

A Report to the Petaluma City Council

A summary of efforts and accomplishments in the reduction of problems related to underage and high-risk drinking

Petaluma Coalition
to Prevent Underage
& High-Risk Drinking

July 2008

A national, state, and county-wide call to action

Preventing Underage and High Risk Drinking

National concern

"Alcohol remains the most heavily abused substance by America's youth. We can no longer ignore what alcohol is doing to our children. This Call to Action is exactly that - a call to every American to join with the Surgeon General in a national effort to address underage drinking early, continuously, and in context of human development. Underage drinking is everybody's problem - and its solution is everyone's responsibility." *Acting Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H*

California concern

"Underage drinking is a grave issue in California that demands the serious attention and effective action of families, communities, local and state governments. It is a major public health and safety concern statewide and nationally. The Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) remains committed to investing in the reduction and prevention of underage drinking and the consequences it produces.... Data tells us that alcohol is the most commonly used drug among California's youth." *Renee Zito, Director, State of California - Health and Human Services Agency*

Sonoma County concern

- Alcohol is the leading drug used by Sonoma County teens
- High-risk behaviors occur in association with youth alcohol use
- Sonoma County adults exhibit high rates of high-risk drinking
- Adults engage in high-risk behaviors associated with drinking alcohol
- The impact of high-risk alcohol use on public health and safety is significant.

Planning for Community-Based Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug-Related Problems in Sonoma County, Dec. 2006

Petaluma Accepts the Challenge

In 2004, Sonoma was one of 13 California counties funded by a State Incentive Grant (SIG) to evaluate need and pilot the implementation of an environmental approach to prevent problems related to underage alcohol use and high risk drinking. The Center for Community Action and Training (CCAT) was contracted by Sonoma County to facilitate development of coalitions in Petaluma, Rohnert Park, and Cotati, and to provide technical assistance to the Petaluma Coalition to Prevent Underage and High Risk Drinking (the Coalition).

Based on the needs assessment completed in 2005, the Petaluma Coalition chose to address four key problems related to underage and high risk drinking using evidence based environmental prevention strategies.

Between 2004 and 2007, the Coalition facilitated passage of three city policies aimed at reducing underage and high risk drinking: the City Facilities Alcohol Use Policy, the Social Host Ordinance (SHO), and the Alcohol Related Nuisance Ordinance (ARNO).

In 2007, Sonoma County expanded their financial support of environmental prevention projects in the county. The Healthy Community Consortium (HC²) was one of five community organizations in the county to receive SIG funding to continue facilitating the Petaluma Coalition. In 2008 the Sonoma County Department of Prevention

and Planning funded Petaluma and six other community coalitions to continue to address the problems associated with underage and high risk drinking using an environmental approach.

Local priorities

The Petaluma Coalition decided to address the four highest risk settings related to underage and high risk drinking that surfaced during the 2005 assessment using proven environmental strategies.

This summary addresses the community problem, data that demonstrated the need for action, the strategies implemented, and some key results of the work to date. As one looks at the data, it is useful to remember that when a new law is enacted and enforced, initial results often look like the problem got worse. As the law is enforced and people become aware, the law begins to serve as an effective deterrent and the public health problem is reduced.

ENVIRONMENTAL PREVENTION

Environmental prevention approaches strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors for community alcohol problems. Rather than focusing on individual behaviors, environmental prevention seeks to change community norms, policies, and laws that affect the availability, promotion, sale, and use of alcohol to create a community environment that promotes healthy choices and reduces risk.

Based on the assessment of relevant data, the Petaluma Coalition to Prevent Underage and High-Risk Drinking chose to address four key problems

Problem 1:

Youth obtaining alcohol from and consuming alcohol in social settings. These social settings include small and large house parties as well as community events.

