

Program Proposal for a Drinking License in California

By

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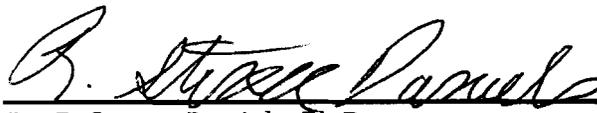
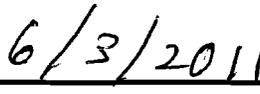
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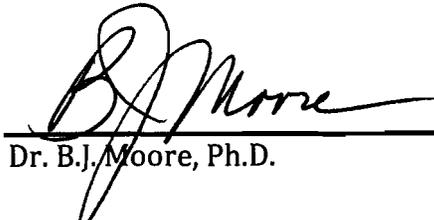
Program Proposal for a Drinking License in California

By Steven R. Varela

This thesis or project has been accepted on behalf of the Department of Public Policy and Administration by their supervisory committee:

   
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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this in loving memory of my grandfather, Frank T. Rodriguez. Although I may have lost you physically, I will always have you in my heart. Not a day goes by that I do not think of you. I miss you and certainly look forward to the day I see you again.

Love Güero

## **Acknowledgement**

I would first like to thank my readers; Dr. Daniels and Dr. Moore, without you both this paper would not be able to be completed.

I would also like to thank my FAMILY, Mom, Ray, and Gabrielle, for standing by me and supporting my efforts. Please know that this would not possible with you. I love you all.

Additionally, I would also like to say thank you to my better half, Aliya S. Khizer. You have been here with me throughout my whole college journey. I could not thank you enough for the help and support you have provided me throughout these years. I look forward to the many years we have ahead of us together. I love you.

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## **Executive Summary**

The current Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) laws were created to save lives and deter underage drinking. Researchers have found that there has been a steady occurrence of unsafe drinking practices among college-aged adults (18 to 24 year olds). The most common unsafe activity is binge drinking where participants are drinking more than five servings of alcohol in one sitting or event.

College presidents and chancellors have made note of the reckless drinking activities occurring on their campus and neighboring communities, and formed the Amethyst Initiative. The Amethyst Initiative focuses on reexamining the current MLDA laws to help find an alternative to curb the reckless drinking activities. They suggest that a drinking education course be created which upon completion participants can receive a license to drink alcohol legally.

This program proposal will take AI's drinking education suggestion and apply it to the state of California. This program proposal will allow 18 to 20 year olds to voluntarily participate in ten-week course, which will educate them about alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences. The materials are not abstinence based and does not try to stop drinking alcohol rather it will provide the participants valuable skills and techniques when drinking alcohol occurs. In addition to the educational aspect of the program, participants will be able to hear about the misuse of alcohol by representatives of their local law officials, emergency medical technicians, doctors, professors, and victims of alcohol abuse.

Lastly, participants who have completed the program successfully will be awarded a license to purchase and consume alcohol legally. However, in order to deter

misuse of the drinking license, license holders will be required to register with the California State Department of Justice and local law enforcement agencies. If license holders were ever convicted of a crime while under the influence of alcohol, they would be subject to stricter penalties and consequences.

In the end, the goal of this program proposal is to break the cycle of reckless drinking habits among 18 to 24 year olds through drinking education and by allowing participants demonstrate proper drinking habits socially among their peers. By demonstrating proper drinking habits socially among their peers, participants will help to bring a change in reckless drinking culture that currently occurs across the state of California. This program proposal is the solution to breaking the cycle of reckless drinking habits and can be certainly have an impact on the drinking culture of Californians.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### History of Alcohol Legislation in America

Since 1984, the Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) for all states in America has been 21 years old. President Ronald Reagan signed the Federal Uniform Drinking Age Act (FUDAA) in 1984. Due to the pressure of legislators and grassroots organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the President had no choice but to adhere to the cry for change.

In the late 1970s, states had MLDA from 18 to 21, which created a patchwork of MLDA across the nation. During this period, many researchers and commentators noted that people who lived in a state with a higher MLDA would cross the state lines into a neighboring state that had a lower MLDA to purchase and consume alcohol. As a result of these activities, “blood borders” were created, and there was a perceived increase of alcohol-related accidents and deaths on the highways that connected the neighboring states (Toomey, Nelson, & Lenk, 2009).

