

Underage Drinking

Thesis: Underage drinking at Waconia High School impacts students' physical health, safety, and academic success.

- I. Problem Exists: Underage drinking is common at Waconia High School, in Waconia, Minnesota.
 - A. Problem Exists: At Waconia High School, it is common for students to consume and use alcohol underage.
 1. As reported by Minnesota's Department of Human Services, between 2010 and 2013, the percentage of Carver County high school students reported that they had consumed alcohol within the last 30 days increased from 17% to 19%, respectively (Substance Use in Minnesota).
 2. As reported by Minnesota's Department of Human Services, in 2014, Carver County reported 7% of school disciplinary action involved alcohol, rather than the average of 2% which other Minnesota counties reported (Substance Use in Minnesota).
 3. As reported by Minnesota's Department of Human Services, in 2016, 28.8% of Carver County juniors (11th graders) alone reported using alcohol within the past 30 days, in comparison to 24.6% of juniors in the rest of Minnesota counties (Substance Use in Minnesota).
 - B. The present system for the problem is within the Waconia High School.
 1. According to Minnesota Department of Human Services, the problem of underage drinking is a common problem throughout the counties of Minnesota (Substance Use in Minnesota).
 2. According to Dana Henn, a counselor and the advisor to the extracurricular group SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) at Waconia High School, the problem of underage drinking has been present and a common issue at least throughout her eleven years at Waconia High School (Henn).
 - a) Waconia High School's SADD group has tried to address underage drinking in the past by hosting a Red Ribbon Week to encourage students to drive safely and posting posters around prom season addressing the "dangers associated with underage drinking" (Henn).

3. According to Maureen Farrell, Waconia HERO Coalition Coordinator, Waconia was awarded the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Grant of \$625,000 over five years which is used to address and prevent youth substance use and abuse in the Waconia community (Farrell).

- a) The Waconia community was awarded this grant due to the exceedingly high rates of underage drinking, reported in Minnesota's 2013 student surveys, in relation to other school districts in the state (Farrell).
- b) In the third of five years, Waconia's HERO Coalition has been working with community members (school administration and students, local businesses, faith organizations, youth groups, etc.) to address and educate the public about the dangers of underage drinking (Farrell).

(1) In a phone interview with Maureen Farrell, it was made know that the HERO Coalition is looking for sustainable ways to address the problem in the community after the time and money of the DFC Support Grant was awarded (Farrell).

- (a) Maureen Farrell, Waconia HERO Coalition Coordinator, suggested different community groups to inquire with about sustainably addressing the problem of underage drinking (e.g. Waconia's extra-curricular group, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), local businesses, community stakeholders, etc.) (Farrell).

II. Harms: There are many harms that come from underage drinking and will affect a student's future.

A. Using alcohol underage can harm a person's brain, present and future physical health, and personal safety.

1. According to Amitava Dasgupta, PhD in Organic Chemistry and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at University of Texas, consuming excess alcohol is detrimental to both the human body and mind (Dasgupta).
 - a) "Underage drinking is a serious problem because the adolescent, ages 10 to 19, brain is more susceptible to alcohol related damage than the adult brain" (Dasgupta).

2. According to Amitava Dasgupta, “underage drinking is a public health and safety issue, because young people who start drinking at an early age have a much greater risk of becoming alcohol dependent later in life than individuals who start drinking at age 21 or older” (Dasgupta).
 - a) Studies indicates that the rate of lifetime alcohol dependence was 40% when an individual started drinking at 14 or younger, while it is 10% at 21 (Dasgupta).
3. According to Gerry Stimson, Director of Knowledge-Action-Change, Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and author of *Drinking in Context : Patterns, Interventions, and Partnerships*, “young people’s [ages 10 to 24] inexperience with alcohol and inability to gauge and stick to their own limits increase the potential risk for harm, especially where drinking is paired with other activities, such as driving” (Stimson).
 - a) As stated by John Brick, PhD in Biological Psychology at Binghamton University of New York, alcohol intoxication may interfere with the ability to remember to wear a seat belt, turn on driving lights and directional signals, attend simultaneously to other vehicles, pedestrians, traffic control devices, road markings, hazards, or signs and to control position, speed, estimate time and distance (Brick).
 - b) According to Amitava Dasgupta, PhD in Organic Chemistry and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at University of Texas, at higher blood alcohol levels, a person becomes impaired with compromised reflexes and motor skills (Dasgupta).
 - c) According to Amitava Dasgupta, underage drinkers are susceptible to immediate ill effects of alcohol use, blackouts, hangovers, and alcohol poisoning, in comparison to to their adult counterparts (Dasgupta).
4. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, alcohol increases the risk for many deadly diseases, such as cancer... or the short consequences of alcohol poisoning (Underage Drinking : Myths Vs. Facts).
 - a) According to Daniel M. Perrine, PhD in Chemistry from The University of Illinois, Chicago, drinking excessively throughout a