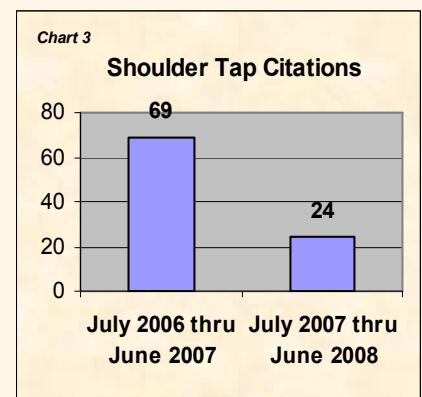
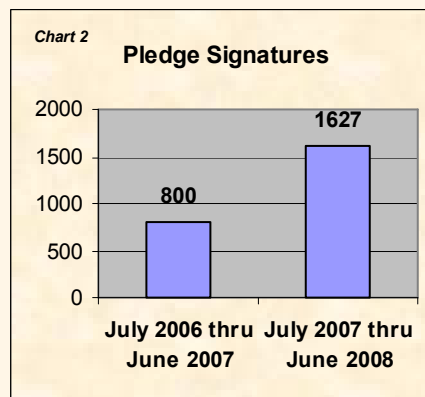
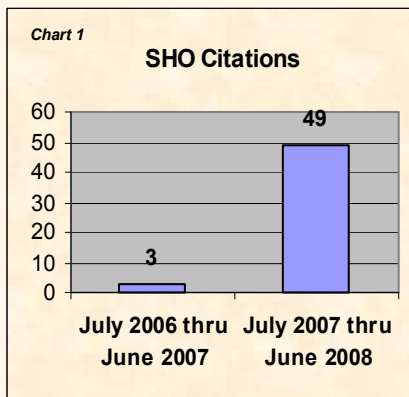
Data: According to the 2005 California Healthy Kids Survey local teen drinking rates were higher than the average in California. 82% of Petaluma 11th graders surveyed in 2005 report that it is easy to obtain alcohol. Anecdotal reports from young people in 2005 report that they often get alcohol at home or at the home of friends. 26 % of 9th graders and 20% of 11th graders report that parents or other adults are present when drinking at parties.

Strategy: The Social Host Ordinance (SHO) went into effect in January of 2007. The SHO is designed as a nuisance abatement strategy that supports law enforcement officials who routinely respond to complaints from the public about unruly parties. It establishes that loud or uncontrolled parties are a “public nuisance”. As a strategy for deterring underage drinking parties on private property, the social host ordinance imposes a criminal infraction on the responsible adult when an unruly party or public nuisance is found to exist.

Strategy: The Parent/Community Pledge is another strategy designed to address the problem of youth access to alcohol. This Pledge is distributed to parents of all junior and senior high school students as part of their school registration packets. By signing the Pledge adults acknowledge that it is illegal to serve alcohol to youth and that they are accountable for nuisances on their property.

Impact: In fiscal year 2006-07, 3 SHO citations were written. Between July of 2007 through June 2008, 49 SHO citations have been written. *Chart 1* The Petaluma Police Department reports a greater community concern and awareness around underage drinking. This is the expected first step in the process of norm change. The 2007 California Healthy Kids Survey data shows a slight reduction in 9th and 11th grade binge drinking rates.

Impact: 800 signatures were received in 2006-2007 and over 1,600 were received in 2007-2008. *Chart 2* Parents are becoming increasingly aware that it is not okay to serve alcohol to underage youth. They are informed about the SHO and in dialogue with the Coalition and other parents about the serious health problems related to teen drinking and their role in the problem.



Problem 2:

Youth are obtaining alcohol from and around retail alcohol outlets. Some off sale outlets sell alcohol to minors and permit nuisance related activities to occur around their stores. In addition, there are adults who loiter around off-sale outlets and purchase alcohol for minors.

Data: According to the California Healthy Kids Survey in 2005, in Petaluma, 65% of 9th graders and 82% of 11th graders reported alcohol “fairly easy” or “very easy” to obtain, and 25% of 9th graders and 48% of 11th graders reported that they get adults to buy alcohol for them.

