

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

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### **Focus group results lead to alcohol self-assessment.**

Eau Claire Healthy Communities conducted focus groups during the month of March to better understand the drinking habits of 18-25 year olds in Eau Claire. These efforts are part of the Security Health Plan of Wisconsin grant to create community change around high-risk drinking in Eau Claire County. According to the Burden of Excessive Alcohol Use in Wisconsin, Eau Claire County's rate of binge drinking among adults ages 18 and older is 30%, higher than the state-wide rate of 23% and national rate of 16%.

Throughout the month of March, Healthy Communities facilitated focus groups with 18-25 year olds in Eau Claire County to better understand their behaviors around drinking. Participants were surprised by the medical definition of binge drinking by the Center for Disease Control which for males is more than four drinks within two hours and for females, is more than three drinks within two hours. "Those in the focus groups did not know the definition of binge drinking and many of them drink at un-safe levels despite the risks," said Mike Valentine, Project Coordinator. Other common themes that surfaced were that 18-25 year olds do engage in high-risk drinking and feel immune to the associated risks. Respondents highlighted numerous downsides of alcohol misuse yet reported how they use alcohol excessively.

The focus group results show the need for awareness on the differences of low, increased, and high-risk drinking. The Healthy Communities High Risk Drinking Prevention Action Team hopes to accomplish this by encouraging the community to take a short self-assessment survey based on a study of 43,000 US adults by the National Health Institute. "We challenge all residents of Eau Claire County to take the test, to see how you compare with people in the rest of the nation," said Jennifer Eddy, Family Physician and Healthy Communities member.

The self-assessment will measure each respondent's drinking habits and share how to decrease risky drinking behavior. All responses will be kept confidential. The data gathered will help the High Risk Drinking Prevention Action Team understand the current drinking patterns among Eau Claire residents. This survey can be found by following the [self-assessment survey link](#).

Alcohol misuse has been identified as one of the top three health risks in Eau Claire County. "Although drinking is said to be a part of Wisconsin culture, high-risk drinking behaviors pose a serious threat to the health of our community. We encourage all Eau Claire citizens to take this survey and reflect on their drinking habits and how they affect their overall health," said Lieske Giese, Director of the Eau Claire City/County Health Department.

