

Madison Parent Survey Reveals Mixed Messages About Youth Alcohol and Drug Use

The Madison Alcohol and Drug Education Coalition (M.A.D.E. in Madison), today announced the results of a recent survey of Madison parents with children in grades five through 12. The survey focused on parents' understanding of youth attitudes towards alcohol and drug use as well as family rules and expectations regarding drugs and alcohol.

“It is clear that we must continue to ask the tough questions so that we understand how to best serve the needs of our community,” stated Mary Beth Golja, chair, M.A.D.E. in Madison. “I urge parents and community leaders to join M.A.D.E. and help us to shine a light on this issue and work together to create a healthy and safe environment for our youth.”

Taken between May 1 and June 26, 2009, the survey was offered online to Madison parents with children in grades five through 12. Six hundred and forty seven (647) parents took the survey. According to the Madison Board of Education, there were 2,449 students estimated to be in these grades in 2008/09.

The following are highlights of the results from parents who responded to the survey.

Engagement / Supervision / Discipline

Parents who responded to the survey reported high levels of engagement, supervision and discipline. Specifically:

- Almost all (96%) reported knowing where their child was when they were away from home and who their child was with.
- 95% reported disciplining their child when they break family rules.
- Most parents (93%) reported providing opportunities for their family to have fun together.
- 85% reported their child shares thoughts and feelings with them.
- While 91% reported asking their child if their homework was completed, 93% reported participating in their child's activities at school, including attending school event.
- Most parents (88-94%) reported having clear family rules about the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and have recently communicated those rules to their child(ren).

Parent perceptions about their child's alcohol or drug use / the availability of alcohol and drugs

Of the 647 parents who responded to the survey:

- 86% say they are “very” or “fairly” confident that they will know if their child is using alcohol

or another drug.

- 66% said their children could easily get alcohol.
- 61% reported their children could easily get cigarettes.
- 47% said their kids could easily obtain marijuana.
- 60% are concerned their child will try marijuana.

Parents' attitudes and beliefs about teen substance use and prevention

Parents who responded to the survey report mixed messages when it comes to teen substance use and the potential to prevent teen substance use. Specifically:

- One third (32.6%) of parents who responded feel that it is okay for youth to use alcohol or other drugs occasionally.
- 45% of parents believe the use of alcohol is a private matter that should be dealt with at home while 37% disagreed with this statement.
- 30% of parents do not believe it is possible to prevent substance abuse among youth.
 - However, 82% of parents think that substance abuse prevention programs are a good investment for the community.
- Almost half (46%) reported not being aware of the resources available in Madison to deal with alcohol, tobacco or other drug concerns and questions.

“Clearly we have our work cut out for us,” concluded Golja. “We know so much more today than we did 20 years ago about the impact of alcohol, tobacco and drugs on the developing teen brain and we need to spread the word. At the same time, national statistics tell us that 65% of kids get their alcohol from friends and family. Parents need to know this and they need to know that they are the most influential person in their child’s life. Most importantly, they need to know that by setting clear rules and expectations, parents can help their child make positive, healthy choices.”

As a follow-up to the parent survey and to get a better understanding of teenage life, M.A.D.E. in Madison sponsored a youth survey in October 2009, the results of which will be released this winter. Based on what is learned about the strengths of Madison’s youth and the challenges they face, M.A.D.E. will be the catalyst to bring the community together to ensure that the messages and treatment that youth receive are consistent when it comes to risky behaviors.

Other recent M.A.D.E. in Madison activities include outreach at the recent “Back to School” nights; kickoff of a free school-based mentoring program for 4th – 6th graders; and the town’s first Youth Summit, which attracted nearly 50 teens. On March 31st, the M.A.D.E. Coalition will be presenting the results of the teen survey data to the community. The results of the survey will address substance use, the challenges and the strengths of Madison youth and the issues that youth raise as concerns. The meeting will take place at the Arts Barn from 7:00 to 9:00 pm and members of the coalition will be on

hand to answer questions and concerns. A community conversation and discussion of issues related to building resilient youth, substance use and parent involvement will take place at Savvy Tea on Durham Road on April 21st. Details on that venue will follow.

The Town of Madison, Connecticut secured a Drug-Free Communities grant to support underage drinking prevention activities in 2008. The grant provides \$625,000 over five (5) years and funds initiatives that serve as a catalyst for increased citizen participation in efforts to reduce substance use among youth. A second grant, Partnerships for Success Initiative was secured this past January with a specific focus on underage drinking for the 12-20 population. Both grants are being managed and implemented by the Madison Alcohol and Drug Education Coalition – M.A.D.E. in Madison.

Residents may view a copy of the parent survey at Madison Youth and Family Services, 10 School Street, Madison, Connecticut. To learn more about substance abuse prevention in Madison or to get involved in M.A.D.E., please call (203) 245-5694. M.A.D.E. in Madison meets the first Monday of every month at 7:00 P.M. at the Madison Police Station. All meetings are open to the public and new participants are welcome.

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About the Madison Alcohol and Drug Education Coalition (M.A.D.E. in Madison)

M.A.D.E. is a community coalition of parents, community and faith-based organizations, elected officials, business and social service professionals, and staff from the Town of Madison and Madison Board of Education. M.A.D.E.'s mission is to create a safe and drug free community that values its youth and is committed to encouraging those relationship, experiences, values, attitudes, and attributes that every young person needs for success. For more information or to get involved, call (203) 245-5694 or send an email to madeinmadison@madisonct.org