

REPORT TO
THE MAINE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE (OSA)
AND
ETHOS MARKETING AND DESIGN

BENCHMARK SURVEY OF MAINE PARENTS
ALCOHOL USE ISSUES AND PROMOTIONAL
CAMPAIGN EVALUATION

Executive Summary

STRATEGIC MARKETING SERVICES
A DIVISION OF PAN ATLANTIC CONSULTANTS

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communications:

Six in ten targeted parents have seen advertising regarding teenage drinking in Maine. Most parents who saw the advertising are aware of the core message that OSA through Ethos Marketing has been promoting and believe that the ad was effective. (While the survey was conducted statewide, please note that the advertising coverage was limited to major markets surrounding Portland and Bangor and it excluded the Presque Isle media market.)

- Sixty percent (59.6%) of parents indicated that they have seen advertising this year regarding teenage drinking in Maine.
- More than one-half of these parents (54.1%) recalled a core message that can be directly related to the OSA/Ethos ad campaign.
- Nearly three-fourths (73.1%) of parents who saw an advertisement regarding teenage drinking in Maine this year rated the ad as either “very effective” (31.5%) or “somewhat effective” (41.6%).

Approximately one-third of parents have seen public relations coverage relating to teenage drinking in Maine over the past several months.

- Thirty-four percent (34.4%) of parents surveyed indicated that they saw or heard media coverage other than advertisements that related to teenage drinking in Maine.
- Of these parents, nearly one-half (47.7%) read a newspaper article, while 27.3% saw television news coverage and 25.0% heard coverage on the radio. Fourteen percent (14.0%) read an editorial in the newspaper.

More than half of parents who saw an ad or were exposed to other media coverage relating to teenage drinking in Maine indicated that they have taken or will take specific actions as a result of the advertising or media coverage.

- Twenty-two percent (22.3%) of these respondents indicated that they will talk to their kids more often and 12.3% said that they will be more diligent and aware of the topic. While a number of other answers were given, 11.7% of these respondents said that they are unsure of what they will do differently as a result of the coverage and 33.5% indicated that they will not do anything differently.

Fifteen percent of parents surveyed indicated that they have sought out information on the issue of teenage drinking in the past six months.

- Close to 15% of those polled have sought out information on teenage drinking in the past six months.
- Of the 74 parents who have sought out information on teenage drinking in the past six months, 50.0% have gone to their child’s school for information and 45.9% have sought out information from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). These sources were followed by their child’s doctor or pediatrician (23.0%) and the Maine Office of Substance Abuse / The Parenting Kit (12.2%).

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

Approximately 43% of parents indicated that they are aware of the Office of Substance Abuse (OSA), while 7.6% have contacted the OSA and nearly 6% received a Parenting Kit.

- A total of 215 respondents, or 43.0% of the total sample, are aware of OSA. Of these respondents, only 38 indicated that they have contacted OSA either via telephone or their website. This represents 17.7% of those who are aware of OSA and 7.6% of the total sample.
- Approximately 14 percent (13.6%) of parents surveyed indicated that they have heard about the Maine Office of Substance Abuse's Parenting Kit. A total of 29 respondents have received the Parenting Kit or have viewed it online. This represents 42.6% of those who are aware of the kit and 5.8% of the total sample.
- Of the 29 respondents who have received the Parenting Kit or viewed it online, 72.4% read the whole kit and 20.7% read at least half. Most of these respondents indicated that they have taken or will take specific actions as a result of the information in the kit.

While awareness of MADD is extremely high at 98.0%, overall awareness of OSA is high relative to most other agencies, organizations, and coalitions that deal with substance abuse and related issues in Maine.