Strategy: In November 2007 the Alcohol Related Nuisance Ordinance (ARNO) was passed. The ARNO is a nuisance abatement tool that establishes uniform operating practices for all bars, restaurants, and stores selling alcohol. The ARNO requires Responsible Service Beverage (RBS) training for all managers and servers. The ARNO holds merchants accountable for alcohol related nuisance behavior associated with their outlet.

Impact: As a result of combining merchant education, RBS training, and rigorous enforcement, alcohol merchants in Petaluma are working in partnership with the police department to prevent calls for service. Shoulder tap citations of adults purchasing alcohol for youth have dropped from 69 in fiscal year 2006-2007 to 24 in 2007-2008. *see Chart 3*

Problem 3:

High risk and underage drinking frequently occurs at community events. Alcohol is widely available at community events with few policies regulating consumption.

Data: 2005 police calls for service and anecdotal reports revealed special events, such as Butter and Egg Days, St. Patrick's Day, 4th of July, and other festivals, were problem events with fights, vandalism, public drunkenness, and driving under the influence (DUI).

Strategy: Special Events Policies and Practices (SEP) are voluntary guidelines adopted by event organizers to reduce problems associated with sales and service of alcohol during special events. A number of Petaluma organizations have implemented voluntary alcohol sales and service practices over the last year.

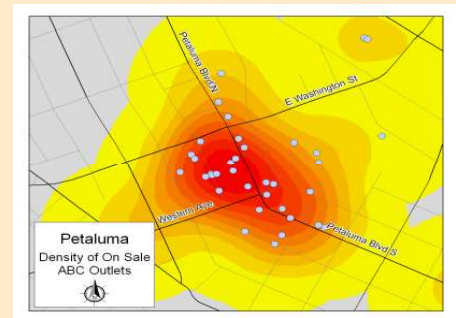


Impact: Although community non-profits initially expressed concern about imposing controls on their events, they are complying voluntarily with policy changes and report positive results. Most notably the Downtown Association, Kiwanis Club, and Chamber of Commerce have implemented RBS training, enclosed "Beer/Wine Gardens", regulated pour size, and trained event monitors. These practices have led to a dramatic reduction in public intoxication, fights, and other nuisance behavior at Petaluma events such as Butter and Egg Days and the 4th of July celebration.

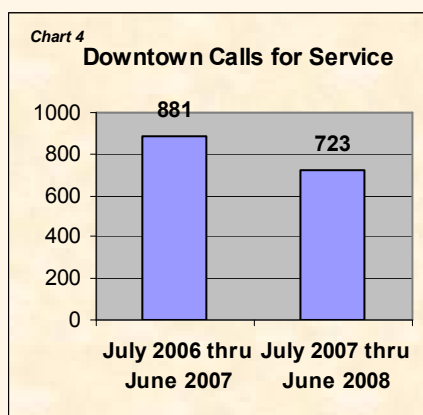
Problem 4:

Patrons of on-sale liquor outlets consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. High risk alcohol consumption in on-sale outlets threatens individual health and safety by contributing to DUI, sexual assault, property damage, violence, vandalism, and other injuries. The change in mode and operation of some outlets, such as restaurants morphing into nightclubs, negatively affects surrounding neighbors.

Data: According to the California Alcohol Beverage Control Board (ABC), Petaluma has a higher concentration of alcohol outlets per resident population than the statewide average (one outlet for every 279 residents compared with one outlet for every 558 residents statewide). As of January 2006, 45% of the approximately 108 on-sale alcohol establishments in Petaluma were located in the downtown area. The high concentration of retail alcohol outlets and the change in mode of operation from restaurants to nightclubs places a burden on local law enforcement agencies to respond to alcohol related calls for service. During the period of June 1, 2005 — December 31, 2005, between the hours of 6:00 pm and 6:00 am, in the downtown area alone there were conservatively 375 police calls for service for alcohol-related problems including, but not limited to, drunk-in-public, fights, DUIs, and property damage.



Strategy: The ARNO calls for educational visits, and RBS training and it promotes collaboration among business owners and law enforcement to abate problems before they get out of hand.



