"Is Everybody Really Doing it?"
Using a Social Norms Approach to Successfully Reduce Youth Risk Behaviors

Training Workshop sponsored by
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Prevention Today Requires Science Based Strategies

1. Good Theoretical Reasoning
2. Good Data (Evidence Based)

Current Theoretical Models for Substance Abuse Prevention

- Health Education
- Health Terrorism
- Social Control
- Social Norms

Starting Point for Social Norms Approach

Humans are group oriented.
We are largely influenced by and conform to peer norms.

Long Tradition of Theory and Research on Peer Influence and Conformity to Peer Norms

What about Perceptions of Peer Norms?
First came observations

Personal Attitudes and Perceived Norms about Alcohol Use among College Students (Source: Perkins and Berkowitz, 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Personal Attitudes</th>
<th>Perceived Norm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) One should not drink,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) never get drunk, or 3) never drink to an intoxicating level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that interferes with academics or other responsibilities.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Occasional drunkenness interfering with academics or responsibilities is OK, or 5) a frequent drunk is okay.</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then came theory

Peer Influence on Substance Use

Perception of Peer Norms

Personal Use

Actual Peer Norms

Source: H. W. Perkins, “Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs...,” 1997

Then came more observations

College Student AOD Norms in NY State (Core Survey Data, 1996)

**ALCOHOL**

- **Actual Norm** - Drinking Twice/Month or Less Often (60%); only 5% drinking daily
- **Perceived Norm** - 89% Believe the Typical Student Drinks at least Weekly. 25% Believe Daily Drinking is the Norm.

Source: Survey conducted by New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1996
College Student AOD Norms in NY State (Core Survey Data, 1996)

**TOBACCO**

- **Actual Norm** - No Use (54%) with only 26% using daily
- **Perceived Norm** - 94% Believe the Typical Student is a User. 69% Believe Daily Use is the Norm.

Source: Survey conducted by New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1996

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**MARIJUANA**

- **Actual Norm** - No Use (66%) with only 13% using weekly
- **Perceived Norm** - 92% Believe the Typical Student is a User. 65% Believe Weekly Use is the Norm.

Source: Survey conducted by New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1996

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**HALLUCINOGENS**

- **Actual Norm** - No Use (91%)
- **Perceived Norm** - 61% Believe the Typical Student is a User. 15% Believe Weekly Use is the Norm.

Source: Survey conducted by New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1996

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**COCAINE**

- **Actual Norm** - No Use (95%)
- **Perceived Norm** - 61% Believe the Typical Student is a User. 16% Believe Weekly Use is the Norm.

Source: Survey conducted by New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, 1996

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Students’ Misperceptions of the Norm for the Number of Drinks Consumed the Last Time Other Students “Partied”/Socialized at Their School (NCHA Nationwide Data from 72,719 Students Attending 130 Schools, 2000-03)

**Accuracy of Perceived Drinking Norm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors in Perception</th>
<th>Under-estimate by 3+ Drinks</th>
<th>Under-estimate by 1-2 Drinks</th>
<th>Accurate Estimate</th>
<th>Over-estimate by 1-2 Drinks</th>
<th>Over-estimate by 3+ Drinks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71% Overestimate Peer Drinking!

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Actual Gender Norms vs. Young Adult Perceptions of Gender Norms (1998 Survey of 18-24 Year Olds, N=500)

Percent who drove within one hour after drinking 2+ drinks in the past month.

Source: JW Linkenbach & HW Perkins, 2003
Typical Pattern of College Student Support for Campus Policies about Alcohol Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Perceived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Care</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tobacco Attitudes and Perceptions Among 6 - 8 Graders (%) in a Washington State School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Attitude</th>
<th>Perceived Norm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco use is never a good thing to do.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional tobacco use is ok, but not daily use</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily tobacco use is ok if that’s what the individual wants to do</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tobacco Attitudes and Perceptions Among 9 - 12 Graders (%) in a Washington State School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Attitude</th>
<th>Perceived Norm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco use is never a good thing to do.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional tobacco use is ok, but not daily use</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily tobacco use is ok if that’s what the individual wants to do</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drinking Norm and Perceived Norms Among 9th Graders in a Secondary School in Central New York State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many alcoholic drinks, if any, do you think each of the following students or average typically consume at parties or social occasions? Just give your best estimate of what is most typical for each category (1 through 6).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Your Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students in your grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Brothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Average and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Regular social gatherings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Alcohol and smoke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Median Response
Who Participated?

Almost Everyone!
1,116 students took the survey
96% of the entire student body

Riding with a Drinking Driver

- **Reality (Actual Norm)** - The majority (60%) never ride with a drinking driver,

- **Who does?** Among those who correctly believe the majority do not: 32% have ridden with a drinking driver in the last year.

But among those who incorrectly believe the majority do: 60% have ridden with a drinking driver in the last year.

Parental Control of Alcohol Use

- **Reality (Actual)** – 74% of students say their parents do not permit any alcohol use at all or only a few sips at a family or religious gathering; for 92% no drinking with friends is allowed under any circumstance.

