

Backgrounder

Binge Drinking at the University of South Florida:

Binge Drinking and alcohol-related problems among students at traditional four-year universities have been reported all over the U.S. The University of South Florida's Student Health Services, Counseling Center and Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse strive to help and inform students of the risks of binge drinking.

USF's Department of Psychology examined binge drinking and alcohol-related problems in 762 culturally diverse community college students. Based on this study, 25 percent of the students engaged in binge drinking.

Student Health Services provides students with health care and education to strengthen student learning and promote physical health and well-being so they can succeed in school and achieve educational goals. There are two basic strategies to addressing alcohol abuse. The first strategy is moderation and involves restraint in the use of alcohol. The second strategy is abstinence. Many students can change behavior by regularly attending self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (a "step-by-step" group meeting focusing more on restraint) or Rational Recovery (an approach that supports abstinence). Other students may need more formal or personalized treatment to change their behavior like counseling and therapy where Jennifer Fuller helps in the USF Counseling Center.

Binge drinking refers to the rapid consumption of alcoholic beverages for the sheer intention of getting intoxicated.

Alcohol poisoning is the most life-threatening consequence of binge drinking. Fuller, health learning facilitator at USF's Counseling Center, said that when someone gets alcohol

poisoning the body loses control of involuntary actions such as breathing and the gag reflex. Losing control of these functions can cause someone to asphyxiate or die choking on his or her own vomit. Fuller also states that even if a victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage, something most students are unaware of.

For support, assistance or further information about binge drinking please contact Jennifer Fuller at (813) 974- 4936 or E-mail Jennifer at jfuller@shs.usf.edu. Information is also provided on USF Student Health Services website at www.shs.usf.edu.