



working together coalition

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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### *Working Together: A Coalition for Safe and Healthy Communities*

#### Community Description:

Our Coalition works within three of the five school districts located within Cass County, Minnesota. They are the school districts of Northland Community School, Pine River-Backus and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley. Cass County is a rural County located in North Central, Minnesota which covers an area of 2018 square miles with 13.5 people per square mile. Cass County is growing, experiencing a population increase of nearly 25% from 1990-2000. The population is expected to grow even more dramatically over the next 30 years; it's expected to increase by more than 35%. The population demographics include:

- An estimated population of 27,150 with 86.5% of our population Caucasian. The next largest single race groups are American Indian 11.5% and Hispanic or Latino origins .8%.
- The Leech Lake Indian Reservation or Gaa-zagaskwaajimekaag in the Ojibwe language lies between the county lines of Beltrami, Cass, Hubbard and Itasca. The 2000 census showed that the population on the reservation was 10,201 making it the largest Indian Reservation in the state by residents. The reservation land comprise about one third of Cass County.
- Children from birth to 18 years old make up 30.5% of our population.
- The numbers of students in grade 6 – 12 by school which we serve are: Northland Community School- 263 students; Pine River- Backus has 474 students; and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley has 473 students.
- The primary issue facing Cass County residents are economic, which has resulted in social and health issues. In July of 2010 the unemployment rate was 8.9% compared to 6.8% state wide. Traditionally Cass County residents experience high rates of unemployment. Our per capital income (2005) was \$40,320 compared to \$52,048 for the State. This may be a result of limited industry with primary workforce in the service areas. In 2005, 23.2% of our children lived below poverty compared to the state average of 13.1%. Children eligible for free and reduced lunch in our service area is 55% compared to 30.9% state average. (MDH, 2006, US Census Bureau, 2005).
- Our population is aging, the dominate age group is 45-60 year olds.
- Elderly persons, over the age of 65, make up 18% of our population. By the year 2030, 1 in 3 Cass County adults will be age 65 or older

These three school districts are comprised of many geographical areas. There are several different cities that lie within these boundaries: Walker, Hackensack, Akeley, Remer, Longville, Boy River, Federal Dam, Outing, Pine River and Backus. All three of the school buildings reside within Cass County, Minnesota, however in Minnesota, school districts also cross county lines, so we may also serve students that live in Hubbard County, Itasca County and Crow Wing County.

Two of the three school district boundaries lie within the Leech Lake Indian Reservation; we also serve many Native American Communities.

Attached, please find maps of Cass County, Minnesota. The first map shows the geographical area of all three school districts of Northland Community, Pine River- Backus and Walker, Hackensack, Akeley (WHA). The second map is showing the boundaries of the Leech Lake Indian Reservation.

## Community Needs:

We used a combination of existing data as well as data collection for our community assessment.

Main Data Sources Used by the Working Together Coalition	
Community member interviews/ Key Informant Interviews	Our Coalition continuously seeks information from our Community Members to gain better knowledge around the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among our youth. These questions have been asked not only to our community but to our youth as well. The questions have been geared to better understand where our community is with awareness, education, access, youth activities, parent involvement and the perception of use among our youth.
Town Hall Meetings	We have held a Town Hall meeting in the Pine River-Backus community for the past several years and have held our first in 2010 in the Northland and Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Communities.
Minnesota Student Survey (MSS)	The State of Minnesota uses the MSS with grades 6, 9 and 12 on an every three year basis. This survey asks questions about activities, experiences and behaviors. It is administered by MN Dept. of Education, Health and Human Services and Public Safety. Data used below is from the 2007 survey, with some 2004 data for trend analysis. The entire survey can be found at <a href="http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss">www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss</a>
Most of Us Survey	In February 2008, 2009 and 2010 the Pine River-Backus school surveyed the 7 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade students to determine their use of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs as well of their perception of their peers use. The purpose of this survey is to assess if perceptions of use match actual use; with the opportunity to then address misperceptions. A parent survey was also conducted to gather their perceptions.
Alcohol Compliance Checks	Alcohol compliance checks started in December of 2008. We have kept records since this date.
Responsible Beverage Server Trainings	Responsible Beverage Server Training Alcohol IQ Quiz has been given to all servers that are involved with this training in 2010.
Local Law Enforcement Data	We gather local law enforcement data on a monthly basis in regards to Minor Consumption charges, this data is back to 2006.
Community Readiness Survey	In 2007 the school district of Pine River-Backus completed a community readiness survey which was conducted through the Minnesota Institute of Public Health.

From the data collected and surveys conducted it shows that we need to improve in the areas of education, prevention, access and changing of community norms.