- **Myth (Perceived Norm)** - The majority (52%) thought the other parents were more permissive in allowing more drinking at home or with friends.

Sample Secondary School Data

119 School Cohorts Surveyed
Grade (Year) Levels Ranged from 6 -12
12 States across the USA
52,462 Respondents

Quantity of Alcohol Typically Consumed at Parties and Social Gatherings

http://alcohol.hws.edu

Myth and Reality at Midwest High School:
Results from a Fall 2005 Survey of Student Norms Conducted at a Midwestern School
Grades 6 - 8
Personal Tobacco Use and Perceived Norm

![Graph](Grades_6_8_Tobacco.png)

Source: SW Perkins and DW Craig, Alcohol Education Project, 2008.

Grades 9 - 12
Personal Tobacco Use and Perceived Norm

![Graph](Grades_9_12_Tobacco.png)

Source: SW Perkins and DW Craig, Alcohol Education Project, 2008.

Grades 6 - 8
Personal Alcohol Use and Perceived Norm

![Graph](Grades_6_8_Alcohol.png)

Source: SW Perkins and DW Craig, Alcohol Education Project, 2008.

Grades 9 - 12
Personal Alcohol Use and Perceived Norm

![Graph](Grades_9_12_Alcohol.png)

Source: SW Perkins and DW Craig, Alcohol Education Project, 2008.

Web-based Survey Instrument

[Image: http://www.SocialNormSurveys.org/bullya/]

Bully Behavior at School in Last 30 Days: Actual Prevalence and Perceived Norms

(N=10,668)

[Never in past 30 days and only a minority know it!]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Misperceived</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping...</td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Pushing.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Pushing_Norm.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Pushing_Misperceived.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teasing in an unfriendly way...</td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Teasing.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Teasing_Norm.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Teasing_Misperceived.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling hurtful names...</td>
<td><img src="Bullying_CallNames.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_CallNames_Norm.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_CallNames_Misperceived.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding someone from a group to make them feel bad...</td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Exclude.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Exclude_Norm.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
<td><img src="Bullying_Exclude_Misperceived.png" alt="Graph" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bullying Behavior at School in Last 30 Days:
Actual Prevalence and Perceived Norms

Perceived v. actual intercourse: Girls
By the end of the eighth grade how many girls do you think have had sexual intercourse?

Perceived v. actual intercourse: Boys
By the end of the eighth grade how many boys do you think have had sexual intercourse?

Two indisputable findings in the research literature:
1. The peer norm is one of the strongest predictors of personal behavior.
2. Peer norms about substance use and other risk behaviors are grossly misperceived in the direction of overestimated behavior and permissiveness in attitudes.

Research Shows
Misperceived ATOD Norms Exist
- In All Types of Colleges (Regions, Size, Programs, Actual Norms)
- In Primary and Secondary Schools
- Across Subpopulations of Youth
- In a State-wide Population of Young Adults
- For Attitudes, Use, Policy Support, and Protective Behaviors
- For All Types of Drugs

Back to Theory
Cause of Misperceptions

- Psychological - mental attribution processes
- Social psychological - memory and conversation patterns


Consequences of Misperceptions

- Definition of the situation produces a “Reign of Error”
- Actual Use and Abuse Increases
- Layers of Misperceptions Compound
- Opposition is Discouraged from Speaking
- Intervention by Others Declines
- “Carriers” of Misperception Contribute to the Problem

Source: H. W. Perkins, “Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs...,” 1997

The Social Norms Model

Baseline
Identify Actual & Misperceived Norms

Intervention
Intensive Exposure to Actual Norm Messages

Less Exaggerated Misperceptions of Norms

Predicted Result
Less Harmful or Risky Behavior

Translating Social Norms Theory into Prevention Strategies
Examples of Strategies to Reduce Misperceptions and Strengthen Positive Norms

- Print media campaigns

The majority of HWS students (54%) typically consume four or fewer drinks or no drinks with alcohol when partying.

90% of HWS student-athletes believe that students should not drink to an intoxicating level that affects academic work or other responsibilities.

67% of all students consume alcohol once per week or less often or do not drink at all.

When asked about their last 30 days...

- 98% of HWS students have not used smokeless tobacco
- 87% of HWS students have not used cigarettes
- 74% of HWS students have not used marijuana

86% of HWS students usually or always eat before or during a party where they may be consuming alcohol or they do not drink at all.
Of HWS students typically drink alcohol once a week or less. 

Source: Data collected in the Spring 2000 BD295 survey of a representative cross-section of 327 students.
The majority of athletes in season drink only twice per month or less often.

Did you know that...
7 out of 10 HWS student-athletes (70%) believe one should never use tobacco.

82% of HWS student-athletes blew a 0.05 or lower BAC returning home late at night.

82% of HWS student-athletes never injure themselves or others as a result of alcohol consumption during the academic term.

Most HWS Student-Athletes

The majority... never use tobacco (67%), eat at least three meals per day (59%), sleep at least seven hours per night (69%) or consume alcohol no more than once per week or not at all (59%).

Most Useful

1 drink = 12oz. beer or 5 oz. wine or 1 oz. liquor

4 or fewer drinks when they party.
MOST Montana young adults (4 out of 5) don’t drink and drive.

