

CDC Town Hall Teleconference

Teen Drinking and Driving: A Dangerous Mix

October 9, 2012
2:00pm – 3:00pm EDT

Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants will be in a listen-only mode. During the question and answer session please press star 1 on your touch-tone phone, and please record your name clearly when prompted. When recording your name, please make sure your phone is off mute.

Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections at this time you may disconnect. And now I would like to turn the meeting over to your host, Dr. Judith Monroe, Director, Office for State, Tribal, Local and Territorial Support, Deputy Director with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Ma'am, you may begin. Thank you.

Judith Monroe: Thank you very much. Well good afternoon everyone and I'm really glad that all of you could join us today for this really, really important topic. Before we get started, I want to go over some housekeeping details for you. Remember to go online and download today's PowerPoint presentation so that you can follow along with the presenters.

The Web address to find this is www.cdc.gov/ftltpublichealth - all one word, that's S-T-L-T public health, and just make that all one word. There is a link directly to the Town Hall Web site and under the highlighted Products and Resources on the bottom right, and that's where you can find the slides.

On this page you can also view the bios for each of the presenters. This is where we will add the audio recording and the transcript for today's meeting

for your future use, and they will be available for you next week. Today we are here to discuss the latest *Vital Signs* report, which focuses on teens drinking and driving.

So we have good news, and the good news is that the percentage of teens participating in this very dangerous behavior has decreased by more than half in the last 20 years, but anyone who has had teen drinking and driving touch their lives knows that it's still a major health concern.

In fact, the vast majority of teens in high school who report drinking and driving within the past month also say they binge drink. Prioritizing the dangers of teen drinking and driving is half the battle. The other half is providing practical approaches for community education and involvement.

This important effort includes promoting such basic and effective tools as the Rules of the Road, Parent-Teen Driving Agreement, which we will learn more about during today's teleconference. On today's call, you will hear from two esteemed colleagues, both experts in the field of epidemiology. They will share the latest statistics and insights regarding this crucial topic and what can be done to counter it.

First we will hear from Dr. Ruth Shults, a senior epidemiologist in the Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention in CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She will provide a summary of this month's *Vital Signs* report. Dr. Shults will hand the call over then to Katherine Gonzales, an epidemiologist with the Michigan Department of Community Health.

She will discuss both statewide and local intervention techniques, as well as data considerations and next steps. Please note that there will be time for

questions after the presentations, but you can get in the queue to ask a question at any time during the teleconference. Just press star 1 and record your name when prompted. And now, I'd like to turn the call over to Dr. Shults.

Ruth Shults: Thank you Dr. Monroe, and welcome everyone. As Dr. Monroe mentioned, I'll be discussing the CDC's October *Vital Signs* report. For this report we looked at the National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys since 1991, which was when the survey began, and we looked more in depth at the drinking and driving data for the 2011 National YRBS, and also from 41 state YRBS surveys.

And I'll move on now to Slide Number 5. And as Dr. Monroe mentioned, there is much good news. Between 1991 and 2011 we saw a 54% decline in the prevalence of drinking and driving among high school students age 16 and over.

But still that leaves one in 10 high school students age 16 and over drinking and driving during the past 30 days, and the majority of these students who drink and drive also report that they binge drink, which for the YRBS is defined as having five or more drinks within a couple of hours.

So we've certainly made progress but there's still work to do. Drinking and driving is especially dangerous among teens, because they have limited experience at both driving and at drinking alcohol. We know that teens who are experimenting with alcohol are testing the limits, and for the most part when they drink, they drink to get drunk.

And when they drink and get behind the wheel, at any level of blood alcohol concentration or BAC, teens are at higher risk of being in a crash than older drivers. In fact, a recent study found that for each 0.02% increase in blood

alcohol concentration, and that equates to roughly one drink, the risk of a driver ages 16 to 20 years old being - or dying in a crash more than doubles.

And so, if you do the math, that works out to a teen who has a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08%, which is the illegal threshold for adult drivers. That teen driver is 17 times more likely to die in a crash than had the teen not been drinking. So with that background on drinking and driving, let's look at some YRBS results.

So in this graph, we're looking at the trend over time, and the green line in the middle represents the major result of this study, and that's the - showing you the 54% decline over the two decade period from 1991 to 2011. The red line above the green line represents male students' percentage of drinking and driving over that time period, and the yellow line below the green line represents females.

And so of course what you can see is that in 1991, male students were drinking and driving at a much higher prevalence than females. Their rate has come down faster over time, and so now in 2011 we see 12% of males and 9% of females 16 and older reporting drinking and driving. And by the way, we restricted the analysis to students 16 and over because in - everywhere in the U.S. except for New Jersey and New York City, a 16 year old can have a license to drive without an adult in the car.