- Total awareness levels (unaided and aided combined) for the various agencies tested are as follows:
 - ✓ Mothers Against Drunk Driving – 98.0% (36.2% unaided, 61.8% aided)
 - ✓ Maine Office of Substance Abuse – 43.0% (6.8% unaided, 36.2% aided)
 - ✓ Day One – 27.4% (4.2% unaided, 23.2% aided)
 - ✓ Mainely Parents – 25.0% (2.0% unaided, 23.0% aided)
 - ✓ One Maine – 12.6% (0.8% unaided, 11.8% aided)
 - ✓ Maine Youth Voices – 9.2% (0.8% unaided, 8.4% aided)
 - ✓ Communities for Children – 3.2% (0.0% unaided, 3.2% aided)
- In addition, unaided awareness of the following organizations is high:
 - ✓ Alcoholics Anonymous – 21.8% (unaided awareness only)
 - ✓ DARE – 13.2% (unaided awareness only)
 - ✓ Alateen – 2.4% (unaided awareness only)

Effective Parenting Behaviors:

The 12 Effective Parenting Behaviors are discreet, positive parental behaviors that may reduce the incidence of alcohol and other substance abuse among teenage children. These behaviors can be taught and measured and are as follows:

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

Norms (behaviors and beliefs)

1. Talk to your kids
2. Know who your kids' friends are
3. Teach kids how to have fun without drinking
4. Regularly help with homework
5. Encourage your teen to seek your help on important decisions
6. Eat dinners frequently as a family

Regulation and Enforcement (setting and upholding rules at home, in school, and in the community)

7. Know where your kids are and what they are doing
8. Set and enforce limits and boundaries
9. Praise and discipline your teen when merited

Availability (controlling it through involvement with your child)

10. Do not furnish alcohol to teenagers
11. Do not allow teenagers to consume alcohol in your home
12. Support the legal drinking age of 21

Due to the time constraints of the telephone survey and an increased focus on Communications questions on this occasion, the parent survey instrument did not measure all 12 behaviors. Several questions on the survey, however, are related to some of the 12 Effective Parenting Behaviors and the results are outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

Talk to your kids

- Approximately one-half of parents surveyed (49.6%) indicated that they have serious talks about alcohol with their child several times per year, and 38.2% said that they have these discussions once a month or more. The primary topics covered in these discussions are: drinking and driving (59.7%), peer pressure (54.2%), effects of alcohol on judgment or decision-making (42.3%), parental feelings about underage drinking (32.5%), and negative medical impacts of alcohol (24.4%).
- More than eight in ten parents (84.2%) either “strongly agree” (28.4%) or “agree” (55.8%) that their child shares his/her thoughts and feelings with them.

Know where your kids are and what they are doing

- Parents “always” or “often” ask the following when their child goes out for an evening:
 - ✓ If there will be adult supervision – 81.6%
 - ✓ If alcohol will be present – 72.8% (**up from 51.0% in 2002**)
 - ✓ What the consequences will be if s/he breaks any pre-established rules – 60.6% (**up from 47.8% in 2002**)

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

- Nearly nine in ten parents (88.2%) normally have a conversation with their child about activities and events of their evening when the child comes home. The majority of these conversations (84.1%) take place that night. Forty-four percent (44.2%) of parents who normally have these conversations indicated that they have a goal of checking to see if their child has been drinking when the child comes home. This is increased from 36.9% in 2002.

Set and enforce limits and boundaries

- Nearly all parents (98.6%) agreed with the statement, “The rules in our family regarding alcohol use are clear”.

Do not furnish alcohol to teenagers / Support the legal drinking age of 21

- While 81.8% of parents indicated that they have a “zero tolerance” policy regarding underage drinking, the remainder of the sample (18.2%) does allow their teenager to drink alcohol under certain conditions. Of the parents who permit their children to drink, 28.6% allow their children to consume “less than one drink” compared with just 3.3% in 2002.
- ***Parents strongly support a variety of strategies to address the issue of teenage drinking:***
 - ✓ Strengthening enforcement of the existing laws that prohibit supplying alcohol to minors – 97.2%
 - ✓ Having undercover compliance checks of retailers who sell alcohol – 96.2%
 - ✓ Strengthening enforcement of the existing laws on underage drinking – 81.4%
 - ✓ Increasing the alcohol tax and using the revenue to fund prevention, enforcement and/or treatment programs – 71.4%
 - ✓ Regulating advertising to make drinking less appealing to youth – 65.2%
 - ✓ Creating stronger laws to address underage drinking – 57.2%
 - ✓ Increasing the tax on alcohol – 51.8%
- **It should be noted that support for an increase in alcohol taxes jumped by almost 20% when people are made aware that the incremental funds would be earmarked for prevention, enforcement and/or treatment programs.**

