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Colleges Work Together To Reduce Binge Drinking

Colleges that are part of a national program to reduce binge drinking among students say the first two years have been productive.

More schools will join the initiative in June. According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, about four out of five college students drink alcohol, and about half of college students who drink, also consume alcohol through binge drinking.

The Associated Press reports 32 colleges and universities are part of the National College Health Improvement Project, created by Dartmouth College in 2013.

The program aims to help members measure their progress against binge drinking, and then share their strategies with other schools. "It's been a really great source of collaborative learning and resources," Annie Stevens, Associate Vice President for Student and Campus Life at the University of Vermont, told the AP. "It really does give you a chance to get out of your own bubble and look around and rely on your colleagues. We're all struggling with the same thing and saying, 'Hey, have you found anything you're doing that seems to work?'"

The University of Vermont has started sending emails to parents before big party weekends or events, asking them to talk with their children about high-risk drinking. The school is also working with police to identify off-campus housing that generates calls about troublesome parties. "So instead of police going back and being called to that house several times, our staff can go and knock on doors and have a better conversation with students about, 'Really? Do you want police showing up?' or 'What's happening on this street or in this neighborhood?'" Stevens said. Any time a student goes to the University of Vermont campus health clinic, they are asked about their alcohol use. A doctor becomes involved if any of the answers raise a red flag, according to Stevens.

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