Preventing Underage Alcohol Drinking through Working with Parents

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Program Area: Blueprints Promising Program

Prevalence of Any Use, Heavy Use, Frequent Use, and Frequent Heavy Use of Alcohol in the Past 30 Days, by Single Years of Age, 2000


The percentage of youth (10-18) that have been drunk at least once the last semester.
The percentage of subjects at different ages that have been drunk more than 10 times the last semester.

Alcohol related consequences age 15

Alcohol related consequences age 17
Amount of youth that believes that their parents worry about their children's alcohol consumption in relation to their parents' report about their worries.

The percentage of youth who said they have been drunk and percentage of parents who had found their youth drunk.

Parents get increasing experiences of seeing their child drunk but parent worries are not affected by their experiences of seeing the child drunk.
Cognitive dissonance theory
When cognitions are inconsistent → Distress
Remedy: Change cognition or behavior

What does the theory have to do with underage drinking?

Parents usually have a restrictive approach to underage drinking, especially when children are younger.

The percentage of parents having lenient stance towards underage drinking over time (longitudinal data)
What happens if parents encounter their children drunk?

Longitudinal data over three years: concentrating on the majority of parents to 13 year olds that have restrictive attitudes towards underage drinking.

“Roughly 25% of parents have seen the child drunk at the age of 15?" 

“It is natural for children in your son or daughter’s age to be curious to try alcohol. We trust our son or daughter to drink responsibly.”

A relatively small group of parents have encountered their early teens drunk, these youth are quickly increasing their frequency of drunkenness.

• This phenomenon can be explained in terms of parental cognitive dissonance.
• This group can be targeted in a universal program.
• Effekt is communicating clear messages about this to a universal group of parents.
Parent’s attitudes towards 16-year olds alcohol drinking in relation to the children’s actual drinking.

Longitudinal studies on youth and parents in the US showing relationship: Parent Attitudes - Youth Drinking Behaviors


Let’s take an adolescent perspective
Parents can and are expected to be clear authorities within their family

EFFEK'T rests on the principle that parents have an important role in regulating their youth.
Concept
Target: important dynamic conditions that are realistic to alter.

What if we try to maintain parents restrictive attitudes toward underage drinking:
Will this have an impact on their children’s alcohol drinking?

Koutakis, N., & Stattin, H. & Kerr, 2008

EFFEKT™
- Target: Parents to 13-15 year olds.
- Administration: Ordinary parent-teacher conferences.
- Dose: 15-20 minutes twice per year).
- Active ingredient: Facts and arguments delivered in an interactive format.
- Administer in any community making use of existing resources: without any cost other than training.
Implementation

Ordinary staff e.g. teacher, school counselor, school nurse.

Content on ordinary parent-teacher conferences (20 min)

• Information on underage drinking:
  • Parent values matter
  • About letting the child drink
• Consensus agreement.
  • Having clear and restrictive house rules.
• Concluding letter to all

Parental agreement

We, parents, have agreed to the following common rules regarding our children:

- [List of rules]

Signature

First stage: Open parents’ eyes

• Initially, focus on making parents aware of the problems with underage drinking, even to the extent that negative emotions are evoked.
• Purpose: to make parents more open to suggestions for change.
Number of 15 year-olds who have been drunk at least once during the past year:
- 15 of 30 15 year-olds
- 7% more boys than girls

From parent presentations:

Number of 15 year-olds who report being drunk more than 4 times during the past term:
- Permissive parents
  - 21 of 30 pupils
- Restrictive parents
  - 6 of 30 pupils

From parent presentations:
Second stage: Change parents’ ways of thinking about underage drinking

• Tear down parental misconceptions about youth drinking, such that most youths drink and it is not possible to change the situation.
• Parents should become aware that their attitudes and behavior matters.

Powerlessness \( \rightarrow \) Empowerment

Third stage: Implement specific techniques

Parents should be taught clear and simple rules about how to prevent and handle their adolescent’s drinking behavior.

- What do you and your friends think about alcohol?
- Do you know why there is an age limit for buying alcohol?
- What do you do when you are offered a drink?
EFFEKT is a three stage rocket

Intervention results

Koutakis, Stattin & Kerr (2008)
Tested and confirmed paths using latent growth curve models (Koutakis & Ozdemir, 2010)

Mean levels for parent reported restrictive attitudes toward underage drinking at grades 7, 8 and 9 for parents in the intervention- and control groups.
Repeated measures analysis of variance displaying self-reported drunkenness for youths in the intervention and control condition at grades 7, 8, and 9.

Repeated measures analysis of variance for a sub sample of early starters in drunkenness and delinquency displaying self-reported drunkenness for youths in the intervention and control condition at grades 7, 8, and 9.

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In addition

- More parents attend parent meetings
- More Communication: parent \(\rightarrow\) school; school \(\rightarrow\) parent.

**Effect Size**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Over all ES</th>
<th>Early starters ES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repeated measures, control for pre test</td>
<td>Post test, control for pre test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drunkenness</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial behavior</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.38</td>
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</tbody>
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Number needed to treat for one to benefit = 7.7 / 7.1
Conclusions

- Any effective prevention program must focus on important conditions that are realistic to alter.
- In order to be able to mobilize parents, it is crucial to have them motivated.
- Parent attitudes and parenting practices concerning underage drinking matter.
- The EFFEKT approach is effective in maintaining parents restrictiveness and thereby decrease underage drunkenness.

Training:

- Introduction to Prevention Science
- Theoretical and empirical background of EFFEKT
- The logic of the program
- Current knowledge about parenting research – preventive implications
- Program theory
- Treatment Fidelity
- Prerequisites for a sustainable implementation
- How to communicate professionally
- How to answer the most common questions from parents.

Logic Model for EFFEKT

Inputs

- Trained Teachers
- Access to parent-teacher conferences

Activities

- Convener agreements on avoiding parties.
- Letters to all parents.
- More parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences.
- Increased communication between parents and school & school parents.
- Less underage drunkenness, rebellions, rebellions.
- More parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences.
- Increased communication between parents and school & school parents.

Outcomes

- Less underage drunkenness.
- More parental attendance at parent-teacher conferences.
- Increased communication between parents and school & school parents.
Youth have been observed to drink more as they age, which may be influenced by parents having clear expectations. The intervention results show a trend where youth drinking decreases with clearer parental expectations. For more information, please contact nikolaus.koutakis@oru.se.

text:

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EFFEKT - a Universal Prevention Program Targeting Parents to Prevent Underage Drunkenness