

Latino Stereotypes Affect Access to Alcohol Treatment

Albuquerque, N.M. - Cultural stereotypes about Hispanics could impede Latino youth from seeking help for drug and alcohol abuse, according to a new study by the PIRE Behavioral Health Research Center of the Southwest, and the University of Montana.

The study obtained first-hand information from practitioners to propose the development of culturally relevant, quality care for rural adolescent populations who have limited access to behavioral health care. Researchers found four commonly held cultural stereotypes that health care providers' believed inhibited Hispanic youth from seeking help for substance abuse - family, religion and spirituality, gender roles and socioeconomic factors.

"By just focusing on those factors, even the best-intentioned prevention and treatment models will result in a simplistic response to the complex social, political and economic realities that create health disparities among ethnic minority populations," said Dr. Cathleen Willging, Ph.D., primary investigator on the study.

"This often results in many communities viewing mainstream health and human service institutions with suspicion. Although social stigmas associated with behavioral health problems no doubt influence how some Hispanic families seek help, it is important to note the role that a history of discrimination and racism plays in such a process."

Researchers interviewed 42 behavioral-health providers over a three-month period in 2005.

Study participants included drug and alcohol counselors, mental health therapists, nurses and physicians, and prevention specialists in four counties in rural, southern New Mexico. This area includes some of the highest rates of unemployment and highest percentage of people living in poverty in the country.

Researchers found practitioners believed that Hispanic families were circumspect about seeking behavioral health services because of distrust of Anglo providers, to avoid stigma of mental illness and substance abuse and the need to demonstrate self-reliance. Providers most notably considered Hispanic cultural heritage and values as obstacles to general well being.

This perception, researchers report, indicates that the behavioral health providers tend to focus on culture as a site for change, thereby deemphasizing the important role of socioeconomic status in determining the social context of illness, help seeking and recovery.

From this study, changes to substance abuse treatment services can be made to better provide care for rural adolescents and their families. Researchers recommend a series of modifications to the training of behavioral health care providers.

Culturally competent care includes not only providing appropriate Spanish-language services, but also education and employment opportunities for youth and families-even those lacking legal residency. Furthermore, state and local governments should consider mechanisms that encourage the training, hiring and licensing of local behavioral health professionals who represent the cultural background of the communities in which they serve.

For more information or to obtain a copy of the published report, contact Michelle Blackston at (301) 755-2444

Research



State Task Force on Alcohol Advertising and Underage Drinking Has Roots in Tragedy

Santa Fe - For attorney Gerald Collins, the story of the new state task force on alcohol advertising and underage drinking began with the death of his sister, Renee Collins-Gonzales, at the hands of drunk driver on November 6, 2006. That night, a drunk driver speeding the wrong way down Interstate 25 slammed into the minivan of Paul and Renee Gonzales, killing five members of the Las Vegas, N.M., family.

Dana Papst, 44, had been drinking on a US Airways flight and had a blood-alcohol level of 0.32 percent -- four times the legal limit -- when the head-on collision occurred. The crash killed Paul Gonzales, 36; his wife, Renee Collins-Gonzales, 39; their daughters Jacqueline Gonzales, 11, and Selena Gonzales, 11; and Alisha Garcia, 17, who was Paul Gonzales' stepdaughter.

The sole survivor was Arissa Gonzales, 15, another daughter of Paul and Renee Gonzales. Papst, who had five prior DUI arrests, also died.

The tragic crash shocked New Mexicans, especially when investigators later learned from fellow passengers that Papst had been "hammered" during the US Airways flight and tried to depart the cabin when the plane was still in midair. In the wake of the crash, state lawmakers, and later on flights to the state.

Within weeks of the crash, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson allocated an additional \$3 million to fight drunk driving in the state, and later approved a study of whether installing tire spikes on highway entrance ramps could prevent wrong-way

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The DWI Resource Center is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 New Mexico organization formed to reduce the social and economic impact of DWI through public awareness, education, prevention programs and research. The Center also provides assistance to victims and serves as a central clearinghouse of information on DWI and victims' rights.

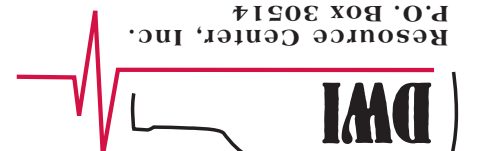
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New State Task Force Charged with Study of Alcohol Advertising Laws

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driving tragedies. Richardson also approved a bill that would mandate installation of ignition-interlock devices on the vehicles of out-of-state drivers who have previous drunk-driving convictions on their records.

For Gerald Collins, however, that wasn't enough. Collins, an attorney for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico, recalls that on the night of the crash, Selena and Jacquelyn were returning from a soccer tournament and Alisha from a volleyball tournament.

Paul was a girls' basketball coach, while Renee was a school nurse.

"They were tremendously involved in youth," said Collins. "I am a soccer coach and my club was hosting the tournament the girls were playing in. The entire family is dedicated to helping the youth in our communities."

After the tragedy, Collins began to look closely at the roots of drunk driving, including the problem of underage alcohol use and the influence of alcohol advertising. "Most laws in the books or contemplated seem to focus on punishing the offender," said Collins. "Few laws, regulations or plans for revisions of the same focus on the source of the problem -- the suppliers of this dangerous drug."

