

PRESS RELEASE

For more information:

Erica McNamara, RCASA Director

Email: emcnamara@ci.reading.ma.us

<https://www.reading.k12.ma.us/community/rcasa/>



**Reading
Coalition
Against
Substance
Abuse**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

READING TO PROVIDE PARENTS WITH TOOLS TO ADDRESS YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

Reading, MA- November 20, 2018

Seven cities and towns in the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition (MVPHC), including the Reading Coalition Against Substance Abuse, are banding together to launch a social marketing campaign aimed at preventing underage drinking and substance use among middle school-aged youth. The campaign comes after studies found that although parents and guardians would like their children to not use alcohol and other drugs, many expressed a belief that underage drinking is inevitable.

Over the past two years, the MVPHC, which includes Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham, Winchester and Wakefield, has collected and evaluated data on youth alcohol and substance use. It has also conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with parents regarding their attitudes and behaviors in regard to youth alcohol and substance use. Their findings include the following:

- Youth substance use in the Mystic Valley region is higher than the state average.
- Parents/guardians generally want to do the right thing but are not sure how to begin.
- Parents/guardians are willing to talk with other parents but aren't doing that currently.
- Some parents believe that alcohol use is a rite of passage and that allowing their children to drink as adolescents will teach them how to drink "responsibly."

"Although parents and guardians may believe that youth alcohol use is inevitable, research shows that parental intervention is effective in discouraging alcohol and substance use in children," said Elizabeth Parsons, MVPHC Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator. "Our goal is to share fact-based information and tools they can use to have meaningful conversations with their children and adults in the community."



Make communication part of your plan.

NOW'S THE TIME TO START TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS.



You may not be thinking about this now, but middle school is the perfect time to start talking to your kids about alcohol and other drugs. Talk. They're listening.

Prepare yourself. Prepare your kid. Pass it on.
Want suggestions how? • MysticValleyPublicHealth.org



©2018-2019 Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition. All rights reserved.

Prevention research shows that social marketing campaigns targeting parents are the best ways to change cultural attitudes and influence behavior. Parents in the MVPHC region reported that they get their news and information from print and online newspapers, radio, Facebook, and in-person at community gathering spots and school and town meetings. Parents also heavily rely on information from school correspondence and medical professionals. The MVPHC campaign will leverage in-person communications, the MVPHC's quarterly e-newsletter, and social media to reach its intended audience.

“The MVPHC social marketing campaign will be aimed primarily at middle school families as that seems to be the time that parents and guardians are most ready for this message,” noted Lauren Chambers, MVPHC Opioid Abuse Prevention Coordinator. “That said, it’s never too early or too late to address these issues with your kids.”

The campaign will give realistic and actionable steps that parents can take to learn more about substance use prevention, how to talk to their children, and why and how to talk to other parents as well. Parents will be educated on the substance use issues that youth are facing along with tools that parents can use to have honest conversations with their children. In these conversations parents will be urged to communicate expectations, rules and consequences for alcohol and drug use. Lastly, parents will be encouraged to speak openly with other parents about their family position on alcohol and drug use in order to build a culture that values a healthy community for children.

The MVPHC’s work is supported by grants from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services For more information, visit www.mysticvalleypublichealth.org.

About the Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition

The Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition (MVPHC) is a coalition of health departments representing Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winchester. It was developed in 2004 to address Emergency Preparedness mandates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 2004, a strong system of collaboration has expanded efforts throughout the region, including a regional tobacco control grant affecting tobacco policy in the Mystic Valley. In 2013, the MVPHC received the Massachusetts Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative (MOAPC) grant, and in 2015 received the Substance Abuse Prevention Collaborative (SAPC) grant focusing on underage drinking and marijuana. The MVPHC is a collaboration of both grant-funded and non-funded community coalitions. Contact the MVPHC at mvroap@gmail.com or (781)-393-2449 or (781)-979-4132. Find them online at <https://www.mysticvalleypublichealth.org/>. Follow them on Twitter @mysticvalleypbc or on Facebook at Mystic Valley Public Health Coalition.



PARENT OPERATING SYSTEM UPDATE:

WHEN YOUR KID WAS 5.



Let your parent peers know what your rules and expectations are for your children, and ask about theirs too!

WHEN YOUR KID IS 12.

