

Alcohol Abuse the Number One Problem on College Campuses

"Abusive drinking is the major and pervasive substance abuse problem on our nation's campuses." This is the conclusion drawn by the Commission on Substance Abuse at Colleges and Universities, convened by Columbia University's Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). The commission's members range from college presidents to students as well as parents, physicians, and legislators. Their task was to examine the nature and extent of substance abuse on American college campuses through a review of current literature, focus groups, personal interviews and hearings. All statistics cited by the commission were based on studies conducted from 1981 to 1993. Among the commission's findings were the following:

- The level of abusive drinking among college students has remained constant over the past decade, at a rate exceeding that of the general population.
- The way in which students are drinking has changed. Students drink more alcohol, more often, and for the sole purpose of getting drunk. In fact,
 - one in three college students drinks for the sole purpose of getting drunk, and
 - over one-third of college women reported drinking to get drunk in 1993, more than three times the response in 1977.
- The high level of abusive drinking on college campuses has serious academic, health and safety consequences.

The committee calls for a "cultural transformation" of attitudes on alcohol within the college community, replacing the "notion of drinking as an avenue to success and popularity" with one that makes it clear that excessive use of alcohol is destructive and unacceptable behavior.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from "Rethinking Rites of Passage: Substance Abuse on America's Campuses." A report by the Commission on Substance Abuse at Colleges and Universities. June, 1994. Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Contact CASA at 212-841-5200 for more information.

CESAR NEEDS YOUR HELP!

CESAR is seeking to identify effective interventions for violent, substance-abusing youth. Please contact Marie Ragghianti at 301-403-8329 (telephone), 301-403-8342 (fax), or Marie@cesar.umd.edu (e-mail) if you have information or suggestions. Thank you!

For more information about today's topic or to be placed on the distribution list, please call CESAR at 301-403-8329.

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