### Community Member Interviews/Key Stakeholder Interviews

Conversations have been held with community members to talk about their perception and asked questions about youth access to alcohol. Below is the following that was found:

- Most all community members interviewed believe that youth are starting as early as 12 years old.
- The community members felt that youth are using for the following reasons: peer pressure/perception that everyone is drinking, rite of passage, low self-esteem, mental health issues, normal within their family and lack of parent involvement.
- Of those interviewed they believed it was easy or very easy for youth to access alcohol, drugs and tobacco in their community. Two ways community members (adults and youth) felt youth have access to alcohol are through parents (they are buying it or their youth are stealing it from them) and older friends or siblings.
- Many community members felt that parents didn't want to have the tough conversations with their children. They felt that parents should be talking to their kids earlier about the risks that go along with the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, but felt that parents needed some support in doing this.
- Overall the community level of concern was perceived as "not very much", to "some concern". It is interesting to note that most felt the community "should be" more concerned.

Many community members shared that our youth are drinking because it is their normal. One comment reflected the community norm – "As long as parents in this community take the stance that kids are going to drink anyway, why not let them drink at home, we will have problems."

## Minnesota Student Survey

It is important to note that Minnesota scores have become consistently worse for most indicators than the rest of the nation. We are amongst the top state for alcohol use and binge drinking rates. Following is a list of concerns from the compiled data for Cass County, Minnesota Student Survey:

### Alcohol Use:

- 30% of our 6<sup>th</sup> grade males and 22% of our 6<sup>th</sup> grade females have consumed alcohol. The *age of onset* for youth consuming alcohol is at very young ages and it should be noted that the data shows that our youth started drinking at age 10 or younger at rates 50% higher than the state.
- Over ½ of our 9<sup>th</sup> grade population have consumed alcohol.
- 2 out of 3 Cass County students have consumed alcohol by the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- 45% of our 12<sup>th</sup> grade males have used alcohol in the last 30 days.
- 25% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 18% of females have drunk more 5 or more drinks on 10 or more occasions in a year.

### Marijuana Use:

- Marijuana use among our 12<sup>th</sup> grade population has increased from 18% to 21% in females and from 18% to 25% in males from 2004 to 2007.
- 25% of our 12<sup>th</sup> grade males have used marijuana in the past 30 days.

### Combined Alcohol Use and Other Drug Use:

- More than 1/3 of our students have driven a motor vehicle after using alcohol or other drugs 1 – 3 times.
- 32% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 36% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade females used **both** alcohol and marijuana in the past 12 months.

### Tobacco Use:

- 42% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 35% of females have used tobacco products in a 30 day period.
- Cigarette use during the last 30 days is much higher in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade than the state, with 19% of males and 23% of females smoking; compared to the state at 12%.
- We are significantly worse than the state average in regards to youth that have smoked a cigar or used chewing tobacco, with 32% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade males and 62% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males having used. 10% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade females have.
- Our statistics for chewing tobacco are markedly worse than state averages, with 28% of our 12<sup>th</sup> grade males using compared to 19% state average; and 13% of these males used all 30 days compared to 5% state average. Our 9<sup>th</sup> grade males show a similar trend compared to the state.
- For use of any tobacco products during the past 30 days it was found that in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade 19% of males and 23% of females report use, and for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 28% of males and 33% of females report use.
- For frequent use reported of use of any tobacco product used 20 or more of the past 30 days: 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 6% males and 1% females, and for 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 15% males and 0% females report use.

### Perception of Harm:

- It is important to note that while 55% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males and 62% of females perceive great risk from smoking, only 36% of males and 45% of females perceive this risk from alcohol intake at binge drinking levels. Our perceived risk of harm indicates lack of knowledge in some areas, and in general our students are less likely to perceive harm correctly than students state wide.

### Parental Disapproval:

- In 2004 the MSS asked students if they had talked with at least one of their parents about the dangers of tobacco, alcohol or drug use. Over half of 6<sup>th</sup> graders had and about one half of 9<sup>th</sup> graders had. For 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 35% of males and 39% of females had.

The **Most of Us Survey** conducted in 2007, 2008 and 2009 consistently came and showed that our youth misperceive what their peers are actually using. In the 2009 survey it found that: It was found that 60 percent of students believe that drinking alcohol is never a good thing for anyone their age to do. Yet, only 35 percent of students believe that their peers agree. These types of misperceptions were consistent throughout the entire survey. This continues to supports our effort to change community norms.

There was a Parent Survey conducted in 2008 where the primary focuses on parent's perceptions of youth substance use and attitudes. This focus is important because research studies consistently demonstrate that parents often misperceive youth alcohol and drug use. Most parents surveyed believe their children never use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, however they believe most students in their child's school are using.

### Alcohol Compliance Checks

Prior to December 2008 Alcohol compliance checks were not routinely performed. In 2008-2009 the checks were only conducted within the Pine River-Backus communities. The 2010 data includes alcohol compliance checks done with the addition of the other two school districts. They are currently only being done in the areas we serve within Cass County, MN. Below are the rates of compliance for businesses that have been checked.

2008 Compliance Checks	2009 Compliance Checks	2010 Compliance Checks
63% of businesses passed	88% of businesses passed	83% of businesses passed (as of May , 2010)

### Local Law Enforcement Data

Minor consumption charges from local law enforcement showed the following:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (present)
Under 18 year old Minor Consumption	11	4	23	19	19
18-21 year old Minor Consumption	53	1	48	52	31
Total	64	23	71	71	50 ( As of May 2010)

In the 2007 **Community Readiness Survey** it showed that we have a medium level perception of a problem, high level of belief it is not okay, high support for prevention, low recognition of access issues and high level of belief that the community is apathetic to change.