So moving on to the next slide, Number 8, we'll look at a little more detail the 2011 data. And what we see when we look at race ethnicity is that Hispanic and white students report higher rates of drinking and driving than black students. Looking at the Total column over here we see 12% for Hispanics, 11% for whites and 7% for blacks. And we see a sizable increase in the

behavior over the age categories, almost doubling from age 16, where 7% reported drinking and driving to 14% for 18 and over.

Looking now at the state data, at prevalence of drinking and driving in 2011, what we found was a threefold different in prevalence across the states, with the low being reported in Utah of almost 5% of students reporting drinking and driving, to a high of almost 15% in North Dakota.

Looking at the map, the states you see in black have the highest prevalence. And what we found is clustering of the higher prevalence is - of drinking and driving, in the upper Midwest and also along the Gulf states. One of the limitations of the study I'd like to mention is that we did not have data from nine states. Those states are represented in white, and those states included the entire West Coast.

So moving on to Slide 10, so what has been working to reduce drinking and driving among teens? There are two laws that every state has: minimum legal drinking age and zero tolerance. The minimum legal drinking age law makes it illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 21, while the zero tolerance law makes it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drive after drinking any alcohol. And again, every state has these two laws.

More recently, every state has adopted graduated driver licensing systems. And the idea behind graduated driver licensing, or GDL is to help new drivers get more experience in less risky driving conditions. And although graduated driver licensing doesn't directly address drinking and driving, it reduces the behavior among 16 and 17 year olds by instituting nighttime driving restrictions and teen passenger restrictions.

Every state except for Vermont has a nighttime restriction for newly licensed teen drivers, although the start times vary considerably. Some start as early as 9:00 pm or earlier, and others start at midnight or later. And currently 44 states have teen passenger restrictions.

Okay, moving on to Slide 11. In closing, I'd like to mention some of the CDC recommendations for what individuals can do to reduce drinking and driving among teens, and our final speaker, Katy Gonzalez will give some examples of what communities in Michigan are doing to address the issue.

Parents can really be the first line of a defense in, against drinking and driving of their teens. And to be effective in that role, it's good for parents to know that most teens, when they drink, do drink to get drunk. And they often get their alcohol either from their own home or from the home of their friends.

Parents should recognize the dangers of drinking and driving, and be serious about enforcing a no drinking and driving rule with their teens. Parents can also let their teen know that if the teen is ever out with friends, and the driver begins drinking, the parent will help the teen get home safely.

Parents should model safe driving behavior, and parents can set and enforce all of the rules of the road with a Teen Driving Agreement. And we have an example of a Teen Driving Agreement, which I'll show you in the next slide. That's available at www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey. And "parents are the key" is all one word.

So Slide 12, here's a quick look at what the CDC Teen Driving Agreement looks like, at least the top half of it. We collaborated with the American Academy of Pediatrics on putting together this Teen Driving Agreement. This

is one example. There are other examples out there. We encourage parents to choose the one that works best for them.

So what can teens do? Well, they can choose to never drink and drive, refuse to ride with a teen driver who's been drinking, know and follow their state's GDL laws, follow the rules of the road that are set out in the Parent-Teen Driving Agreement, and to always wear a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short the trip.

And lastly, pediatricians and other healthcare providers can screen teens for risky behaviors including drinking and other substance use, drinking and driving, and also riding with a driver who's been drinking alcohol or using drugs.

Pediatricians can inform parents and teens about the risks of drinking and driving, and encourage parents to set and enforce the rules of the road with a Teen Driver Agreement. And lastly, remind parents to lead by example as safe drivers. Thank you for your attention, and I will now turn the microphone over to Katy Gonzalez.

Katherine Gonzalez: Thanks. So as Ruth mentioned, my name is Katy Gonzalez, and I'm currently one of two CDC funded alcohol epidemiologists. I work at the Michigan Department of Community Health, and today I will be talking about impaired driving and impaired driving prevention among Michigan high school students.

On Slide 17, the table illustrates the prevalence of self-reported driving after drinking alcohol using 2011 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey data. Data were stratified into two groups, current non-binge drinkers, and current binge drinkers, both 16 years of age or older.

Non-binge drinkers were defined as students who reported having at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days, and binge drinkers were defined as students who had five or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours during the past 30 days. Approximately 10% of non-binge drinkers reported driving after drinking in the last month, and almost 30% of binge drinkers reported this behavior.

