



Archdiocese of New York Drug Abuse Prevention Program (ADAPP) Launches Campaign to Reduce Underage Drinking

*Research shows that underage drinking has reached epidemic proportions, with 81 percent of high school students admitting that they have used alcohol. **The Risk is Real** campaign hopes to change that.*

Using social media, real teens' stories, graphic images, and an interactive website for parents and teens, the Archdiocese of New York Drug Abuse Prevention Program (ADAPP) is committed to helping reduce underage drinking. "The Risk is Real" campaign provides parents with facts and tips that encourage them to talk with their teens about the harmful effects of underage drinking.

"We are often led to believe that underage drinking is a 'rite of passage,' but research shows that youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to have alcohol dependency," says Frances Maturo, Executive Director of the Archdiocese of New York Drug Abuse Prevention Program (ADAPP).

"We want parents to talk to their kids early and often about underage drinking, and this campaign helps parents learn the real risks and how to avoid them," explains Maturo.

Janit Bliss, Coordinator of Community Programs at ADAPP, adds, "We conducted a youth survey that shows drinking increases by 30 percent from 9th grade to 11th grade -- 22 percent to 51 percent respectively. In addition, the majority of 11th-grade students report that their parents do not see this as a problem. That's just unacceptable. Our goal is to educate parents and teens about what really happens as a result of youth drinking, and to teach teens to 'think before they take a drink.'"

The campaign is funded by a Prevention First grant from the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Teens, parents and community members participated in pre-campaign focus groups to help create the campaign themes and share their stories. Dozens of businesses, clubs and restaurants are participating by posting campaign materials in their windows and storefronts. "The Risk Is Real" campaign message will also be visible on posters located in schools and bus stops throughout the community.

"The messages really hit home for me," said a 10th-grade student. "There is a lot of pressure to drink, and I have friends who used to get in trouble or accidents because of it. It ruins their chances for college and everything they're going for. The campaign shows why it's dangerous and emphasizes that a lot of kids have fun without drinking."

A parent of three teens adds, "I think it's up to us to tell our kids how drinking can have serious results for them. My own son got sick one night from alcohol and it was very scary. There's a drinking age for a reason; teenagers don't have the decision-making skills yet. The campaign posters are strong reminders, and the website is something I can show my kids to say 'it's just not okay.'"

To develop the campaign, ADAPP partnered with Connect with Kids (CWK), a leading social marketing, media and educational resource that specializes in youth issues. CWK has produced campaigns to reduce school truancy and increase awareness about youth obesity, drunk driving, abstinence, and other current issues that affect teens. "The Risk is Real" campaign website streams videos of real kids and their true stories of underage drinking. It also provides the latest facts, parent tips, sample pledges and more.

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