



California Drug Counseling

High Schools to Test Students for Alcohol

It was getting so few teachers at Westwood High School in suburban Boston wanted to chaperone school dances. There were drunken quarrels and dramas. At one school event, a student was rushed to the hospital with alcohol poisoning.

"It's a drag to deal with it," one teacher told assistant principal Emily Parks. And that's how she and other school administrators were feeling, too. "It's frankly kind of frightening when you have students who've had enough to drink that it's presenting a safety problem," Parks says.

So, in recent weeks, she and fellow administrators adopted a policy that a growing number of schools are using to deter drinking at after-hours events: They're now testing students who enter school dances, including the upcoming prom, with Breathalyzers.

Some teens complain that the testing policies are intrusive and misdirected. They include 18-year-old Jason Speakman,

who thinks officials' efforts would be more effective if they tested students as they left events to drive home, or increased road patrols.

"Kids getting into cars stumbling drunk — THAT'S a problem," says Speakman, a high school senior in Barrington, R.I., where school officials are considering alcohol tests.

If he were asked to take a test when entering a school event, he says he would refuse — even if he'd had no alcohol. "I just feel like it's a violation of privacy," he says.

In an attempt to be less disruptive, officials at some schools only use alcohol testing on students they suspect have been drinking — ones who might have slurred speech or are chewing a lot of gum to hide the odor.

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Reaching Poor Nations Vital in Fighting AIDS

With his ambitious goal of treating 3 million patients in poor countries with AIDS drugs by year's end looking increasingly out of reach, Dr. Jim Yong Kim of the World Health Organization called for a renewed push by world leaders and top scientists to get the medicines to as many poor people as possible.

"Please stop speculating whether we will make it or not, and do all you can to make it happen," Kim said in a keynote address to the 12th Annual Retrovirus Conference, the leading scientific meeting on progress in AIDS research.

Kim said that extraordinary progress toward the goal of the so-called 3- by-5 program had already been made: In the last six months of 2005, the number of people in poor countries receiving AIDS drugs rose to 700,000 from 440,000.

To reach 3 million, the number treated would have to double by July, then double again by January. That would take a new level of political will from the leaders of India, Nigeria and South Africa, where 41 percent of the 5.1 million thought to need AIDS drugs currently

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- Over 65% of all foster care placements in Montana are directly attributable to drug use, and of those, meth is a primary factor 57% of the time.
- On average, it takes 10 years for HIV to wear down a patient's immune system.

Meth's Impact on Children Probed

Alison Bruno was 13 when her mother, a drug addict, offered her methamphetamine.

"I was addicted from that day forward," recalled Bruno, now a 22-year-old Iowa mother of two girls. She smoked meth until she found out she was pregnant at 15 and resumed after the baby was born.

"I would leave my baby with her dad, who was not an addict, for days and weeks at a time. I felt like I needed meth to survive," said Bruno, a college student engaged to be married. She said she has been clean since she got treatment at a resi-

dential family program more than three years ago. Bruno and two other recovering meth addicts told their stories Tuesday to the Senate Finance Committee, which is examining the impact of meth on children.

"Meth poses unprecedented challenges to child-welfare agencies," testified Kevin Frank, regional administrator of child and family services at the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. "Over 65% of all foster care placements in Montana are directly attributable to drug use, and of those, meth is a primary factor 57% of the time."

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Test Students for Alcohol

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"Without a Breathalyzer ... you have to be lucky or the kid has to be stupid," says Rich Catrambone, a social worker at Newton South High School in Newton, Mass., where testing is done on a case-by-case basis. "This takes the guess work out of it."

Last fall, officials at the school expanded testing to a night football game — a move that caught many students off-guard and resulted in nine getting suspended. That outcome prompted student newspaper editor Chiraag Mundhe to write an editorial suggesting that giving students advance warning would do more to deter underage drinking.

"It really didn't curb the problem; it just punished kids," says Mundhe, a 17-year-old senior.

He's more supportive of the type of policy adopted at nearby Westwood High, where every student entering dances must take a Breathalyzer test.

At North Central High School in Indianapolis, an early adopter of alcohol testing, that's been the rule for 10 years. And Principal C.E. Quandt has never had a student test positive — proof, he says, that students are getting the point.

"You can't protect kids 24-7, but you can make the experience they have here a positive one," Quandt says. "We're not going to 'wink-wink' the issue. There is a right and wrong."

Now some parents are following suit.

Worried about a spate of drunk driving accidents, Steve Sherrets, a father in Independence, Iowa, purchased his own tester, a brand known as Alcohawk, to monitor his two teenage sons.

"At first, they said 'You can believe us,'" Sherrets says of his sons' reaction. "And I said, 'Well, I'm sure that's what the kids told their parents before they got into accidents, too.'"

Still, testing for alcohol isn't a cure-all.

"Anyone who thinks Breathalyzers are going to solve the problem is kidding themselves," says Stephen Wallace, national chairman and CEO of Students Against Destructive Decisions, also known as SADD. "It can be somewhat effective, but it's only one tool in the toolbox."

He says schools also should provide counseling and education about underage drinking and encourage parent-child communication on the issue.

Wallace noted, too, that some teens he's spoken with in focus groups said they would simply take substances that couldn't be detected by a Breathalyzer — or would avoid school events where testing was done.

