B. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Name:
Changing the Culture of Risky Drinking Behavior: Policy Change
HWPP Project Number:
2011-02
*Without exceeding this one (1) page, briefly describe your project and partnership.*

The Changing the Culture of Risky Drinking Behavior Coalition, a Community-Academic Partnership of the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium and the Medical College of Wisconsin’s Injury Research Center, is proposing to embark on a new stage of their work in La Crosse County, both enhancing their past successes with evidence-based strategies and creating sustainability for these and other practices through permanent policy change. The goal of the project is to create a sustainably safe environment for alcohol consumption through changes in local alcohol licensing policies; practices on college campuses, in taverns, and at festivals; and by educating current and future leaders in community collaboration. The partnership will also work on developing itself as an entity, creating stronger relationships and growing the collaboration beyond its current structure to be more inclusive of the community it serves. Building on our well-established structure of recognizing all partners’ strengths, respecting differences, and sharing credit for all successes, we will continue to grow our partnership internally and externally.

On a foundation of honoring the alcohol-driven history of the community along with the collaborative reputation our community has gained in recent years, the Community-Academic Partnership has already engaged in developing a working coalition, engaging community partners, creating a strategic plan for the County to address alcohol-related injury prevention, and obtained funding to develop and implement evidence-based strategies that address the dual issues of underage access and binge drinking among 12-24 year olds. It has begun working in partnership with local tavern owners and the organizers of community festivals, which too frequently are sites of binge and/or underage drinking.

In the proposed project, the Partnership will take on the issue of policy change. In addition to improving the way it delivers evidence-based practices such as Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training and promoting the Parents Who Host Lose the Most (PHLM) campaign, it will work to promote new policies that will sustain these and other evidence-based strategies in the future. To specifically address underage drinking, the Partnership will work toward a Social Host ordinance being introduced in local municipalities to broaden the liability of serving alcohol to underage youth to include and damages that result from their actions while intoxicated. We will also work with the three college campuses to review and strengthen their internal policies to address underage access on and off campus. To address the issue of binge and underage drinking at taverns, festivals, and other community events, the Partnership will work toward the establishment of conditions on alcohol licenses that require applicants to engage in evidence-based practices that promote alcohol safety. To provide sustainability to these practices, we will work toward a license fee structure that specifically directs fees toward RBS training for license holders on a regular basis and funds for law enforcement to conduct compliance checks and party patrols near high school and college campuses. In addition, we will work toward developing an Alcohol License Review Board in at least one municipality to oversee these new policies and ensure that funds are directed appropriately. Finally, to further ensure sustainability of these changes, we will develop and implement an educational course for current and future community leaders that teaches community engagement and collaboration within the framework of policy change, using alcohol policy as a case study. This course will ingrain the importance of maintaining the foundations of culture change this project has laid.

What is innovative about our approach is that we address these issues as one of public health and safety rather than individual behavior. We engage what many would consider to be non-traditional partners—tavern owners and festival organizers—in our quest to bring about change. Finally, we will approach our work not in silos, as has traditionally been the case, but across all sectors of the community, because this issue reaches campuses, businesses, families, and the community as a whole.