

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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First Lady and state officials urge participation in town hall meetings dealing with underage drinking and announce upcoming statewide community readiness survey

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota First Lady Mikey L. Hoeven and Department of Human Services' officials urged people to participate in upcoming Town Hall Meetings on Underage Drinking and to also respond to a statewide "community readiness survey" if they are contacted. Both efforts will help communities develop solutions to underage drinking, they said.

Inspired by the U.S. Surgeon General, 1,600 communities across the country are participating in a nationwide series of federally-funded Town Hall Meetings to raise awareness and promote local action to combat and prevent alcohol abuse by minors. In North Dakota, 19 communities are hosting meetings. Participants will receive information and tools to connect with today's youth about the dangers of underage drinking.

"In order to solve our underage drinking problem, we know that we need to work together as a society," Hoeven said. "We are pleased with the interest and commitment demonstrated by these communities. Holding local conversations is an important step as communities mobilize to tackle this challenge."

JoAnne Hoesel, director the department's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Division said, "Alcohol harms the mind and body of growing teens in ways that many people don't realize. Drinking should not be considered a rite of passage. We want people to be informed of the dangers, as well as the resources in their communities that are working on solutions.

Hoesel said the upcoming survey of about 14,000 adults will measure perceptions about alcohol and drug use and current prevention efforts. Results will identify how prepared communities are to take action on alcohol and drug use, and will be used by prevention specialists and community members to decide the best strategies for their local areas.

A list of North Dakota Town Hall Meetings is available at www.nd.gov/dhs/info/news. To learn more about the consequences of underage drinking go to www.stopalcoholabuse.gov.

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