

# **Missoula County Statement to Commissioners**

This document outlines the Missoula County prevention levy committees transcript for their meeting with city commissioners. They begin by explaining what they are asking for and why, providing a background of their organization and data solidifying their arguments and reasoning. Following up with what they have done thus far in prevention efforts to demonstrate ability to impact the community before supplying closing remarks.

## **Why we are here today**

To ask you to place on the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Primary ballot a 2 mil voted levy to help fund established substance abuse prevention efforts in Missoula County.

While we realize that these dollars would not fully fund the current infrastructure of services, they would be an important piece of the funding pie needed to keep these important efforts moving forward.

Over a million dollars per year have been secured to implement a multi-strategy approach to prevent substance abuse and its related social ills such as violence, school failure, crime, child abuse & neglect and suicide.

Some of those funding sources will dry up this year, leaving a major gap in some critical programs that are beginning to see success in reducing underage substance use and related issues.

## **Background of Forum/Prevention Coalition –1995**

Coalition of community leaders and agency directors came together, studied data on how Missoula's kids were doing (high drop-out rate & alcohol use.)

Developed a comprehensive approach to reduce underage substance use, school failure and create a community infrastructure that would promote the healthy development of Missoula's youth.

The strategies that were adopted are based on over 30 years of research in the field of prevention and employ several best-practices that have yielded results.

We know from research that there are certain risk factors present in kids' lives

(like history of use, violence, being disconnected from school and community, lack of positive adult role models, and availability of drugs) that contribute to substance abuse – but that there are also protective factors that can act as a buffer to those risk factors – like parental and community attitudes and policies, positive adult role models, alternative activities that promote positive youth development, and clear standards and healthy beliefs.

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Missoula has used the MPNA survey results over the past ten years to identify areas of need and develop strategies to address those needs. (MPNA measures 20 risk factors and 13 protective factors)

## **So, what does the data tell us?**

We know that Missoula has one of the highest underage drinking rates in the state. In fact, local youth in grades 8-12 report alcohol use rates 7-16% above the national average. And 1 in 3 10<sup>th</sup> graders report binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a sitting).

The other alarming statistic we have been tracking is the age of onset of alcohol use. Over the past several years we have seen middle school students beginning to drink, when it used to be older high school students.

Parental attitudes and community laws and norms have impacted youth access and availability of alcohol.

## **What have we done about it?**

We have implemented specific strategies that target youth populations for prevention and early intervention including alternative activities (Flagship), early assessment and referral (Project Success), community education and awareness (Forum sub-groups work on education, bulletin boards, ads, community conversations etc.) and public policy enforcement and enhancement ( compliance checks, bar walk-throughs, party patrols etc.)

While we are seeing improvements (see MUSAP report), there is still a long ways to go. MUSAP – Missoula Underage Substance Abuse Prevention, share data on underage drinking rates, parental and community attitudes, attachment to school and community and positive adults.

## **Closing**

The timing is critical for this levy so that we do not lose ground with the efforts and successes of the past 13 years in preventing substance abuse among our youth so that they can become healthy and productive adults.

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