Comparisons to the MYDAUS Survey:

The Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) was instituted by the State of Maine to obtain information about the nature, severity, and range of substance use and abuse among adolescents. The MYDAUS has been administered periodically by the Office of Substance Abuse (OSA) since 1988. The 2002 MYDAUS measured the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, as well as risk and protective factors associated with such use. It is important to note that although all public schools in Maine with any grades 6 through 12 were solicited to participate in the survey, the following analysis looks at only grades 8 through 12 so that it can be compared to the research at hand.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

Agree/Disagree Statements:

“My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.” (Teens) “The rules in our family regarding alcohol use are clear.” (Parents)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
MYDAUS - teens	5.6%	15.5%	38.6%	40.3%
Parent survey - 2002	0.2%	0.6%	10.4%	88.8%
Parent survey - 2003	0.2%	0.8%	21.7%	77.3%
“Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?” (Teens) “My child shares his/her thoughts and feelings with me.” (Female parents, N=267 in 2002 and N=255 in 2003)				
MYDAUS - teens	11.9%	25.8%	37.3%	24.9%
Parent survey - 2002	0.4%	2.2%	48.9%	48.5%
Parent survey - 2003	0.8%	9.3%	57.6%	32.2%
“Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your father?” (Teens) “My child shares his/her thoughts and feelings with me.” (Male parents, N=233 in 2002 and N=245 in 2003)				
MYDAUS - teens	21.0%	29.2%	33.6%	16.2%
Parent survey - 2002	0.4%	8.4%	52.0%	39.2%
Parent survey - 2003	0.9%	9.1%	61.6%	28.4%
“If you drank some beer, wine, or liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents’ permission, would you be caught by your parents?” (Teens) “If my child drank alcohol without my permission, I would catch him/her.” (Parents)**				
MYDAUS - teens	21.1%	42.6%	20.7%	15.6%
Parent survey - 2002	1.2%	9.2%	43.9%	45.8%
Parent survey - 2003	1.2%	16.5%	45.5%	36.8%

Notes: For this analysis, MYDAUS results are a total of 8th to 12th grade only, and “Don’t know” answers were excluded from the parent survey.

** Seventeen percent (17.0%) of the original parent sample answered “Don’t know” to this question in 2002 and 20.0% answered “Don’t know” in 2003.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

- Overall, parents showed much more agreement with the statements listed above than did the teenagers who took the MYDAUS. **However, the current results show that parents are somewhat more aligned with teenagers' views than they were in the 2002 survey.**
 - ✓ The percentage of parents who “strongly agreed” that the rules in their family about alcohol use are clear decreased from 88.8% in 2002 to 77.3% in 2003. This compares with the 40.3% of teens who “strongly agreed” with the statement.
 - ✓ While nearly one-half (48.5%) of mothers in the 2002 survey indicated that they “strongly agreed” that their child shares his/her thoughts and feelings with them, the figure in 2003 is 32.2%, much closer to the 24.9% of teens who also “strongly agreed” with the statement.
 - ✓ For fathers, the percentage who “strongly agreed” that their child shares his/her thoughts and feelings with them decreased from 39.2% in 2002 to 28.4% in 2003. This compares with the MYDAUS figure of 16.2%.
 - ✓ The percentage of parents who “strongly agreed” that if their child drank without their permission they would catch him/her decreased from 45.8% in 2002 to 36.8% in 2003. This compares with the 15.6% of teens who “strongly agreed” with the statement. *It is important to note that although “don't know” responses were excluded from the above analysis for comparative purposes, 20.0% of parents in 2003 and 17.0% of parents in 2002 indicated that they weren't sure if they would catch their child if s/he drank alcoholic beverages without their permission.*