lifetime can increase the risk of head, neck, esophagus, stomach, and/or liver cancer (Perrine).

- b) According to Daniel M. Perrine, PhD in Chemistry from The University of Illinois, Chicago, liver damage can occur in people who abuse alcohol throughout their lifetime (Perrine).
 - c) According to Amitava Dasgupta, PhD in Organic Chemistry and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at University of Texas, heavy alcohol consumption damages the human brain and may cause memory loss and severe dementia (Dasgupta).
5. According to Ben Karnes, retired Waconia Sheriff of 22 years and Waconia High School Security Officer, in his professional experience he has seen drugs and alcohol use affect a student's mental health (Karnes).
- B. Underage drinking can harm and create negative consequences to students' academic success.
- 1. According to Amitava Dasgupta, PhD in Organic Chemistry and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at University of Texas, underage drinking is associated with impaired intellectual development due to adolescent drinking induces brain structure abnormalities, which can lead to poor memory, impaired study habits, poor ability to learn, and poor academic performance (Dasgupta).
 - 2. According to Amitava Dasgupta, PhD in Organic Chemistry and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at University of Texas, students who binge drank were more likely than those who didn't binge drink or those who drank moderately to report poor academic performance and involvement in other risky behaviors like riding with drivers who had been drinking, using illicit drugs, being sexually active, being a victim of dating violence, and attempting suicide (Dasgupta).
 - 3. According to Ben Karnes, retired Waconia Sheriff of 22 years and Waconia High School Security Officer, in his professional experience he has seen drugs and alcohol use affect a student's academics resulting in falling grades (Karnes).
- C. Drinking under the age of 21 is illegal and will create significant problems in the lives of students if caught and cited for underage drinking.
- 1. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration,

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, if caught participating in underage drinking, a person under the legal drinking age may have to pay a fine, perform community service, or take alcohol awareness classes (Underage Drinking : Myths Vs. Facts).

2. According to Ben Karnes, retired Waconia Sheriff of 22 years and Waconia High School Security Officer, there are several direct and indirect consequences that will affect a student's life if caught using alcohol illegally (Karnes).
 - a) Legally and directly speaking, if a student is cited for underage drinking it is a criminal offense and will, in most cases, go to court and deal with the outcome (Karnes).
 - b) Indirect consequences of a student being cited for underage drinking include, but are not limited to: ability to participate in activities (if a student breaks a code of conduct, he/she cannot participate in activities for a specific amount of time depending on their violation) and lose the trust of authority in their life (e.g. teachers, administration, coaches, etc.) (Karnes).
 - (1) The school also keeps records of citations a student receives (Karnes).
 - (a) If the number of citations increases, the more serious the student's consequences will be (Karnes).
 - (b) By keeping records of student's citations, it helps school administration and security officer "track" students' use of alcohol and determine what individual underlying problems of behavior are and how to address it (Karnes).

III. Causes: The problem of underage drinking is caused by many influences, including: parents, peers, and social acceptability.

A. Parents have great influence on a student's decision to drink.

1. According to Lorraine R. Collins, PhD in Psychology and Professor of Community Health and Health Benefits at State University of New York, parental socialization factors, imitation and social reinforcement, are shown to repeatedly influence their child's drinking behavior (Collins).

