

Morgan County CLEAR Coalition Reduces Substance Use



Morgan County (MC) CLEAR is a community coalition of volunteers working for more than a decade promoting a safe and healthy community. Our mission is to work together as Community Leaders Educating About Resistance (CLEAR) to address high risk behaviors in youth. Since CLEAR's inception we have promoted to parents that they are the #1 reason that youth choose to be drug free; thus families need to talk about the risks. Each year since 2009 an annual survey has been completed with steady results of 70% of MC youth have talked with parents about substance use.

Our main substance abuse prevention foci have been on educating youth on the dangers of underage alcohol, prescription drug, and tobacco/nicotine product use. The success of MC CLEAR on these issues is evident in the changes in the Missouri Student Survey (MSS), which is conducted in even-numbered years to track risky behaviors of public school students in grades 6-12. MC youth in both MC RI and MC RII school districts participate.

In 2006, CLEAR began its work to reduce underage drinking through a grant from the Department of Mental Health. At that time, 30% of MC 6th-12th grade youth indicated a past 30-day consumption of alcohol, compared to 27.1% for Missouri. In 2016, MC 6th-12th grade youth reported a decline by 18.1% in past 30-day consumption of alcohol, while MO youth reported only a 12.9% drop. These data hint toward the success of CLEAR in decreasing past 30-day consumption of alcohol from above the state average to below the state average over a 10 year period. Donna Chapman, CLEAR coordinator shared, "CLEAR is so proud of the reduction in alcohol use and wants to thank the parents of youth for these changes."

Education on the Dangers of Prescription Drug Abuse

CLEAR included education about the dangers of prescription drug (Rx) abuse in 2010 through partnerships with Osage Community Elks Lodge #2705 and local law enforcement. Promoted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) local Rx drug take back events were promoted. Within a year together with our partners three permanent Rx drop boxes were installed around MC, Versailles, Stover and Laurie. Later through a grant from the American Medical Association Foundation (Nov. 2014 to Nov. 2015) CLEAR was able to provide 72 presentations to school age children, a media campaign that included billboards, newsletters, school and community handouts, and posts on social media focusing on the dangers of Rx drug abuse. This year CLEAR, through a partnership with ACT Missouri, our local Regional Support Center, and many local partners, provided over 3,000 drug deactivation bags which allow individuals to safely destroy their own unneeded prescriptions at home. Additionally, two "Chasing the Dragon" Town Hall events were held with assistance from the DEA.