Binge drinkers were significantly more likely to report driving after drinking, and a higher frequency of driving after drinking than non-binge drinkers. It is important to note that the YRBS binge drinking definition of five or more drinks suggests that these individuals are driving almost at the point of the legal level designated for adults at 0.08% BAC.

As mentioned before, these individuals are at greater risk for motor vehicle crashes, injuries and death. Identifying hazardous alcohol consumption patterns such as binge drinking frequency and intensity among youth is often overlooked when developing impaired driving interventions.

When these behaviors are addressed, impaired driving and related negative outcomes may be reduced significantly. Next slide. When interpreting data, it is important to be mindful of factors that may bias the results. For instance, although the YRBS survey has been tested for reliability and validity, data are self-reported and may be subject to social desirability bias, resulting in some under-reporting of perceived undesirable behaviors.

In most areas of the U.S., it isn't culturally acceptable to drink and drive, and students may not truthfully report the prevalence or frequency of this behavior. It is necessary to supplement these data with other sources to make sure we really are getting a clear picture of what is happening.

One data source that is possible to use is impaired driving arrests from a local or state police agency. These data may be helpful for identifying certain individuals and risk factors, but they should be used with caution. Drunk driving arrest outcomes are extremely variable on the enforcement of the laws, the number of officers on the road and other factors.

For example, due to budget cuts, there are 3,500 less police officers on Michigan roadways today than in 2001. With fewer officers to patrol our roads, there's a strong possibility that drivers may still be driving impaired and just are not being caught by authorities.

Other possibilities are to use data from fatal crashes available through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, or if your own state collects information on alcohol related traffic crashes, like Michigan does. On Slide 19, there is a graph that demonstrates that alcohol-involved crashes in which the driver had been drinking has declined among 16 to 18 year old Michigan drivers from 2001 to 2011.

These numbers mirror the October 2 MMWR findings that impaired driving among Michigan teens is decreasing. One thing to keep in mind is that if the crash does not result in a serious injury or fatality, the blood alcohol concentration of the driver may not be collected. These numbers are most likely an under-representation of alcohol-related crashes, due to the fact that a large proportion of crashes may not result in a serious injury or death.

Moving on to Slide 20, the Community Preventative Services Task Force is an Independent non-federal uncompensated body of public health and prevention experts whose members are appointed by the Director of CDC. Their task is to

issue evidence-based recommendations on effective population-level strategies to improve health outcomes.

By reducing alcohol-impaired driving, the Task Force recommends 0.08 blood alcohol concentration laws for adult drivers, lower or zero tolerance laws for young or inexperienced drivers, maintaining the current minimum legal drinking age laws, publicized sobriety checkpoint programs, mass media campaigns, multi component interventions with community mobilization, ignition interlocks and school-based instructional programs.

All of these interventions are currently being implemented in Michigan, with the exception of sobriety checkpoint programs. The State also has graduated licensing programs, which Ruth mentioned. These are focused on new drivers, and there are many restrictions in place to ensure that safe driving behaviors are adopted early.

Some restrictions are having no violations or tickets in a 12-month probationary period, which include any alcohol-related infractions, not having more than one passenger under the age of 21 in the car while driving, and having at least 30 hours of required classroom education including alcohol-related education.

In addition, the Michigan State Police have evaluated their arrest and crash data to determine when impaired driving tends to be highest. During high risk times like March, when St. Patrick's Day and March Madness, the NCAA basketball tournament occur, the Michigan State Police Office of Highway Safety Planning coordinate efforts in high risk counties across the state.

Extensive advertising campaigns, media coverage and increased police presence on the roadways are used to catch impaired drivers. Next slide. The

Tri-County area consists of Ingham, Eaton and Clinton Counties, and includes the state's Capitol, a large university with more than 40,000 undergraduate students, a wide distribution of urban and rural residents, and also affluent and low-income neighborhoods.

The Tri-County area also has local interventions to reduce impaired driving among high school students. The campaigns are often focused around high profile events like prom and graduation, and try to involve as many sectors of the community as possible.

A network of police officers, prevention specialists, school district leaders and families come together for the Safe Prom initiatives, to create educational materials about impaired driving which are disseminated in the community. Hotels, motels, limousine companies and every alcohol retailer in the three counties receive information about the upcoming prom season and the negative ramifications about furnishing alcohol to a minor or providing a safe place for teens to drink.

All-school assemblies in which local police chief participate are held to educate youth about alcohol consumption and related harms, like motor vehicle crashes. Parents are reminded about the dangers and legal implications of having minors consume alcohol within their home, and the media also broadcasts similar messaging.

While campaigns to educate youth, parents and the community are important, they are most effective when coupled with other interventions. In some high schools, police officers are often present during proms to provide assistance if there is any question of underage alcohol consumption, either prior to arriving or on the premises.

