

INTRODUCTION

Problems Identified

The Cobb Underage Drinking Task Force reviewed a significant body of evidence identifying; alcohol as the top health and safety threat for youth today, the serious effects of underage drinking on public health, safety, crime and quality of life related problems, and the fact that private (house party/gathering) settings are the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol. Further investigation identified the following underlying conditions contributing to problems:

Attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of parents and community adults regarding underage drinking and adult provision of alcohol to youth...

- parents/adults believing that underage drinking is an adolescent rite-of-passage
- parents/adults believing there's nothing they can do to prevent underage drinking
- parents/adults hosting underage drinking parties/gatherings (believing that youth will drink anyway and that this actually can keep youth safe)
- weak parental monitoring of youth activities and behaviors
- weak/inconsistent enforcement of minimum legal drinking age laws

We also identified that feeling guilty, worried, anxious or helpless about the problem is not productive, that focusing solely on educating youth to prevent the problem is ineffective, and that other communities around the country were successfully deterring underage drinking parties/gatherings by implementing local social host ordinances.

Solutions Developed

The following summarizes research that supports the effectiveness of the project's approach for developing solutions:

- 1 **Limiting youth access to alcohol has been shown to be effective in reducing and preventing underage drinking and drinking related problems.** ¹
- 2 **Social host policies are among the most effective in reducing youth binge drinking and drinking and driving.** ²
- 3 **Building effective partnerships among law enforcement and citizens reduces crime.** ³

1 *National Academies Report to U.S. Congress, "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility", 2005*

2 *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, "Reducing harmful alcohol-related behaviors: Effective regulatory methods", 2000*

3 *U.S. Department of Justice, "Effective crime prevention practices", 2006*

Project Designed

Cobb Safe Neighborhoods/Safe Homes involves neighborhood residents working together with law enforcement partners to prevent underage drinking and youth access to alcohol and other drugs; keeping our youth, families and neighborhoods safe. Cobb Safe Neighborhoods/Safe Homes will:

- Increase community awareness of unsafe underage drinking realities and adult social host liability
- Increase shared adult accountability for preventing underage youth social access to alcohol
- Decrease alcohol availability to underage youth in private non-commercial settings

For more information: www.cudtf.org/safehomes • 404.223.9812

