

Report finds 1 in 3 students binge drink

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NYU formed a focus group to address the problem of underage binge drinking in light of two reports on binge drinking among college students and teenagers - one of which says one in three U.S. college students primarily drink to get drunk.

The Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that 33 percent of college students in the U.S. drink primarily to get drunk. The Center for Disease Control published a study that found that 45 percent of teenage respondents reported consuming alcohol in the past month - of the cases, 64 percent qualify as binge drinking.

Both studies qualified binge drinking as five or more drinks in a row for males, and four or more for females.

The purpose of NYU's focus group was to determine the most effective programming and educational initiatives for eradicating the growing problem.

Dr. Kimberly Yousey, director of research and assessment at NYU, outlined some of the signs of alcohol abuse.

"Some common signs of a possible substance-related issue are changes in mood, behavior or appearance; sleeping or eating too much or too little; grades slipping and attendance problems; nodding off or displaying manic behavior; defensive or secretive affect," she said.

NYU's Child Study Center developed five tips for parents to help reduce teenage drinking based on the CDC study.

In an appeal to parents who believe their child's underage drinking is out of their control, Richard Gallagher, director of the Thriving Teens Project at the NYU Child Study Center, said parents are the biggest influence on their children.

"Though media and peers play a role," Gallagher said, "parental influence is critical and there are ways parents can maximize that influence to reduce the likelihood that their children will engage in binge drinking."

The Center recommends that parents talk to their children about how to react to being offered substances and about the substance use the child witnesses; limit the child's access to substances; inform their child of the dangers associated with alcohol use and abuse; and always know where their child is and what he is doing.

One Stern freshman, whom WSN granted anonymity, said the emphasis of NYU's five tips are misaligned.

"I think students should be taught to drink responsibly," she said. "There is a difference between wanting to prevent the consequences of drinking and wanting to prevent drinking period. The latter is just not going to happen."

Steinhardt freshman Lydia Velichkovski said the responsibility can't just lie with parents.

"It can't hurt to tell parents to get more involved," she said. "But sometimes it just pushes teens to rebel even more."

Among other dangerous consequences, the CDC report found that binge drinking is strongly related to sexual activity, violence and other risky behavior.

One CAS sophomore, who asked to remain anonymous, said, "Everybody I know who drinks binge drinks. They drink to get drunk."

Another underage binge drinker, who also asked to remain anonymous, said, "A lot of the people that go here aren't really that social and it's a lot easier to meet people when you're wasted. So, I think mostly kids drink to get laid."