

## Research Study Summary

### *Swedish Study Shows No-Use Messages from Parents can Reduce Underage Drinking Behaviors among Adolescents*

Rates of underage alcohol use significantly increased in Sweden in the mid to late 1990s after its alcohol policies became less restrictive. The Swedish National Institute of Public Health called for new alcohol prevention programs to address this new public health risk. A group of researchers at Orebro University developed the following study evaluating a parent-based underage alcohol prevention program.

The program was implemented in three community types: an inner city, small town and housing project in Orebro County, Sweden. Parents of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in experimental schools were advised to either adopt or maintain a no-use position on underage alcohol use and relay that message clearly to their children. Over the course of 2.5 years (through grades 7, 8 and 9), parents received mailings and school presentations on maintaining this no-use attitude and were encouraged to urge their children to participate in organized activities such as school clubs and/or athletics. Parents of students in control schools had no intervention.

The goals of this study were to reduce alcohol use among students in control schools and increase the level of participation in supervised activities. It was hoped that decreasing the amount of unsupervised time during the day would decrease delinquent behaviors among the students in experimental schools.

Results were determined through analyses of student and parent surveys in control and experimental schools over time. The intervention was successful in convincing parents to take a strong zero-tolerance approach to alcohol use. These attitudes were reflected in the lower rates of underage alcohol use among students in the experimental schools in comparison to the control schools. The intervention reduced drunkenness and the frequency of drunkenness in the intervention group.

This is not to say that rates of alcohol use did not increase with time; in fact, underage alcohol use increased from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade as may be expected. However, the increase of underage alcohol use was steeper in the control group that did not experience the intervention.

The intervention did not seem to directly impact the levels of student participation in extracurricular activities. There was an increase in delinquency over time; however the increase in delinquency among students in the control group was steeper than in intervention group. Authors say this may be evidence that the effect of the intervention spread from alcohol use to delinquency.

Results were seen across all types of communities and offer support to parent-focused programs and show that parents can have a significant impact on the behaviors of their children.

**Koutakis, N., Stattin, H., & Kerr, M. (2008). Reducing youth alcohol drinking through a parent-targeted intervention: The Örebro Prevention Program. *Addiction*, 103, 1629-1637.**