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## Bottoms Up Approach

Snohomish County is attacking underage drinking from the bottom up

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Of the 10th graders who consider themselves drinkers, 28 percent admit to having a drink in the last month. Sixteen percent admit to having five or more drinks in a sitting in the last two weeks. (MyNorthwest.com Photo/Alyssa Kleven)

## Attacking underage drinking from the bottom up in Monroe

BY [Chris Sullivan](#) on July 11, 2013 @ 5:38 am (Updated: 7:28 am - 7/11/13 )

Over 115,000 Washington kids filling out a state survey last year said they consider themselves as drinkers, and now the state is trying a new approach to attack the problem.

The state used to divvy up alcohol prevention money equally to all the counties, basically throwing money at the problem from the top and hoping it reached the kids that needed it.

The efforts have had some success. The number of Washington kids that report they drink has gone down over the last five years, and the number of eighth graders that report drinking has gone down by half.

But prevention coordinator Joe Neigel in Snohomish County Human Services says a lot more work has to be done. The state is now targeting communities that have a problem with the issue and focusing the prevention money there.

"It's not a top-down effort where the state is coming in and saying, 'This is what you shall do,' one-size-fits-all," he said. "This is community stakeholders coming together and finding what will work for them."

Monroe is one of the 52 communities now creating local coalitions to address their specific issues with underage drinking, and Neigel said Monroe has a problem.

"We do have issues, like alcohol consumption in the tenth grade, suicide attempts, truancy, fighting and even on-time graduation," he said.

This coalition in Monroe meets for the first time on Thursday, "Identifying the resources in Monroe that are already positioned to respond to those needs," Neigel said. "Finding out where there are gaps in those resources that can be addressed by the coalition and then finding those innovative and best practice strategies that can fill those gaps."

Of the tenth graders who consider themselves drinkers, 28 percent admit to having a drink in the last month. Sixteen percent admit to having five or more drinks in a sitting in the last two weeks.

Neigel said they have to find a way to cut that number down.

"We know youth who drink are more likely to be victims of violence and assaults, more likely to be perpetrators of violence and assaults and have a much harder time developing and graduating as students," he said.

Part of this new coalition plan is to closely monitor if it's having any impact, and if it is, what needs to be done to try and successfully reach these kids.