Laura Maloney, a 15-year-old freshman at Westwood High in Massachusetts, says many students did, indeed, skip a recent dance where testing was done for the first time. But while she has mixed feelings about the new policy, she says many friends who attended told her that being tested "wasn't a big deal."

"When that goes out," she says, "maybe people won't be as skeptical."

Her mother, Leslie Warner-Maloney — who is president of the school's parent-teacher organization — hopes so.

She says underage drinking has been a big concern to parents, many of whom gathered to watch a video about a freshman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who died in 1997 after binge drinking at a fraternity.

"That really just hit us," Warner-Maloney says. "My kids are straight-A students — and so was this kid. It could happen to anyone."

*SOURCE: U.S. National
By: Martha Irvine*

Fighting AIDS

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reside.

Kim said small African nations are starting to outperform the public health efforts of South Africa, where President Thabo Mbeki has yet to embrace with any enthusiasm his own government's plan to provide drugs. Kim noted that tiny Swaziland, Lesotho and impoverished Zambia have made great strides in meeting their targets.

"If those three countries meet their goals at the end of 2006, it might be quite embarrassing to South Africa to say they have reached only 10 percent," Kim said.

In remarks to reporters earlier in the day, Kim called Mbeki "a very smart man who spent all his life fighting for social justice." But, he said, he believes the South African president does not understand the "social justice implications" of pro-

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viding a rapid scale-up of an AIDS treatment program there, where more than 5 million people are living with HIV.

"The rich people in South Africa are getting access to treatment," said Kim, who was born in South Korea, raised by his immigrant parents in Iowa, and trained in medical anthropology at Harvard.

Kim doled out praise to the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and to the Bush administration's emergency program for AIDS relief, for making the progress of the last six months possible.

For too long, he said, the world health community has been content to describe the scope of the AIDS problem -- and to urge that international attention be paid to it -- but has failed to put words into action. The 3-by-5 program is an effort, he said, to get the "World Health Organization back in the AIDS business" by setting "a clear,

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Meth's Impact

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Frank said hundreds more children are living with grandparents or other relatives because their meth-addicted parents are incarcerated or have abandoned them.

Nationwide, 40% of child-welfare officials reported increased foster-care placements because of meth in the prior year, the National Association of Counties found last July.

About 12 million people over age 12 have tried meth, the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health found. The number of people abusing or dependent on meth more than doubled between 2002 and 2004, from 164,000 people to 346,000, testified Nancy Young of the National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. She said pregnant women are showing the fastest increase among those seeking treatment for meth problems.

Meth is cheaply made in makeshift labs by extracting pseudoephedrine from cold medicine.

"It's frightening," said Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, senior Democrat on the Senate panel, of meth's rapid rise. At a recent meeting at a high school, he said, four students told him their parents were users.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, the panel's chairman, said children of meth users are often neglected because the parent's high can last for hours, and a binge for days. He said others

are exposed to pornography and sexual abuse because meth can cause a dramatic increase in a user's sex drive. "Our nation's child-welfare system is already overburdened," Grassley said.

Darren and Aaronette Noble, a married couple in Missouri, said a family treatment program turned their lives around by helping them understand why they abused meth and enabling them to work together. They had each used meth for years and served time in prison. One of their daughters was born addicted to meth.

"When I was using meth, I felt dead most of the time," testified Aaronette Noble. "My teeth and my hair were falling out, and other people had custody of my (four) children. My husband and I were homeless and sleeping in our car."

Meth "tore our whole family apart," said Darren Noble, adding that the family has changed since undergoing treatment and no longer associates with meth users. He said he no longer craves the drug.

"I feel tempted at times," Bruno said after the hearing. "I have to prepare myself for those moments." She said she still goes to meetings to aid her recovery. "I'm an addict. That's not going away."

SOURCE: USA Today
By: Wendy Koch



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California Drug Counseling education and counseling center provides a variety of services including behavior modification, HIV/AIDS prevention and Medical drug/alcohol counseling, Prop 36 counseling, tutoring, mentoring, sex education counseling, parenting and other counseling services.

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*The Fresh Start office provides
placement counseling and job
assistance for ex-offenders.*

*The Fresh Start office is
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Fighting AIDS

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measurable target."

Speaking before an elite audience of 3,900 AIDS researchers from 72 countries, Kim called for a "public health approach" to the epidemic, shunning perfection in favor of practicality. He said that doctors who object to "second-class therapy" for the Third World are ignoring evidence that simplified treatment regimens, without extensive laboratory testing, produce good outcomes for the overwhelming majority of patients.

Waiting for sophisticated tests of viral load and white blood cell counts before providing antiviral drugs would mean "millions dead," Kim warned.

Much of the Boston meeting will be devoted, however, to the sophisticated analysis of the AIDS virus and to studying the nuances of treating the infection with various combinations of 20 approved AIDS

drugs.

Much of the buzz at this year's session centers about the revelation a week and a half ago in New York that a single patient had come down with a possible new strain of HIV that was resistant to all but one antiviral drug and that apparently led to a rapid decline in the man's health. On average, it takes 10 years for HIV to wear down a patient's immune system to the point where he or she develops the opportunistic infections that are symptomatic of AIDS. This patient -- who was an abuser of methamphetamines -- may have reached that point in months.

The issue is hotly debated among AIDS experts in Boston, however, because no evidence has been presented that the virus is readily transmittable, or that it is in fact a unique and new strain of HIV.

*SOURCE: San Francisco Chronicle
By: Sabin Russell*