Rural youth alcohol consumption, access and perceptions in one Alaskan community: Implications for strategic prevention

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BACKGROUND
This study investigated the public health issue of underage drinking in one rural Alaska community. With little literature on underage drinking in rural Alaska, it is crucial to identify and better understand the contributing factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
A case study design with a mixed methods approach was conducted. Quantitative methods included a secondary data review of YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) and a Youth Alcohol Use Survey (YAUS). Qualitative methods included developing and conducting youth key informant interviews and youth focus groups.

INTERVIEW RESULTS
- Alcohol use among youth occurs mostly in the 14-20 age group
- Most youth know where underage drinking takes place
- Youth drink because it is “cool” and is “something to do”
- Alcohol mostly comes from purchases made by adults over age 21
- Consequences of drinking were seen as insignificant, with little influence from law enforcement
- Youth suggested more activities as a main solution for solving the underage drinking problem

CONCLUSIONS
This project provided the community with the information to create targeted interventions for youth alcohol consumption. The following recommendations were suggested to combat underage drinking in the community, which are in line with the 2012 State of Alaska’s report, “Alaska’s Strategies to Prevent Underage Drinking”:
1. Promote pro-social behaviors
2. Increase school connectedness
3. Increase parent-family connectedness
4. Increase law enforcement presence and consequences

REFERENCES

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