

## **IU News Room**

**IU News from all eight campuses**

---

Last modified: Thursday, November 12, 2009

### **Study: Alcohol-related problems decreasing among IU Bloomington students, especially freshmen**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Nov. 12, 2009**

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- A new study conducted by the Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC) at Indiana University's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation shows that alcohol abuse among IU Bloomington students has markedly decreased, even as alcohol abuse among college students across the nation is on the rise.



<http://newsinfo.iu.edu/asset/page/normal/7167.html>

*Photo by Aaron Bernstein*

Dee Owens

**Print-Quality Photo (<http://newsinfo.iu.edu>)**

</asset/page/normal/7167.html>)

"In the past, our rates have been higher than the rest of the country," said Dee Owens, director of IU's Alcohol-Drug Information Center in the Division of Student Affairs. "Now, instead of looking at our numbers going up or just staying steady -- which is considered a great success -- we saw our numbers go down in every category," she said.

The 2008-09 ICAN (Indiana Collegiate Action Network ) survey, combined with the results of the previous two years' CORE surveys, showed the following results for Indiana University Bloomington students:

- The percentage of students who consumed more than five drinks in a week went from 42.8 percent in 2006 to 37.5 percent in 2009, a 12.4 percent decrease.
- The percentage of students who engaged in binge drinking in the previous two weeks went from 60.3 percent in 2006 to 56.8 percent in 2009, a 5.8 percent decrease.
- The percentage of students who have experienced legal troubles or received disciplinary action in the previous two weeks went from 15.3 percent in 2006 to 12.3 percent in 2009, a 19.6 percent decrease.
- The percentage of students who have driven while intoxicated went from 38.4 percent in 2006 to 22.6 percent in 2009, a 41.1 percent decrease.

A meta-analysis from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/> (<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>)), which uses numbers from government databases and national surveys, showed that alcohol abuse on college campuses nationwide has increased over the past 10 years. The number of alcohol-related deaths among 18- to 24-year-olds rose from 1,440 in 1998 to 1,825 in 2005, while "episodic (binge) drinking" saw a 3 percentage point increase in the same time period, from 42 percent to 45 percent.

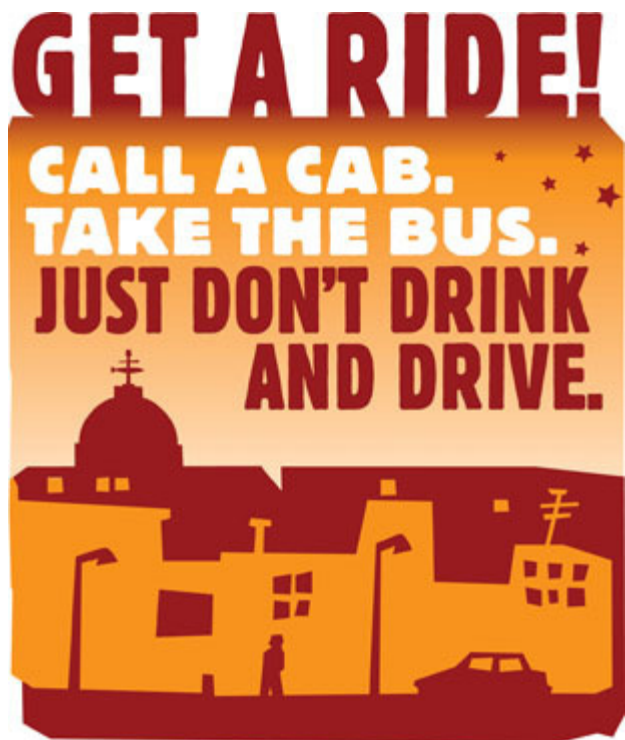
Owens attributes the success of lower numbers at IU Bloomington while alcohol abuse is on the rise nationwide to two primary factors: a widespread "Get a ride! Just don't drink and drive" campaign created and supported by Monroe County Prosecutor Chris Gaal, and the institution of AlcoholEdu (<http://kb.iu.edu/data/avui.html> (<http://kb.iu.edu/data/avui.html>)), a required online course for all incoming IU Bloomington freshmen and transfer students. The 2- to 3-hour, interactive AlcoholEdu class varies by individual, depending on how questions are answered.

"We want everybody who comes to campus to receive accurate education to start. The choices students make after that are up to them, but they can no longer say 'Gosh, we didn't know that,'" Owens said.

With help from a two-year grant through IPRC/HPER, researchers conducted two CORE surveys from 2006-2008, switching to the state-funded ICAN survey in 2008 (numbers were confirmed as comparable between the two surveys).

The ICAN survey is funded through a federal block grant from the Division of Mental Health and Addiction through the Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, of which Owens is president. The CORE surveys and AlcoholEdu were funded by the federal Department of Education for two years; AlcoholEdu is now funded by the IU Parents' Association.

"We do know from research that students form their behaviors in the first six weeks of class. If we can front-load information, we can help shape those behaviors," Owens said.



<http://newsinfo.iu.edu/asset/page/normal/3392.html>

[Print-Quality Photo \(http://newsinfo.iu.edu/asset/page/normal/3392.html\)](http://newsinfo.iu.edu/asset/page/normal/3392.html)

"We know that education alone can be ineffective, but it works when combined with other evidence-based practices -- the mandatory, interactive online class; the public campaign that has become ubiquitous; and now a student judicial system that sends student offenders through a screening to be certain they don't have a clinical problem with alcohol and a referral system for intervention and treatment if they do," she said.

After a four-year cohort of AlcoholEdu and the widespread campaign, a behavioral "sea change" will have already taken effect, said Owens. Among other information, the public campaign contains details about public transportation options as well as the free "Night Owl Express" (formerly "Midnight Special") that provides rides for students to prevent drinking and driving.

"That behavioral change requires four years," she said. "Now, when you talk to juniors, they go 'Oh yeah, I took AlcoholEdu when I was a freshman.' Next year, when you talk to seniors, they'll say, 'Oh yes, I took that when I was a freshman.' Then, suddenly, it's institutionalized."

The 2009 ICAN survey data will be made public at the ICAN conference Friday (Nov. 13) at the Radisson Hotel at the former Indianapolis Airport location.