

New Mexico

Providing Evidence to Make the Case for the Prevention of Excessive Alcohol Consumption

Despite the huge public health impact of excessive alcohol consumption in the U.S., state health departments have very little public health capacity to monitor the extent of the problem or to assess whether prevention programs are making a difference. To address this gap, CDC's Alcohol Team began supporting an alcohol epidemiologist in New Mexico in 2002 who is responsible for conducting public health surveillance and assisting in the design, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based programs to prevent underage and binge drinking.

In 2008, New Mexico's alcohol epidemiologist, Jim Roeber, MPH, provided scientific support for important policy and programmatic initiatives related to the prevention of excessive alcohol consumption and related harms in the state, including:

- Participating in a legislatively-mandated, multi-agency task force on alcohol advertising and youth at the request of the state Alcohol and Gaming director. This included arranging expert testimony to the task force by David Jernigan, Executive Director, Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth; helping to draft task force recommendations, focusing on the placement of alcohol advertising in youth-oriented media; and drafting the task force's final report entitled, "Alcohol Advertising: Next Steps for New Mexico".
- Assisting New Mexico's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-funded State Epidemiological Workgroup in organizing a day-long "Getting to Outcomes" training session. The session, led by Sarah Hunter of the RAND Corporation, was designed to help local prevention specialists translate evidence-based prevention strategies (e.g., limiting alcohol outlet density) into public health practice.
- Presenting on the New Mexico Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (NM BRFSS), and on alcohol indicators (e.g., binge drinking among adults) generated using NM BRFSS data, to researchers at the "Border BRFSS" meeting.
- Collaborating with Susan DeFrancesco, JD, MPH, MAT and others at the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center on a draft alcohol policy brief entitled, "Next Steps to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harm in New Mexico". Future alcohol policy briefs highlighting evidence-based strategies to prevent excessive alcohol consumption and related harms (e.g., increasing alcohol excise taxes and screening and counseling for alcohol misuse) are also being discussed.
- Briefing the New Mexico Department of Health's Chief Medical Officer and Public Information Officer on underage drinking in preparation for their joint meetings with Acting Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu to rollout the *2007 Surgeon General's Call to Action on Underage Drinking in New Mexico*.

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- Leading the multi-agency Prevention Subcommittee of the New Mexico Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) Leadership Team, at the request of the Governor-appointed DWI Czar, and helping to draft prevention recommendations for the state DWI Strategic Plan, emphasizing environmental prevention strategies for excessive drinking (e.g., increasing alcohol excise taxes) and DWI.
- Working with the DWI Czar and the New Mexico agency administering the SAMHSA-funded Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment program to increase the use of screening and counseling for alcohol misuse in clinical settings.

By conducting research and providing leadership on the issues of underage and binge drinking, New Mexico's alcohol epidemiologist is translating the data and evidence-based research about excessive alcohol consumption into public health practice. These activities demonstrate the importance of having alcohol epidemiologists at the state level.