

Health Matters: Holiday Safety Don't Drink (or do Drugs) and Drive

There will be many reasons to be merry this holiday season. And making sure that your loved ones enjoy themselves responsibly is one of the most reliable ways to guarantee their safety. That is why the Needham Public Health Department and the Needham Coalition for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention (NCYSAP) would like to remind residents to think ahead and be safe this holiday season.

The holiday season can be one of the deadliest and most dangerous times on America's roadways due to drunk driving. In December 2009 alone there were 753 people killed in crashes that involved drivers or motorcycle riders with blood alcohol concentrations of .08 grams per deciliter or higher. In addition to drinking and driving, celebrations during the holiday season can also result in individuals getting behind the wheel while under the influence of drugs. "Drugged" driving poses a significant, yet largely unrecognized problem. It is well known that drugs impair perception, judgment, motor skills and memory by impacting the centers of the brain that are responsible for these activities and yet individuals under the influence of drugs still get behind the wheel.

Here are some simple tips for a safe holiday season:

- Plan a safe way to get home before the festivities begin
- Before drinking, designate a sober driver and leave your car keys at home
- If you're impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation
- If you happen to see a drunk driver on the road, don't hesitate to contact your local law enforcement.
- And remember, Drugged Driving is Drunk Driving. If you know someone who is about to drive or ride with a driver who is impaired, take the driver's keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

For more information, to share your insights and ideas or to join our email list please contact Carol Read, Substance Abuse Prevention & Education Coordinator, Needham Health Department 781-455-7500 (259) cread@needhamma.gov or visit www.needhamma.gov/ncysap

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The Needham Coalition for Youth Substance Abuse Prevention (NCYSAP) is working to educate Needham residents to prevalent substance abuse issues that threaten the health and safety of our residents during the holiday season and throughout the year. Our coalition is comprised of leaders and stake holders from key sectors of a community including: parents, youth, business leaders, law enforcement, school and public service officials, health care professionals, faith-based organizations, media, youth serving

representatives, state and local government agencies, social service providers and other community representatives. We are committed to disseminating data driven, evidence based research, information and programs to educate our residents on the vital issues of alcohol, marijuana and other drug use. Our collaboration with the Needham Police Department, The Needham Health Department and the Needham Public Schools enables us to work openly, on a community level in response to substance use issues, discussing prevention initiatives, programming and policy change.