Having an officer at the event, who is typically often present at the school during the academic year, can be an extremely effective deterrent for youth. Of course, alcohol consumption and impaired driving are major concerns for after prom as well.

Some schools have found that hosting an all night event, where students can participate in fun activities, eat food and spend time with friends is a safe and effective way to keep students and communities safe, by preventing impaired driving and other alcohol related harms.

For all-night parties to be effective, the majority of students attending prom must attend the event, and it must last until early morning, around 6:00 or 7:00 am. In addition to prevention initiatives focused on high-risk events, there are also programs in place to help youth with an alcohol related offense.

Teen courts consist of an individual's peers, and mostly deal with minor offenses, like a minor in possession or a theft. The court will evaluate the severity of the crime and various other contributing factors, and decide on an appropriate punishment. Teen courts help to educate youth about the justice system and the legal implications of drinking alcohol underage.

Although sentences vary widely by judge, drug and sobriety courts have been shown to be very effective for some individuals. A combination of signs, counseling, random alcohol and drug testing, meeting with a probation officer regularly, and when necessary, ignition interlock devices can be extremely effective, especially when these activities are required for 6 to 12 months or longer and have full parental support.

While some juvenile and adult drug and sobriety courts have very low recidivism rates, punishments aren't standardized across jurisdictions, and it is

yet to be determined which penalties would be the most effective if standardized state wide. Next slide, please.

The Community Guide also makes recommendations on preventing excessive alcohol consumption. Research has demonstrated that when these recommendations are implemented, alcohol related harm such as impaired driving and motor vehicle crashes decrease. Previous studies have illustrated that underage drinkers are especially responsive to restrictions on alcohol availability and pricing.

Because most underage drinkers have a fixed and presumably small income, higher alcohol prices may affect their consumption behaviors more than adults. In tandem with safer driving policies, limiting the availability of alcohol and increasing its price may be effective controls that can reduce impaired driving among youth.

Another solution which looks promising is social host liability. Under social host liability laws, adults who serve or provide alcohol to minors or persons who are obviously intoxicated can be held liable if the person who is provided alcohol is killed or injured, or kills or injures another person.

I often hear about parents providing a safe place for teens to party as long as they don't drive and will stay the night. Alcohol is most commonly obtained from someone a teenager knows, and is most commonly consumed within a home - either their own - or someone else's.

Social host liability laws are relatively new, but could have a large deterrence effect on parents and adults, and reduce the number of places where underage drinkers can obtain and consumer alcohol, and then potentially drive impaired. Next slide.

So moving forward, programs to prevent and reduce impaired driving among youth and adults have a lot of public, political and media support, and most people have some direct or indirect experience related to this problem. Timing is a critical issue, and often when a story is highlighted in the media or when a tragedy occurs, momentum from that event is not used for policy change, education or implementation of other effective strategies to reduce impaired driving from occurring in the future.

While it may seem inappropriate or insensitive, it's important to make the most out of media attention or public outcry to make changes that would lead to less impaired driving and tragedies that are often too common in our communities. One example of a missed opportunity that we have learned many lessons from is an incident that occurred in January of last year.

Some local college students hosted a party, and five seniors from a nearby high school attended. The driver, who had been drinking, lost control of the car, and three of the passengers died and one passenger was injured. The following week, a vigil was attended by hundreds in zero degree weather to remember the students that passed away.

During prom season this past April, our Governor visited that high school's Safe Prom assembly to talk about the dangers of drinking and driving. This is an example of a missed opportunity with broad support, including support from the Governor, which could have been used to strengthen policies to prevent tragedies like this one from occurring in the future.

So as motor vehicles continually become safer and traffic crash outcomes improve, other factors that can impact impaired driving in crashes, like community and parental norms and alcohol availability need to improve as

well. One potentially effective way to change societal norms about teen drinking and supplying alcohol to teens is to have police officers collect information on the place of last drink during a drunk-driving arrest or accident.

If the majority of underage drinkers report a house party or home address, these data can be used to educate the public and change beliefs, strengthen policies and develop more stringent legal implications for those furnishing alcohol to, or providing a location where minors can consume alcohol. Next slide.

So I would like to thank the CDC Injury Program for extending this opportunity, and many, many thanks to the CDC Alcohol Program for making alcoholic surveillance and programmatic activities possible in Michigan. Also, thanks to the Tri-County Alcohol Awareness Committee and local law enforcement officers for all of their great work in preventing impaired driving and protecting youth and others.

On Slide 25 you can find my contact information, so please feel free to contact me with any follow up questions. Thank you.