



Snohomish County
John Lovick
County Executive

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Coalition to prevent underage drinking starts meeting this week in Monroe

Community invited to help plan and support programs

A new underage drinking and substance abuse prevention coalition will begin meeting monthly starting at 1 p.m. July 11 at the Monroe Public School's administration building.

The coalition formed after Monroe was selected in April by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services - Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) to participate in an initiative to reduce youth alcohol and other drug use in the community. The project includes funding for staff, training, technical assistance and community and school-based prevention services designed to create healthier and safer neighborhoods.

Monroe has become one of 52 communities statewide participating in this Prevention Redesign Initiative (PRI), funded by DBHR. The PRI in Monroe will support the coalition as it partners with parents, youth, educators, health professionals, law enforcement, faith leaders, and local government.

"Our goal in redesigning and targeting our state prevention services is to leverage enough resources in high-need communities to achieve greater reductions in substance abuse and the harm it causes," said Chris Imhoff, DBHR's director. "Community leaders are prepared to use these resources to help young people make healthy choices and succeed," added Imhoff.

PRI's primary goals are to reduce underage drinking, improve academic performance, and reduce juvenile crime. Alcohol abuse injures and kills more young people than all other drugs combined. The 2012 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey found that prevention efforts are working to reduce teen drinking; however, more than 115,000 youth statewide identify themselves as

current drinkers.

“We can’t expect our teens to succeed and become future leaders when they’re battling alcohol abuse and other substance abuse,” said Snohomish County Executive John Lovick. “This coalition will bring together the community to help address this issue in ways that work for our youth.”

Because the teen brain is still developing, alcohol use during this time can permanently damage learning and memory, and impairs judgment and impulse control. This puts teens at greater risk for serious injuries, victimization and death. Research also demonstrates that the earlier a person begins using substances, the more likely they are to battle lifelong addiction.

“A number of factors were considered in selecting Monroe for services,” said Mary Myers, Monroe Public Schools’ assistant director for health services. “A primary reason is this community’s strong history of success in collaborating to address difficult and complex issues.”

Community members are invited to join the coalition to help plan and support programs. For information about joining the coalition in Monroe, **contact Joe Neigel** at joseph.neigel@snoco.org.

State and County data from the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey is available at www.AskHYS.net. Information and tips for parents to help prevent underage drinking can be found at www.StartTalkingNow.org.

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