Experience with Alcohol:

	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	Total
Ever had alcohol (more than a few sips)						
MYDAUS - teens	44.9%	57.5%	68.4%	75.4%	79.2%	65.2%
Parent survey - 2002	2.0%	5.0%	9.0%	19.0%	50.0%	17.0%
Parent survey - 2003	7.0%	10.0%	17.0%	35.0%	50.0%	23.8%
Had alcohol in past 30 days						
MYDAUS - teens	22.7%	32.1%	38.8%	45.0%	49.1%	37.6%
Parent survey - 2002	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	9.0%	2.4%
Parent survey - 2003	1.0%	0.0%	3.0%	8.0%	20.0%	6.4%

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

Experience with Alcohol, Cont'd:

	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	Total
Binge drinking in past 2 weeks*						
MYDAUS - teens	10.1%	15.4%	21.0%	26.0%	29.5%	20.4%
Parent survey - 2002	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.2%
Parent survey - 2003	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Notes: For this analysis, MYDAUS results are a total of 8th to 12th grade only.

*** Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in a row in one sitting.*

- Although parents still greatly underestimate the extent to which their children drink alcohol, the results are moving in a direction that is more aligned with what their kids are actually doing.
 - ✓ A total of 65.2% of teenagers in 8th through 12th grade taking the MYDAUS indicated that they have had more than a few sips of alcohol in their lifetime. Nearly one-fourth of parents (23.8%) believe that their child has had more than a few sips of alcohol in their life, a slight increase from 2002 (17.0%).
 - ✓ While 37.6% of teenagers reported having had alcoholic beverages in the 30 days preceding the MYDAUS, only 6.4% of parents thought that their child had been drinking alcohol in the month before the parent survey took place. Again, this is a slight increase from the 2002 survey (2.4%).
 - ✓ **Similar to the 2002 study, perhaps the most striking discrepancy is on the issue of binge drinking. While no parents in the 2003 study and only one parent in the 2002 study thought that their child had participated in binge drinking in the two weeks prior to being interviewed, 20.4% of 8th through 12th graders taking the MYDAUS reported having participated in at least one episode of binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey. Interestingly, in the 2002 survey less than 1% of parents were unsure if their child participated in binge drinking versus 5% in the 2003 survey.**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, Cont'd.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS:

The benchmark results of several questions on the survey show a shift in the data that is closely aligned with the core message of the OSA/Ethos message campaign – parents are more aware of what is really going on regarding teenage drinking within their family.

- The majority of parents (90.8%) believe that their children are either “very honest” (62.6%) or “mostly honest” (28.2%) about their use of alcohol. This decrease since 2002 (when 97.2% of parents felt similarly) shows that parents are being a little more realistic about how honest their child is being about their involvement with alcohol.
- Thirty percent (30.0%) of parents believe that it is likely (either “very” or “somewhat”) that their child will use alcohol within the next year. In 2002, when the question asked about regular alcohol use, just 6.8% of parents indicated that it was likely (either “very” or “somewhat”) that their child would begin drinking alcohol on a regular basis (that is, at least once per month) in the next year. The question was changed to provide a better benchmark for future research, and although these questions are not directly comparable, the survey results do hint toward a shift that is closely aligned with the core message of the OSA/Ethos ad campaign.
- Forty-one percent (40.8%) of parents indicated that none of their child’s friends drink alcohol. While this figure still shows a strong discrepancy with the MYDAUS data, it does show a decrease from 2002 (48.4%).
- More parents are practicing effective parenting today. More than half of parents who were aware of the campaign said that they have taken or will take specific actions as a result. Parents are more likely to talk with their teen in order to determine if they’ve been drinking. In addition, every strategy presented to further reduce teenage drinking was supported by more than half of all parents.

These results show that awareness of the OSA advertising campaign is high and that the core message of the ads is getting through to parents throughout Maine. The advertising campaign has been effective to date. Further increases in awareness and behavior modification will require sustaining the advertising and public relations campaigns.