

## Solving Ashland/Castro Valley Youth Alcohol Problems With Billboards

Hayward, CA

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Local communities, including Ashland and Castro Valley share a national problem -their children drink. A lot and often. But, most of their parents are in denial about it.

Problem-solving begins with problem-identification. And a powerful campaign is getting started in two weeks in Ashland and Castro Valley, which aims to identify the problem in striking, memorable terms.

That's when a half dozen purple and yellow billboards will appear on some of the most heavily traveled roads in the communities. Their stark message can't be missed or misunderstood.

“Don't Kid Yourself. Ashland Youth Get Alcohol At Home.”  
and  
“Don't Kid Yourself. Castro Valley Youth Get Alcohol At Home.”

They will be up the entire month of October and again in December.

The campaign has been created by CommPre (*Community Prevention of Alcohol-Related Problems*), a program of Horizons Services, Inc. which has been serving the City of Hayward and urban areas of unincorporated Alameda County for 15 years. The campaign is funded by Eden Township Healthcare District and Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services.

“It is very clear to us that alcohol and other drugs are just too readily available to our kids”, says Linda Pratt, CommPre Program Director. “and it is just as clear that most parents don't know how big a role they play in making alcohol accessible to their kids.

Pratt is quick to point out that Castro Valley and Ashland aren't unique. The problem of parental denial of adolescent drinking is national. A Georgetown University survey conducted in 2004 found that twice the number of teen respondents (60%) as their parents (31%) reported consuming an alcoholic beverage in the past year.

In Ashland, 21 percent of teen respondents reported they had obtained alcohol at home, while just over 3 percent of parents thought or knew that to be true. Nearly all surveyed Castro Valley parents (94%) say they talk to their teens about drugs, but only two-thirds of the teens recall such conversations.

Easy access to alcohol for underage drinkers has devastating consequences. Nationally, The National Academy of Sciences estimates the annual social cost at \$53 billion, including \$19 billion from traffic crashes and \$29 billion from violent crime.

Locally, 79% of Castro Valley 11th graders say alcohol is easy to obtain, 68% of 9th graders and 33% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders say the same thing. Compared with tobacco, Castro Valley youth say alcohol is easier to obtain than tobacco. Twenty one percent of the 11th graders in Castro Valley and 18% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders in San Lorenzo Unified School District reported they binge drank (five or more drinks in one sitting) in the past month.

36% of 7<sup>th</sup> graders in Castro Valley, and 46% of youth in San Lorenzo Unified School District reported riding in a car with a driver who had been drinking, presumably parents and guardians.

The CommPre campaign acknowledges that the problem of underage drinking must be addressed by the adults in the community. It aims to put parents on notice that they may very well have a problem under their own roof and that they can do something about it. Prominent on the billboards is the CommPre number (510) 247-8207. Ms. Pratt is enthusiastic about providing swift, effective responses to all calls.