Collins came to the conclusion that the alcohol industry was intentionally targeting youths with its advertising, and began calling on lawmakers to address the issue. "I testified before the legislature to deaf ears -- ears that were connected to mouths that had been wined and dined by high-dollar lobbyists for the liquor industry," he said.

State Task Force Established

Still, Collins and allies like Glenn Wieringa of the Santa Fe Health Office, state Rep. Richard Vigil, and state Sen. Kent Cravens, pressed forward with their bid to establish a task force to study the issue of alcohol advertising and underage drinking and make policy recommendations to the legislature and the governor. Recently, the New Mexico legislature passed House Joint Memorial 64, which establishes the task force.

HJM 64 calls for the director of the state alcohol and gaming division to assemble and chair a panel that will "study the relationship between youth exposure to alcohol advertising and youth access to and consumption of alcohol and to recommend methods of restricting youth exposure to alcohol advertising."

Task force members will include representatives from the state's children's cabinet; the attorney general's office; the state health department; the children, youth and families department; the higher-education commission; the New Mexico PTO; Mothers Against Drunk Driving; and other groups.

The task force is charged with studying other states' laws on alcohol advertising, alcohol-industry sponsorship of community events where children are present and possible ways to restrict such activities, and study and recommend "constitutionally defensible restrictions on alcohol advertising and sponsorship in state publications and on state-owned and state-leased lands, including state universities, college campuses, state parks, public buildings and state-sponsored civic events." Regulation

of billboard advertising and ads in publications with large youth readership also will be examined.

The task force recommendations are due to the legislature in November.

"We simply want a forum to educate children about the true dangers of alcohol," said Collins. "We simply want the playing field balanced so that children don't see commercials where everyone drinking has a smile on their face. HJM 64 is our effort to have someone who can make change undertake the task of educating themselves on the dangers of this drug, and take steps necessary to protect our youth from the marketing strategy that will ultimately take many more lives."

Collins continues to work to persuade lawmakers to take action to prevent further tragedies like the one that devastated his family, including calling for a special legislative session to tackle alcohol-related issues. "As I told the representatives and senators, that light at the end of the tunnel may be the next wrong-way drunk driver headed your way," he said.

How Does Alcohol Affect Your Body And Your Driving?

The following chart contains common symptoms people exhibit at various BAC levels, and the probable effects on driving ability.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)	Typical Effects	Predictable Effects On Driving
.02%	Some loss of judgment; relaxation; slight body warmth; altered mood	Decline in visual functions (rapid tracking of a moving target); Decline in ability to perform two tasks at the same time (divided attention)
.05%	Exaggerated behavior; may have loss of small-muscle control (e.g., focusing your eyes); impaired judgment; usually good feeling; lowered alertness; lack of inhibition	Reduced coordination; reduced ability to track moving objects; difficulty steering; reduced response to emergency driving situations
.08%	Muscle coordination becomes poor (e.g., balance, speech, vision, reaction time, and hearing); harder to detect danger; judgment, self-control, reasoning, and memory are impaired	Concentration; short-term memory loss; speed control; reduced information processing capability (e.g., signal detection, visual search); impaired perception
.10%	Clear deterioration of reaction time and control; slurred speech, poor coordination, and slowed thinking	Reduced ability to maintain lane position and brake appropriately
.15%	Far less muscle control than normal; vomiting may occur (unless this level is reached slowly or a person has developed a tolerance for alcohol); major loss of balance	Substantial impairment in vehicle control, attention to driving task, and in necessary visual and auditory information processing

Information in this table shows the BAC level at which the effect usually is first observed, and has been gathered from a variety of sources including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the American Medical Association, the National Commission Against Drunk Driving, and www.webMD.com.

DWI Thanksgiving SuperBlitz November 16 - December 1

For many across New Mexico, Thanksgiving is a cherished holiday when families and friends gather and to celebrate another year of blessings and bounty. But, extra holiday traffic and celebrations can make Thanksgiving an especially dangerous time for motorists. In 2006, more crashes occurred in New Mexico during Thanksgiving than any other holiday period.

"Tragically, alcohol is often a factor in holiday crashes, said Rachel O'Connor, New Mexico DWI Czar. "During Thanksgiving last year there were more than 300 crashes in New Mexico resulting in 9 deaths and 153 injuries. Seven of these deaths involved alcohol."

That's why the DWI Resource Center is actively supporting Bernalillo County Sheriff's deputies, Albuquerque Police officers, and New Mexico State Patrol officers in their stepped-up DWI enforcement efforts, especially local DWI checkpoints and saturation patrols. Throughout the SuperBlitz periods, law enforcement will be conducting additional DWI checkpoints and saturation patrols.

However, citizens need to take an active role in supporting law enforcement efforts. Everyone has a role to play in making our roadways safer this Thanksgiving. The public can help reduce the threat drunk drivers pose to innocent motorists is by calling the DrunkBuster hotline anytime they spot a suspected drunk driver. The number to call from a cell phone is simple: #DWI (#394).

In addition, the DWI Resource Center would like to remind those of you hosting holiday parties to take an active role in stopping intoxicated party guests from driving under the influence of alcohol. Finally, remember that the best defense against a drunk driver is to always wear your seatbelt.

From the Board of Directors and Staff at the DWI Resource Center,

Have a safe and warm holiday season!