



Drug Policy Project Newsletter

Tuesday May 24th, 2005

Volume 1, Number 1

In This Issue

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- Marijuana Remains Legal in Alaska
- 'Alcopop' Drink Manufacturers' Ads Target Underage Girls

IN THE NEWS

- Employers Increasingly Test Their Employees for Methamphetamine
- Doctors Growing Hesitant to Prescribe Painkillers for Fear of Prosecution from DEA

RESEARCH RELEASED

- The Economic Benefits of Substance Abuse Treatment Programs
- Brief Intervention by Doctors Found to Reduce Cocaine and Heroin Use
- Community-Based Coalitions Found to be Effective in Reducing Adolescent Substance Abuse, Esp. for Marijuana and Cigarettes.

The Vermont Bar Association Drug Policy Project brings together top level physicians, lawyers, legislators, treatment providers, educators, judges, law enforcement officials, and civic leaders in a cooperative effort to find more effective ways to reduce the harms caused by drug abuse in Vermont. The Project will examine current drug policies and evaluate the relative effectiveness of current and alternative policies in the areas of drug abuse prevention, addiction treatment, and the legal framework for drug control.

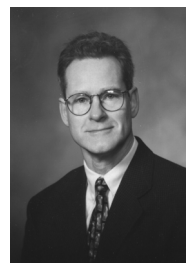
Welcome from Anna Saxman and Kevin Ryan



We are excited to send you this first number of the VBA Drug Policy Project Newsletter. Rather than fill your e-mailbox with endless isolated messages informing you of the latest news and research relevant to the goals of the Project, we opted to create this weekly newsletter to provide you with up-to-date information, news, research, and links to detailed stories and reports. We think you will find

these weekly compendia interesting, and they will provide you with all the background information you need as the Project pursues its goal of reducing the harms caused by drug use in our state.

As you know, there is a general consensus in Vermont that law enforcement cannot reduce the supply of drugs and that we must develop adequate treatment to decrease the demand for drugs. Further, it is generally recognized that most of our drug prevention efforts have fallen far short of their intended goals. While the drug-related prison population in Vermont (and nationwide) has increased, there has not been a corresponding decrease in problem drug use. In Vermont and across the country, as drug abuse has risen so has the devastation and misery that it brings to the lives of the users, their families, and the community. It is time to explore new approaches to break the cycle of drug abuse and its associated harms. We thank you for your efforts on the Project.



Study Finds Adult Drug Courts Effective in Reducing Recidivism

A recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that "drug court participants were less likely than non-participants to be rearrested or reconvicted." In its report, the GAO concluded that drug courts, although initially more expensive than traditional courts, yielded a net benefit because of the reduced overall cost per case. For a brief, one-page summary of the study, visit:

<http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol14/14-20.pdf>

MAJOR REPORTS

Parameters of a New
Legal Framework
for Psychoactive
Substance Control
*King County Bar
Association Drug Policy
Project's Legal
Frameworks Committee*

Controlling Psychoactive
Substances: The
Current System And
Alternative Models
*King County Bar
Association Drug Policy
Project's Legal
Frameworks Committee*

States' Rights: Toward a
Federalist Drug Policy
*King County Bar
Association Drug Policy
Project's Legal
Frameworks Committee*

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The complete report can be found at:
<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05219.pdf>

Substance Abuse Treatment Found to be Cost-Effective in the Long Run

A recent study conducted by the Treatment Research Institute at the University of Pennsylvania has found that substance abuse treatment is a wise investment for corrections programs because of the overall reduced cost per case. Among the studies conclusions are:

- In general, outpatient programs achieve reductions in substance use at a lower cost than residential programs, although the latter services may be more effective for higher risk populations.
- Enhanced outpatient programs tend to be more cost effective than standard outpatient programs.
- Residential prison treatment is cost effective but only in conjunction with post-release aftercare services. In addition, cost effectiveness is greater for high-risk inmates who receive prison treatment plus aftercare, compared with low-risk inmates.

