **77%** believe that their child has not had more than a few sips of alcohol in their life.

TEENS: **61%** report they have had more than a few sips of alcohol in their life.

PARENTS: **83%** believe that their child has not been drinking alcohol in the month before the parent survey took place.

TEENS: **30%** report they have been drinking alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days.

PARENTS: **99%** believe that their child had not been drinking alcohol to excess (five or more drinks in a row within two weeks prior to the survey).

TEENS: **20%** report they had participated in at least one episode of drinking to excess (five or more drinks in a row within two weeks prior to the survey).

PARENTS: **77%** believe that if their child drank alcohol without their permission, they would catch her/him.

TEENS: **43%** report that their parent(s) would not catch them drinking if they were to drink without their parent's permission.

## Perceptions versus **FACT**

Teens mistakenly perceive that their peers are drinking more than they really are. Parents often perceive that they would know if their teen was using or abusing alcohol. Whatever your perceptions are, it is helpful to know the facts.

### parents:

WHAT PARENTS BELIEVE **It's someone else's kid.**

**THE FACTS:** Most parents underestimate the extent to which their teen is at risk. Only 23% of the parents surveyed believed their child has ever had a drink.<sup>2</sup> If you assume that it's "someone else's kid" who is drinking, ask yourself the question—do you really know? Monitor your teen's behavior and talk to them about the negative impact of alcohol on their lives.

WHAT PARENTS BELIEVE **My teen is honest with me.**

**THE FACTS:** 91% of parents surveyed felt that their teens shared their thoughts with them.<sup>2</sup> But when it comes to getting the straight scoop, many kids report it differently. Only 29% of the teens agreed that they share their thoughts and feelings with their fathers, 55% with their mothers.<sup>1</sup> Keep talking and dig deeper. Encourage conversation—ask questions that require more than just "yes" or "no" answers.

WHAT PARENTS BELIEVE **Our family has clear rules about alcohol.**

**THE FACTS:** 97% of parents agree that the rules regarding alcohol are clear.<sup>2</sup> However, teens paint a very different picture. Only 56% of teens strongly agree that the rules about alcohol use are clear.<sup>1</sup>

### teens:

WHAT TEENS BELIEVE **Everyone drinks in my school.**

**THE FACTS:** While 30% of students in southeast Wyoming reported having had a drink in the last 30 days, they are in the minority. Encourage your teen to question their assumptions and help them realize that everyone else isn't drinking.<sup>1</sup>

WHAT TEENS BELIEVE **It doesn't matter, I'll be 21 soon.**

**THE FACTS:** It does matter. 40% of kids who begin drinking before age 15 will develop alcohol abuse or dependence at some point in their lives.<sup>3</sup> That proportion drops to below 10% for those who begin drinking after age 21. Alcohol affects teens and adults differently. It's worth the wait. (See The Medical Impact section in this Parent Handbook.)

WHAT TEENS BELIEVE **Alcohol won't hurt me.**

**THE FACTS:** Alcohol hurts kids. In addition to drunk driving, alcohol is a major factor in many other types of fatal injuries including drownings, burns, falls, and alcohol poisoning from drinking too much, too fast. It makes young people more susceptible to sexual assault and unprotected sex.

<sup>1</sup> 2004 Wyoming Prevention Needs Assessment prepared by DATACORP on behalf of the Wyoming Department of Health, Substance Abuse Division.

<sup>2</sup> "2005 Parents' Perception of Teenage Drinking" Survey Conducted by the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center on behalf of Peak Wellness Center. July 2005.

<sup>3</sup> (NIAAA) National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Washington D.C. Alcohol Alert No. 35. PH 371. January 1997.