

# ***Alcohol Awareness Month Activities for Colleges and Universities***

## **National Alcohol Screening Day**

National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD) is held each year. The College Response NASD program is designed to call attention to the impact that alcohol has on overall health on a national level. The program aims to encourage students to take a look at the way they use alcohol, so that they may take steps to reduce their alcohol intake if necessary. This year NASD is scheduled for April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Event sites are located in community, college, primary health care, military and employment settings. Nearly one in four Michigan colleges and universities offer some kind of screening program on their campuses. NASD is designed to provide outreach, screening and education about alcohol's effects on health for the general public. The theme, "Alcohol and Health: Where do you draw the line?" focuses on a broad health message that is applicable to anyone who drinks alcohol including college students.

A College Kit for use in conducting an informative event to educate students about the risks of drinking is available for a fee of \$150 at [www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org](http://www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org) or by calling (800) 253-7658. Materials in the kit include: a "how to" event guide, campus media templates, brochures, videos, screening forms and scoring interpretation, giveaway items, and posters geared towards binge drinking and the student population. A packet of additional materials is provided health centers to screen students year-round. The kit also includes the AUDIT (Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) screening questionnaire developed by the World Health Organization.

FREE tools for participating in National Alcohol Screening Day may be found at [www.alcoholscreening.org](http://www.alcoholscreening.org). The theme on this website is "How much is **too much**?" There is no charge for the use of these tools developed and made available through Join Together from Boston University. The home page of this website is the screening tool that may be used by anyone. A button on this page "Help Promote [www.AlcoholScreening.org](http://www.AlcoholScreening.org)" takes the visitor to tools that may be used to promote Alcohol Screening Day. Information is also provided to incorporate this screening tool into the college's own web site at no charge provided the site is open for use by anyone and no registration is required.

## **Using Alcohol Awareness Month to Disseminate Social Norming Messages**

Many people associate the development of social norming messages with social marketing. They envision a campaign with posters telling students the percentage of their classmates who make healthy choices around their use of alcohol. This is a great idea if a college has the resources but many do not. There are many less expensive ways to disseminate social norm messages.

Alcohol Awareness Month presents an opportunity for a press release that includes social norming information. Alcohol Awareness Month may be the headline but the content of the article may educate students – if it's the student paper – or faculty, staff, and community members if it's the community paper. Include information about the number of students on campus who don't use alcohol or use very little. Frame Alcohol Awareness Month as a month to celebrate how aware students are of the risks of using alcohol as demonstrated by their healthy choices. Use the media resource in this packet if you need help in writing a press release. Your news information office may be willing to help with this.

### **Contact Local Bars in Preparation for Senior Night Devoted to Drinking**

Many campuses struggle with the high risks associated with a particular night – usually in April – designated for seniors to go bar to bar celebrating their upcoming graduation. Often the “event” has a name – sometimes as simple as “Senior Bar Night” or “Senior Pub Crawl.” This is college drinking organized to be high risk.

Many campuses use Alcohol Awareness Month to educate students, faculty, staff, and community members about high risk drinking but fail to go the step further to address factors in the environment that may contribute to high risk drinking. Senior nights organized around alcohol consumption are a clear example of an environmental factor contributing to alcohol abuse.

This event is seldom organized or sanctioned by the college or university and health educators often feel like they have little control over it. One idea to try to manage it is by working with the bar owners. Starting well ahead of the actual event university officials should contact bar owners and invite them to discuss this event. The discussion can be in small groups of bar owners and university staff and students or in one large meeting. The important thing is that all points of views are heard:

What is the view of the bar owners of this event? Is it a great source of revenue? Is it a problem for wait staff because many students arrive at the bar already intoxicated? Do the bar owners schedule extra staff on this night? Do they provide any special training? Do they usually know when it is going to be before it happens?

What is the view of the student organizers? Are they doing it because it's the “tradition”? Have they thought about the goals they hope to achieve and whether their goals will be accomplished through such an event? What about the risks to health and safety? Are there any alternatives that could achieve some of the same positive goals?

What is the view of college or university staff and administrators? Are they concerned about the health and safety risks of such an event? Are they willing to support an alternative activity? Are they willing to encourage campus-wide discussion – in and out of the classroom – about celebratory drinking?