Impact: The number of calls for service, fights, and problems in Petaluma's downtown hot spots has dropped. Downtown calls for service 2006-07 were 881 versus 723 in 2007-08. *see Chart 4* The Petaluma Police Department reports that alcohol merchants are more actively carding patrons. In addition 188 individuals from 38 alcohol outlets have completed RBS training. The Petaluma Police Department has successfully worked with 3 outlets to modify problem behavior before citations needed to be issued. Local alcohol merchants have begun to contact Officer Hughes when they see a problem developing. By being able to track back to place of last drink, police officers and merchants are regulating consumption.

The Coalition, partners and supporters

The Coalition is comprised of individuals and organizations that are concerned about the issues related to underage and high risk drinking, and committed to impacting the environments where these risks occur. Coalition members work together to design and implement research based policies and practices that can have long term sustainable impact.

The Coalition reflects strong partnerships with law enforcement, education, health care, youth serving organizations, community members, and the media. The Coalition includes:

- The *Petaluma Police Department* (PPD) has provided ongoing leadership and support for the Coalition. Chief Hood, Captain Sears, Lt. Edwards, Sgt. Savano, and Officer Hughes have been active partners and facilitated collaborative efforts between the police department, city staff departments, and other agencies in the community.
- The *Petaluma Parks and Recreation Department* set the tone for special events with their alcohol use policy.
- The partnership with *Petaluma City Schools* is reflected in their distribution and collection of the Parent/Community Pledges at key times during the school year with a cover letter from the Superintendent of Schools. Junior and senior high school counseling staff refer interested parents to the Coalition and solicit Pledge signatures.
- St. Joseph Health System has adopted goals aligned with the Coalition and the *Petaluma Valley Hospital* (PVH) Emergency Room Director, Wendi Thomas, is beginning to gather statistics on emergency room admissions of youth with alcohol involvement and provide this data to the Coalition.
- The *Kaiser Petaluma* pediatric department has integrated the Pledge into routine appointments with all youth who are 11 years and older.
- Local *media* has been supportive throughout the last three years' efforts. The *Petaluma Argus-Courier* has been a key partner in providing timely articles, guest editorials, and editorial staff columns which served to increase awareness and sensitivity around the issues of underage and high risk drinking.
- The Coalition includes members from AAUW, Healthy Community Consortium, Neighborhood Groups, Petaluma City Schools, Petaluma Health Care District, Petaluma Parks and Recreation, Petaluma People Service Center, Petaluma Police Department, St. Joseph Health System, Sonoma County Department of Education, and Sonoma County Department of Health Services.
- The Petaluma City Council has demonstrated their support by the unanimous passage of the Social Host Ordinance (SHO) and the Alcohol Related Nuisance Ordinance (ARNO).



Next Steps

Coalition successes have created a strong platform for sustainable environmental prevention. As we look and listen to our community we can begin to see which next steps to take. The data regarding risks associated with on and off sale alcohol outlets indicates that with the ARNO we have implemented an effective tool to mitigate risks associated with existing outlets. However, the ARNO stops short of being able to prevent problems associated with 1) New outlets, 2) Outlets that change their mode and character of operation – for example “morphing” from a family restaurant into a night club, or 3) “Concurrent sales” where gas stations become licensed to sell alcohol.

The ARNO is effective in mitigating nuisances in existing alcohol outlets and has been used successfully with 4 problem outlets over the last 6 months. However, in one case city staff had to rely on the ARNO as their only policy solution with an outlet that “morphed” from restaurant to night club. Over a 6 month period there was a 600% increase in calls for service related to this outlet, including problems with vandalism, assault, DUIs, and gang involvement. This incurred substantial cost to the city and adjacent property owners.

Many cities in California have developed standard conditions regarding new outlets or when there is a change in mode and character of outlet operation. This type of policy would prevent a first call for service for new outlets.

The Petaluma Coalition to Prevent Underage and High Risk Drinking looks forward to working with city staff and council to explore how to proceed with our already successful collaborative efforts. We will continue to expand community engagement in solution-finding, stimulate critical policy dialogue, and mobilize for effective systems changes.