



Rice County Chemical Health Coalition Update

July 2008

Since 2004, the Rice County Chemical Health Coalition has worked to prevent youth use of alcohol and other drugs. As a countywide, multi-sector work group convened by the Rice County Family Services Collaborative, the Coalition developed a comprehensive, research-based plan to address youth substance abuse in Rice County. The Coalition is comprised of Action Teams, each focused on a particular aspect of drug and alcohol abuse prevention. Work of the Coalition and its Action Teams is based on best practices found to be effective in other communities. Descriptions of the Teams follow:

Mayor's Task Force on Youth Alcohol & Drug Use (Northfield) – City Council-appointed positions; membership includes local citizens committed to reducing youth alcohol and drug use

Accomplishments & Current Areas of Focus:

- Raising community awareness and examining policies around youth alcohol/drug use
- Conducting court monitoring of cases where adults provide alcohol to minors
- Partnering with the Northfield Police Department on compliance checks of alcohol vendors, investigating prescription drug disposal and other projects
- Partnering with the Northfield Union of Youth to compile and track progress on suggested community actions made summer of 2007; co-hosted stakeholders meeting in March
- Partnering with the State of Minnesota in development of community-specific Social Norms Marketing campaign
- Implementing parent education campaigns in cooperation with the Northfield Police Department, the Rice County Attorney's Office and the Parent Communication Network; campaigns focus on preventing substance use during prom/graduation times and over the summer
- Implementing a "Talking Points" program to encourage parents to connect with one another and discuss issues relevant to their children
- Completed the Community Readiness Survey of 600 Northfield residents in partnership with the Minnesota Institute of Public Health
- Partnering with the *Northfield News* to raise awareness and understanding of substance abuse issues in the community through news coverage and regular columns

Provider Team – members include local chemical health providers and general health care providers, including representatives from Northfield Hospital, District One Hospital, Allina Clinic, Carleton College Wellness Center, Rice County Community Corrections, Rice County Social Services, Omada Behavioral Health Services, Family Focus, Recovery School of Southern Minnesota & the Center for Human Resources

Accomplishments & Current Areas of Focus:

- Monitoring the continuum of prevention and intervention services in Rice County for youth and families dealing with substance use issues
- In partnership with local hospitals, developed hospital protocols for responding to patients with substance use issues; policy implemented at District One and under consideration at Northfield Hospital; developed systems for physicians to be able to consult with local chemical health providers whenever necessary
- Providing education sessions to health care providers
 - Developed online chemical health resource directory (www.northfieldhci.org) of Rice County prevention and intervention services; available in English & Spanish

- Continuing to offer and support adolescent-only outpatient treatment groups with transportation available for youth who need it
- Exploring the establishment of sober housing in the community
- Working with area physicians to assure access to opioid withdrawal medication
- Obtained funding assistance from HealthFinders and from the Coalition for patients needing temporary assistance with purchasing opioid withdrawal medication
- Working to offer a support group especially for parents of young people struggling with use of heroin and other drugs

Enforcement Team – members include the Chiefs from the Northfield, Faribault, Morristown, and Lonsdale Police Departments; the Rice County Sheriff; the Rice County Attorney; and additional representatives from the Rice County Sheriff’s Office, Rice County Attorney’s Office, and Rice County Community Corrections, as well as the local schools

Accomplishments & Current Areas of Focus:

- Work on policies around the sale of alcohol to minors - beverage server and vendor training requirements, compliance checks, and enforcement practices
- Developed recommendations for ordinances designed to minimize youth access to alcohol, including the development of a county ordinance that has been adopted
- Implemented a grant focused on the enforcement of underage drinking laws and identifying adult providers of alcohol to minors - Rice County ZAP (Zero Alcohol Providers); secured funding to continue after the grant; officer training and call out procedures completed; additional training held in April 2008
- Organize monthly alcohol beverage server training sessions in partnership with South Central College to assist servers in reducing youth access to alcohol
- Partnering with schools and community agencies to create a locally-focused DVD for parents and community members about youth substance use
- Supporting court monitoring efforts in order to encourage meaningful consequences for adults who provide alcohol to minors
- Exploring options for the collection and disposal of unwanted/unneeded prescription drugs and other controlled substances

Media Team – members included local media professionals, graphic designers, parents, and public health educators

Accomplishments & Current Areas of Focus:

- Designed media campaigns providing age-appropriate information to parents of youth in grades K-5 & 6-12
- Supported two youth media teams to design youth-specific messages for grades 6-12
- Partnering with local media outlets to communicate accurately and productively about local substance use and abuse issues

School Efforts

Accomplishments & Planned Areas of Focus:

- Administering HCI Survey in Northfield Middle and High School in years when the Minnesota Student Survey is not administered; five years of data available
- Administering HCI Survey in Faribault Middle and High School; two years of data available

- A licensed alcohol & drug counselor spends more than two days per week in the Northfield schools, meeting individually with students with substance use issues and providing education
- Healthy Learners Prevention Plan completed in Faribault Public Schools; presentation to Administrators in September, 2006, and to Board of Education in November, 2006
- Community meeting held in Northfield with guest speaker Carol Falkowski and breakout sessions focused on pertinent topics related to youth alcohol and drug use and prevention
- Ongoing review of extant curriculum and options for employing best practices curricula and practices in school-based prevention efforts

Future Focus for the Coalition:

- Partner with the Rice County Mental Health Resource Team and the Truancy Prevention efforts to better understand and reach Rice County families of color
- Offer training to volunteer groups and civic organizations who sell alcohol for special events to help keep alcohol out of the hands of underage youth
- Conduct trainings for local groups and community members on how to identify and respond to youth with substance use issues
- Continue to expand Coalition membership, with special emphasis on increasing involvement of ethnic communities, businesses and faith communities
- Investigate other best practices in substance abuse prevention for implementation in Rice County with an emphasis on environmental strategies