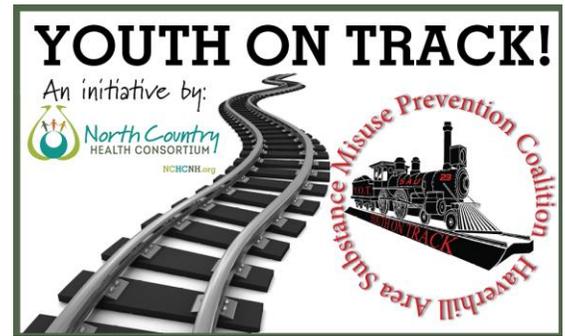


Keeping Your Children Safe from Dangers Inside the Home as Stay-at-Home Orders Continue: Part 3 Alcohol and Quarantine

By: Mariah Coulstring



During the Stay at Home Order, liquor stores have been deemed an essential business in the State of New Hampshire. Meanwhile, in the past several weeks, day-drinking to pass time at home has become more widely accepted. Some online platforms have even adapted to invite users to virtually enter a bar room during Happy Hour to imbibe in a 'Quarantini.' While NH continues with Stay at Home 2.0, with much of the US maintaining the mandate in some form, alcohol use and sales have also increased. Compared to March 2019, during this past March, sales on alcohol products skyrocketed 55 percent. Understandably, it is hard to make sense of the seemingly mixed message this sends to our youth about alcohol use and how to manage stress during this time.

So, why are liquor stores considered Essential Business?

According to an article from the *Scientific American* titled, "Yes, Liquor Stores Are Essential Businesses," "Liquor stores may not seem to be essential businesses in these times of social distancing, but they are indeed essential to the survival of the nearly 15 million people in the U.S. with Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). Far too few of our community members with AUD have access to evidence-based treatment, and the risk posed by liquor store closure may inadvertently contribute to overwhelming the hospitals. Government officials across the country must therefore ensure that alcohol is available. It should be part of efforts to keep people with AUD safer from withdrawal, and to contribute to flattening the demand curve for hospital beds, in an already strained and stretched-thin healthcare system."

The point is, some individuals struggling with AUD need to consume liquor rather than beer or wine because their addiction and tolerance has progressed to the point where beer and wine is not enough to prevent withdrawal symptoms. Further, "if alcohol is unavailable, particularly liquor," the article explains, "people may find alcohol from other unsafe sources, specifically non-beverage alcohol ([NBA] e.g., rubbing alcohol, mouthwash, alcohol-based hand sanitizers). A particularly dangerous NBA is car coolant, which can lead to renal failure and require admission to the intensive care unit (ICU)."

Although liquor stores may indeed be essential for the health and survival of severe alcoholics, this need should be understood by young people and differentiated from drinking to pass time and manage stress.

Talk to your kids about alcoholism and alcohol use

Take this time to have a conversation with your children and family about how serious alcoholism really is. Withdrawal from alcohol without treatment is even dangerous, and can cause tremors, hallucinations, and seizures that may be deadly. Talking to your kids about addiction can make a difference. Especially when exposed to some of the difficult realities of the pandemic— job loss in the family, school closures and online learning, isolation and separation from friends and family, traditions and celebrations being interrupted, and fear of contracting the virus— young people may be driven to drinking and other risky behaviors, especially if they

don't have other coping skills, or a trusted adult to talk to and role-model healthy habits around alcohol consumption.

Tips and resources about how to talk with youth about alcohol

Talk. They Hear You Campaign at www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking engages users in creating a customizable action plan that lays out when to talk, how to talk, and more. Other parent resources here include: "5 Conversation Goals," "Answering Your Child's Tough Questions," "How to Tell If Your Child is Drinking Alcohol," and more. If you want to talk to a live person, the AskPETRA (Prevention, Education, Treatment, Recovery Assistance) helpline is available, by phone or email, to assist individuals with direct support. Call or email, Monday - Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm to be connected with Northern NH professionals who can help provide local resources: (603)259-1729 or AskPETRA@nchcnh.org

Youth on Track is a column dedicated to youth substance misuse prevention and education in our community and is brought to you by the Haverhill Area Substance Misuse Prevention Coalition (HASMPC). Mariah Coulstring is the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Program Coordinator for HASMPC and employee of the North Country Health Consortium (NCHC) in Littleton, NH, the hub of the regional public health network that also serves as the fiscal agent for HASMPC.

Please visit us on Facebook by searching @HASMPC and contact me with questions, comments, or suggestions for topics at: mcoulstring@nchcnh.org or call (603) 259-3700 X251.