

# Prevention <sup>IN</sup> Action

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## Burrillville's Businesses Can Help Prevent Teen Substance Use

The Partnership for Success grant, like all federal prevention programs, requires a strategy that engages all major sectors of a community in the effort to reduce and prevent teen substance use. Every Burrillville business can make an important contribution.

**Tips for alcohol vendors.** Businesses that sell or serve beer, wine, alcohol, or tobacco products can play a major role in helping to reduce drinking and smoking among our teens. They do this proactively by training all employees, sellers, and servers of alcohol to ask for proof of age, check IDs and stay informed of safe practices. Employees have to be confident and comfortable enough to refuse a sale if necessary. These skills do prevent sales to minors or to intoxicated customers.

In fact, Rhode Island General Law 3-7-6.1 requires "all persons who sell or serve alcoholic beverages; anyone serving in a supervisory capacity over those who sell or serve alcoholic beverages; anyone whose job description entails the checking of identification for the purchase of alcoholic beverages; and valet parking staff to complete an alcohol serving training program."

**Compliance checks test training.** Years ago, students from Vermont reported that local stores were a major



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— MARGARET MEAD —

source of alcohol and tobacco. In an effort to decrease underage drinking, and prevent youth from using tobacco products, compliance checks were created, starting with tobacco checks in stores in the mid-1990s. Alcohol compliance checks in stores began a couple years after that, followed by checks in restaurants and bars. Once the compliance checks had been in place for a few years, less than four percent of the teens reported that they could purchase alcohol or tobacco in a store.

**All businesses can be change agents.** While alcohol vendors are on the front line of prevention, other town businesses can adopt practices proven

to reduce youth substance use. Here are just a few to consider:

- Provide lunch and learn workshops in adult-child communication for employees, including how to talk to children and youth about drugs.
- Provide internship opportunities for youth who remain drug and alcohol free.
- Adopt, publish and enforce zero tolerance policies for drugs in the workplace.
- Sponsor a speakers' bureau featuring well-known business people talking about substance use and abuse issues.
- Provide smoking cessation programs in the workplace.
- Create programs to develop entrepreneurial skills for at-risk youth.
- Donate money and services to at-risk families, such as food and clothes, shelter for the homeless, holiday gifts, and tutoring services.

Working together, we can raise drug-free kids. As cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead once wrote, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."



Next Issue: How Faith Communities Prevent Teen Substance Use.

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