During the initial needs assessment Coalition members also identified several areas of focus or ‘*Root Causes*’ in our community. These root causes include:

- Perceived lack of Social Activities for our youth to do within each community.
- Ease of access to and availability of alcohol
- The use of alcohol is socially acceptable among our adult community members.
- The use of alcohol is also socially acceptable among the youth in each community.

*Local conditions* contributing to the identified root causes include:

- Youth are not taking advantage of things offered.
- Families can’t afford extracurricular activities.
- Transportation to and from activities is difficult for our youth.
- Parents are providing alcohol for our youth.
- Establishments are not carding youth.
- Young adults are buying alcohol for our youth.
- Youth are stealing alcohol from their parents.
- Most celebrations/community events sell alcohol.
- Youth are not receiving consistent consequences for Minor Consumptions.
- Perception that everyone is drinking.
- Youth are feeling pressured to drink alcohol.
- Perception that it is safe to drink at home.
- Parents don’t see harm in underage drinking.
- Relaxed rules on drinking because of their age.

### Community Resources

The Working Together Coalition has many capacity resource strengths on which to build including:

Key leaders and stakeholders from law enforcement, schools, healthcare, business community, and faith based organizations, media, county, city and tribal governments, service providers that work with youth, youth and parents represent our Coalition. These community members come from a different walks of life and come with different interests and strengths to work together to prevent the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs among our youth. We all have the same mission which is to prevent substance use by our youth through community collaboration, resulting in an improved quality of life. Local resources include:

- Collaboration with our three school districts to implement evidenced based prevention educational programming, which is community based prevention education among multiple grade levels.
- Local businesses allow space for Coalition Meetings, Sub-Committee Meetings and Coordinators Office Space.
- Local Law Enforcement agencies complete all the alcohol compliance checks and Zero Adult Providers philosophy with donated time and money.
- Cass County Public Health completes all the Tobacco Compliance Checks with donated time and money.
- Local newspapers contribute space for education and information on our Coalition Efforts.
- The Leech Lake Area Boys and Girls Club provides space and staff time to provide alternative activities and curriculum.
- Other organizations/individuals in the community that work with our youth to prevent the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs: Churches, Kinship Partners (Mentoring Program), Lions Clubs, Community Education, 4-H, Just for Kix, Bi-Cap, School Athletics, Interact, Youth Division, School Programs, School Counselors, Teachers

The largest strength we have is our existing Coalition members. One person can't implement population level change and that is why we know it is important that representation from the entire community allows a coalition with diversity of skills and talents come to the table. We know that *The Solution is in the Community!* In addition to our Coalition members and partnerships we have other community assets, skills and programmatic resources including but not limited to the list below;

- Four coalition members are certified as Substance Abuse Prevention Specialists.
- Our ATOD prevention history includes a focus on risk/protective factors.
- Coalition members have been able to attend CADCA's Leadership Forums, the National Coalition Academy, Most of Us Montana Summer Institute and other State and Regional Trainings.
- Our Coalition efforts identified strategies which include; information dissemination, prevention education, alternative activities, community – based processes, environmental approaches and problem identification/referral.

## Community History

The Working Together Coalition (WTC) was established approximately ten years ago and has been responding to the changing needs of the communities since that time. The Coalition was previously known as "The Pine River-Backus Violence Prevention Council". The Council was created in response to a trend within the Pine River-Backus School and in the community, which indicated the following was on the rise; gang influence, increased acts of violence, aggression, vandalism and drug use. The Superintendent of the Pine River-Backus Schools applied to the Minnesota Citizens Council on Crime and Justice (now called Citizens for Reducing Rural Violence, CRRV) for assistance in the process of mobilizing the community to take action. Over time, with the assistance of CRRV, the group emerged meeting monthly to identify key stakeholders, developing an initial priority (family violence), and create an action plan.

In the fall of 2004 a community stakeholders meeting was offered to inform the community of our work. At that meeting community feed-back supported the strong relationship between substance abuse and violence. Efforts were then focused on Methamphetamine Awareness where two community events to educate community members about methamphetamine were held. The Coalition then decided to apply for additional funding and received a Planning and Implementation grant with the Minnesota Department of Human Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division. This funding was for a period of 5 years, ending in June of 2011. The positive effects in the community resulted in expanding the efforts into the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley and Northland Community School Districts. Funding was awarded from the Drug Free Communities Support Program from the Office of National Drug Control Policy and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This funding will be until 2014 with the option to reapply for an additional 5 years.

## Problem / Goal Statements

Based on all of the information gathered above, our coalition activities will impact the measures through environmental strategies. The substance abuse problems that we will address include:

- Alcohol use by minors, with particular attention to high use, drinking and driving issues, low perception of harm, and easy access including from social sources.
- Tobacco use by minors in our community including cigarette use and chewing tobacco.
- Marijuana use including increased use in the community and low perception of harm.