Most Cascade County Young Adults (82%) Don’t Drink and Drive

MOST Montana young adults (4 out of 5) don’t drink and drive.*

MOST Montana young adults (4 out of 5) don’t drink and drive.
97% of Andersen Airmen age 18-24 believe that Airmen should not drink to an intoxicating level that affects military duties or other responsibilities.

The majority (62%) of McConnell Airmen age 18-24 consume alcohol twice per month or less often or do not drink at all.

61% of RAMSTEIN AIRMEN age 18-24 consume four or fewer drinks or no drinks with alcohol at parties and bars.

Most of Us
4 out of 6
Most of us don’t smoke
Most of us care.

Most of us don’t drink

83% choose not to
8 out of 10 don't smoke!

Health tools to share:
1. Leave places where people are smoking
2. Say “No thanks” if someone offers you tobacco
3. Avoid places where people are smoking

UNITED
Most of Us
Most of Us Are Healthy
Most of Us Don't Drink
Most of Us

4 OUT OF 6

Sample Print Media – Summit, CO

MOST
Montana teens (70%) are tobacco free.

Sample Print Media – Summit, CO

MOST Summit High School students (70%) are healthy and active.

7 out of 10
Montana teens (70%) are tobacco free.

7 out of 10
Montana teens (70%) are tobacco free.

7 out of 10
Montana teens (70%) are tobacco free.
High School Teens in City of Rochester NY
Did You Know?

87% of high school teens do not smoke cigarettes.

3 out of 4 do not use marijuana.

Two-thirds (66%) do not drink alcohol.

4 out of 5 do not ride with a driver who has been drinking alcohol.

8 out of 10 teens know their parents think it is wrong for them to drink alcohol.

9 out of 10 teens know their parents think it is wrong for them to smoke cigarettes.  

Source: 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 4,223 teens age 14-18
Examples of Strategies to Reduce Misperceptions and Strengthen Positive Norms

- Print media campaigns
- Video campaigns
- Peer education programs and workshops for targeted risk groups
- New student orientation presentations
- Counseling interventions
- Curriculum infusion
- Electronic multimedia

Research on Effects of Perceived Norms and Social Norms Intervention Programs

- Multi-site cross-sectional studies
- Longitudinal panel studies
- Brief intervention experiments using random assignment
- Longitudinal pre/post case studies of school populations
- Experiments with experimental and control counties
- Experiments with experimental and control classroom interventions
- Longitudinal experiments randomly assigning institutions to experimental and control conditions

Evaluation of Program Effects of First 18 Months at HWS (Rates of Change)

- Frequent Heavy Drinking: - 21%
- Consequences of Drinking
  - property damage - 36%
  - missing class - 31%
  - inefficient in work - 25%
  - unprotected sex - 40%
  - memory loss - 25%

Source: Perkins and Craig, HWS Alcohol Education Project
Similar Initial Effects in Rates of Heavy Drinking Reduction at Different Schools Over 2 Years

- Hobart & Wm. Smith Colleges, NY: -21%
- University of Arizona: -21%
- Western Washington University: -20%
- Rowan University, NJ: -20%
- Northern Illinois University: -18%


Multi-Year Assessment of Campaign Impact at HWS


Multi-Year Intervention Impact at HWS on Liquor Law Arrests


Heavier drinking, norm misperceptions, and injuries among NIU students, 1988-1998

Note: During survey years 1992 - 1994, comparable injury questions were not asked.

Social Norms Marketing Programs at the University of Virginia


Six Years of Declining Negative Consequences Related to Alcohol Misuse Among Students Exposed to a Social Norms Intervention at U of Virginia

"MOST OF US DO NOT DRINK AND DRIVE"
Recall Associated with Lower DUI Risk (p<.05)

Percent Reporting They Always* Make Sure They Have a Designated Non-Drinking Driver Before They Consume Alcohol If They Will Be Riding in a Car Later

Survey Time Points

- Western Counties (Intervention)
- Eastern Counties (Control)

* "100 percent of the time"

Student Perceptions
Perceptions of student intoxication in last 30 days

Parent and Teacher Perceptions
Perceived % of Student having 5 or more drinks in last two weeks

Student Alcohol Use
% consuming more that a few sips in the last 30 days
% consuming 5 or more drinks in a single occasion in the last two weeks
% drunk in last 30 days

**Impact of Social Norms Intervention at Five New Jersey Schools**

**Various Topics Being Addressed by Social Norms Interventions Correcting Misperceptions**

- Alcohol, Illicit Drug and Tobacco Norms
- Sexual Activity and Risk Taking
- Violence Against Women
- Adolescent Bullying
- Academic Climate
- Parenting Behaviors
- Seat Belt Use
- Recycling and anti-littering

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**When is the Social Norms Approach Most Effective?**

- Clear positive norm messages
- Credible data
- Absence of competing scare messages
- Dosage is high (ongoing and intense social marketing of actual norms)
- Synergistic strategies
- Broad student population receives message in addition to any high-risk target groups

Source: H. W. Perkins (ed), The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse, 2003

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