- a) Imitation is when young people model their own behaviors after those of significant others. (e.g. adolescents are more likely to drink if parents drink) (Collins).
 - b) Social reinforcement is where adolescents internalize definitions and exhibit behaviors and values approved by significant others (Collins).
 - c) “Data supports the modeling theory in that mothers and fathers use of hard liquor was found to be a moderately good predictor of initiation into hard liquor usage by their adolescents” (Collins).
2. According to studies by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, researchers observed that students whose parents allowed them to drink at home and/or provided them with alcohol were more likely to participate in using alcohol (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (U.S.)).
3. According to literature supplied by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, permissive attitudes toward adolescent drinking, particularly when combined with poor communication and unhealthy modeling, can lead teens into unhealthy relationships with alcohol (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (U.S.)).
4. According to Dana Henn, a counselor and the advisor to the extracurricular group SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) at Waconia High School, if parents do not care about underage drinking, it will be extremely difficult to address the problem among students (Henn).
5. According to Maureen Farrell, Waconia HERO Coalition Coordinator, “kids make better choices for themselves when they have good adult figures” [and responsible attitudes towards alcohol] (Farrell).
 - a) According to Maureen Farrell, Waconia’s HERO Coalition is currently encourages communities to step up as adults to address underage drinking with youth, parents to children, teachers to students, etc. (Farrell).

B. Peer groups have influence on a student’s decision to drink or not to drink.

1. According to Lorraine R. Collins, PhD in Psychology and Professor of Community Health and Health Benefits at State University of New York, peer socialization factors are also an influence is an underage student’s alcohol use (Collins).

- a) Peer socialization is when adolescents are likely to withdraw from the family and rely more heavily on the influence of peer subcultures (Collins).

- (1) “Empirical data has shown that adolescents who value peer opinions as opposed to these of their parents, for important life decisions and values are at a high risk for alcohol abuse, illicit drug use, and other problem behaviors” (Collins).

C. In recent years, drinking alcohol under the legal age of 21 has become more socially acceptable in the Waconia community.

- 1. According to Dana Henn, a counselor and the advisor to the extracurricular group SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) at Waconia High School, underage drinking has become more and more socially acceptable which leads to difficulties in addressing the problem among Waconia High School students (Henn).
- 2. According to Maureen Farrell, Waconia HERO Coalition Coordinator, most of the community of Waconia does not view underage drinking as a “big deal” and collectively do not see harm around alcohol use in teens (Farrell).

IV. Plan: The Waconia HERO Coalition should partner with Waconia High School’s student extracurricular group, *Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)*, to work together by forming a firm partnership to address and prevent underage drinking amongst Waconia High School students.

A. The Waconia HERO Coalition and Waconia High School’s SADD group should establish a strong partnership to “enhance the impact” of student-led activities that address the problem of underage drinking, such as Waconia’s Red Ribbon Week (Farrell).

- 1. The plan would be presented to both Waconia High School’s SADD group and the Waconia HERO Coalition (Henn).

- a) One example of activities that SADD and the HERO Coalition could co-host would be Red Ribbon Week, which has been previously hosted only by SADD (Farrell).

- (1) There are several specific options for these groups could do to enhance the influence of Red Ribbon Week (“Red Ribbon Campaign”).
 - (a) One option is for the groups to plan and co-host an annual school rally to bring more awareness to Red Ribbon Week to the entire student body (“Red Ribbon Campaign”).
 - (b) A second option would be to create social media campaigns, on favorable media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Schoology, etc.), to generate more participation and awareness amongst students (“Red Ribbon Campaign”).
 - (c) A third option would be to send out a school-wide newsletter to families that explain and advertise the importance of Red Ribbon Week (“Red Ribbon Campaign”).
- b) Dana Henn, WHS SADD Advisor, said The Red Ribbon Week Campaign would not be the only collaborative efforts to address underage drinking between the two groups, they “would continue to co-sponsor and put on events for students throughout the year” (Henn).
2. This partnership would be established specifically by the Waconia HERO Coalition coordinator, Maureen Farrell, and WHS SADD Advisor, Dana Henn (Farrell).
 - a) As the partnership continues, both students and active HERO members will have to work together to address the common problem of underage drinking (Henn).
3. Marueen Farrell, Waconia’s HERO Coalition Coordinator, said that such a partnership will be a benefit not only the coalition, but also Waconia’s SADD group (Farrell).

