Abstract

A rural, Alaskan Native community in Alaska faces issues with underage drinking. Little has been known about the causes of youth drinking in this community. The goal of this study was to investigate youth alcohol consumption, access, perceptions, and consequences. Quantitative methods consisted of secondary data review of YRBS data and administering a youth alcohol use survey. Qualitative methods consisted of developing and conducting youth key informant interviews and youth focus groups. The survey results suggest that about 18% of the youth have had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days and about 15% had 5 or more drinks within a couple of hours on one or more of the past 30 days. The survey results also suggest that 70% of the youth perceive that their parents think it is very wrong to drink alcohol regularly. Also, 85% of youth perceived that there is no or very little chance of drinking alcohol regularly as being seen as cool. The focus group and key informant interview results suggest that youth alcohol use does occur, mostly in the 14-20 age groups, resulting from boredom and lack of activities. Access to alcohol was suggested to mostly come from adults over age 21 buying alcohol for the youth. Most of the youth viewed consequences to drinking as insignificant. This research helped to reveal underage drinking factors in this community and has implications for substance abuse treatment and prevention of youth alcohol use in rural Alaska.