To read the complete study, visit:

http://www.adpana.com/EconomicBenefits_2005Feb.pdf

Vermont Community Coalitions Found To Be Effective in Reducing Teenage Drug-Use

A study of twenty-three Vermont communities has found that community based-efforts within a structured framework can have an impact on the substance abuse habits of youth. Collective reductions in prevalence were achieved for all nine substances measured, with the greatest reductions coming for marijuana and cigarette use in the past 30 days. To read the abstract of this study, go to: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/abstract/110432974/ABSTRACT>

KCBA Legal Framework Committee Releases Trio of Reports

The King County Bar Association Legal Framework Committee has released three reports regarding drug control policy for the state of Washington. In its first report, "States' Rights: Toward A Federalist Drug Policy," the committee lays out the issue of state regulation of psychoactive drugs with relation to the issue of federal intervention. In its second report, "Controlling Psychoactive Substances: The Current System and Alternative Models," the committee discusses the current system for drug control and recommends various reforms to the system. In its final report, "Parameters of a New Legal Framework for Psychoactive Substance Control," the committee lays out guidelines for reforming drug control policy and practices. Please click on the report title below to view the entire report.

[States' Rights: Toward a Federalist Drug Policy](#)

[Controlling Psychoactive Substances: The Current System and Alternative Models](#)

[Parameters of a New Legal Framework for Psychoactive Substance Control](#)

Polls Show Teenage Girls Increasingly Drink Sweet-Tasting Alcoholic Beverages

A pair of nationwide studies released by the American Medical Association has found that teenage girls are starting to drink at a younger age and are being targeted by hard-alcohol companies who use "gateway" drinks such as Smirnoff Ice, Bacardi Silver, and Mike's Hard Lemonade to target less experienced drinkers. The polls found that teenage girls drink "alcopops" more than any other drink, whereas women over twenty-one listed these drinks as their least-consumed alcoholic beverage. The polls also found that nearly half of all girls age 16-18 had seen alcopop ads on TV, while only 34% of women 21 and older had seen the same ads. To find out more, continue to:

http://www.alcoholpolicymd.com/alcoholpolicymd/press_room/girlie_drinks_release.htm

Study Finds Doctors Talking to Patients Can Reduce Cocaine and Heroin Use

A study of three Boston medical centers has found that a brief, motivational interview by a doctor during visits can reduce cocaine and heroin use. Patients who received a motivational interview, referrals, a written list of treatment sources, and a ten-day follow-up call were less likely to test positive for cocaine and opiates after sixty days than those who only received a written list of treatment sources. To read a brief, one page summary, go to: <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/cesarfax/vol14/14-17.pdf>

Alaska Upholds Marijuana Laws

Alaska remains the only state in the union where adults may legally possess marijuana, after the state legislature ended its session without acting on a bill sponsored by Gov. Frank Murkowski (R) to recriminalize it. Murkowski threatened to place the item on the agenda for a special upcoming session, but it has yet to appear there, and the strong support for the current law by Alaskans will likely prevent Murkowski's recriminalization bid from succeeding in the near future. Last year the Alaska Supreme Court upheld a 1975 decision permitting the possession of up to four ounces in a person's home. For the complete article, visit: <http://stopthedrugwar.org/chronicle/386/outoftime.shtml>

Doctors Wary of Prescribing Pain Killers

Suffers of chronic pain are having an increasingly challenging time getting relief, and it isn't because the drugs aren't working—it's because they can't get them at all. After William Hurwitz, a pain specialist in Virginia was sentenced to 25 years in prison for over-prescribing controlled drugs, doctors nationwide have been cutting back on the amount of painkillers they prescribe, and that is making it even more of a pain for some. The American Pain Association estimates that 1 in 4 patients can't get treatment, something which they attribute in part to doctor's fear of the DEA. For more on this, read: http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2005-05-10-painkillers-usat_x.htm



More Employers Testing for Methamphetamine

Employers are increasingly screening job applicants with drug tests, and more of them are failing according to figures on 7.2 million workplace drug-tests conducted in 2004 as released by Quest, a NJ-based drug-testing company. Of the applicants who failed a test, 55 percent were for marijuana, 15 percent were for cocaine, and 10% were for methamphetamine (a 6% increase from last year for this drug). For more on this, go to: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/05/15/ap/business/mainD8A3P4N80.shtml>