- a) Working with a Waconia High School entity, the HERO Coalition would have large school-wide student based platform to address and educate the dangers of underage drinking (Farrell).
 - b) Waconia High School's SADD group would be able to have the ability to benefit from the HERO Coalition budget on co-hosted events or campaigns that address the problem of underage drinking (Henn).
- (1) The HERO Coalition would have a reliable community relationship to help them reach their goals of addressing underage drinking at Waconia High School during their final years working in the community (Farrell).
4. Creating such a partnership would not create any additional costs to either parties, by benefiting from use of both budgets (Henn).
- a) SADD would be able to benefit from budget aspects of the HERO Coalition while the HERO Coalition would have a big (school-wide) student based platform to address underage drinking in the community (Farrell).
 - b) Time and effort from both parties would need to be added in to establish this partnership (Farrell).
- (1) Under the best circumstances, Maureen Farrell, HERO Coalition Coordinator, believes this partnership can be established within the next few months by working together on different campaigns and creating a clear goal that encompasses both missions of the groups. (Farrell).
- B. Workability: This plan is a viable option for addressing the problem of underage drinking amongst high school students in the Waconia community.
- 1. Maureen Farrell, HERO Coalition Coordinator, said the coalition is looking for sustainable ways to address the problem in the community after the time and money of the DFC Support Grant was awarded (Farrell).
- a) Maureen Farrell suggested partnerships with different community groups to sustainably address the problem of underage drinking,

being specifically interested in partnering with Waconia High School's SADD group (Farrell).

2. Mark Fredericksen, Waconia High School Principal, said in a personal interview, that this partnership would seem to fit with the overarching goals of both groups and be a great way to address the problem (Fredericksen).
 - a) Principal Fredericksen also confirmed that there would be no "administrative hurdles" to jump through to allow a Waconia High School extracurricular group to partner with a community entity (Fredericksen).
 3. In Rockwood, Missouri, the Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition partnered with Rockwood High School's SADD group to put on the annual Red Ribbon Week, which provided a "unique and interactive learning experience that allowed students and their families to become aware of the dangers of risky behaviors and engage in candid conversations" ("Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition Highlighted during Red Ribbon Week").
 - a) The D.A.R.E. article quotes Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition Director Renee Heney, saying: "Our main objective simply is to stop substance abuse within the Rockwood community... We accomplish that through partnerships with community organization comprised of parents, educators, youth and community leaders from various fields, including healthcare, business, law enforcement and city government." ("Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition Highlighted during Red Ribbon Week").
 - b) Through their partnership, The Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition "sponsors awareness campaigns, student organizations, events and more – all with the goal of creating a safer community" ("Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition Highlighted during Red Ribbon Week").
- C. Disadvantages/Advantages: The advantages of a partnership between Waconia High School's SADD group and the Waconia HERO Coalition greatly outweigh the inevitable disadvantage.

1. The disadvantage of establishing this partnership is the sustainability of the relationship (Henn).
 - a) According to Maureen Farrell, Waconia HERO Coalition Coordinator, Waconia was awarded the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Grant of \$625,000 over five years which is used to address and prevent youth substance use and abuse in the Waconia community (Farrell).
 - (1) This year school year, 2017-2018, is the third year of the five year DFC Support Grant (Farrell).
 - (a) According to Dana Henn, WHS SADD Advisor, after the grant money and time runs out, SADD will have to address the problem of underage drinking amongst Waconia High School students as a single group again (Henn).
 - (b) Maureen Farrell, HERO Coalition Coordinator, does not know what the exact plans for the HERO Coalition will be after the funds of the DFC Support Grant yet, but is hopeful the community coalition members will continue to “work hard to address underage” amongst Waconia students (Farrell).
 - b) This disadvantage is outweighed by the two years this partnership could positively influence the Waconia community (Farrell).
 - (1) Within only two years, the SADD group and HERO Coalition could influence Waconia High School students to make healthy choices and abstain from underage drinking (Farrell).
2. There are certainly other advantages to cultivating a two year relationship between SADD and the HERO Coalition (Henn).

- a) SADD members would gain valuable leadership and professional experience by having to collaborate and communicate effectively with the HERO Coalition members (Henn).
- b) With a partnership between The Waconia HERO Coalition and WHS SADD, community members, law enforcement, government representatives all get to work together creating a stronger community (Farrell).

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