Empirical data was collected by researchers and presented to the Department of Transportation and the Reagan Administration, which noted that the patchwork of MLDA across the nation was fueling the rate and occurrence of alcohol-related accidents on “blood borders” across the nation. The Highway Safety Act of 1966 provided a rationale to implement a uniform safety standard because the patchwork of MLDA across the states was creating unsafe highways for travel (Toomey, Nelson, & Lenk, 2009). Knowing that the law could not infringe on the States’ power to create and implement laws within their borders, the lawmakers created the stipulation that every state in the union would be required to adhere to the unifying age of 21 years old or

would lose 10% of their Highway Funds annually. It was not until 1988 that all fifty states in the nation raised their MLDA to 21 years old.

### Statement of the Problem

The age of 21 years old is typically associated with the college student population. Part of the college experience is being able to live on your own away from the watchful eyes of your parents or guardians. College for many is the first opportunity for students to make their own decisions about their lives. Such decisions include career choices, lifestyles choices, relationship choices, and the choice to drink alcohol. For too many college students, alcohol is deeply infused in their college experience. College students who are choosing to partake in alcohol consumption tend to make poor or reckless decisions pertaining to alcohol (Amethyst Initiative, 2011). Students tend to develop their drinking habits based on their peer influences, which can be potentially deadly if they are not properly prepared and informed of all the risks of alcohol consumption.

The most common form of alcohol use among the college age group (18-24 year olds) is binge drinking. Binge drinking is consuming five drinks for men and four drinks for women in a single sitting (Fromme, Wetherill, & Neal, 2010). Binge drinking occurs at a higher rate among the 18-24 age group for both college students and non-college students than for any other age group (Fromme, Wetherill, & Neal, 2010). With activities like binge drinking occurring on the campuses across the nation, college presidents and chancellors have come together to form an organization called the Amethyst Initiative.

### Amethyst Initiative

College presidents and chancellors who have seen a high occurrence of unsafe activities with alcohol by students on their campus formed the Amethyst Initiative. Named after the Amethyst gemstone believed to ward off intoxication, the presidents formed the organization to encourage moderation and responsibility as an alternative to the drunkenness and reckless decisions by young adults (Amethyst Initiative, 2011). Members of the Amethyst Initiative signed a public petition that notes that young adults are participating in reckless and unsafe drinking despite the MLDA of 21 years old. Furthermore, the Amethyst Initiative suggests that there is a culture of dangerous binge drinking that is occurring on college campuses across the nation (Amethyst Initiative, 2011). The Amethyst Initiative has pledged to raise discussion with elected officials regarding the current MLDA laws and their effectiveness or lack thereof. The purpose of the petition and discussions with elected officials is to help create a healthy alternative to the current MLDA status quo, which has proven ineffective on their campuses.

The Amethyst Initiative also proposed that changing the law to a lower drinking age might not be the answer. The Amethyst Initiative argued that there should be a change in view of alcohol in American society. The Amethyst Initiative suggests that teaching our youth responsibility and moderation with alcohol is key. The Amethyst Initiative recommends on their parent organization's Choose Responsibility web site:

States should: (i) educate 18-20 year olds on how to drink alcohol responsibly, using a program similar to driver's education programs, that will be implemented on a state-by-state basis: and (ii) issue a drinking license to individuals who pass a final examination successfully at the end

of the 40-hour education program, with the license allowing those individuals to drink alcohol legally in the state in which the license is issued (Choose Responsibility as cited by Toomey, Nelson, & Lenk, 2009).

Choose Responsibility and the Amethyst Initiative are mirroring what other researchers have noted in their research. There needs to be an alternative available for young adults to learn about the responsibilities of alcohol usage. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to design a program for implementation based on the licensing recommendation from Choose Responsibility and the Amethyst Initiative. The state in which this program will be applied is the state of California. The target population will be Californians aged 18-20 years old.

#### Methods and procedures of the study

To design and implement a new program for young adults aged 18-20 years old, a secondary data analysis will be conducted. An analysis of current research and recommendations will be completed to help to design a program that can be implemented within the state of California. The program will be designed around the proposed recommendations from Choose Responsibility and the Amethyst Initiative. However, there will be changes or additions to the original ideas that Choose Responsibility and Amethyst Initiative proposed.

#### Importance of the study

Researchers have found that there has been a steady occurrence of unsafe practices on college campuses across the nation in association with alcohol; the main one is binge drinking, which is consuming five or more beers in one sitting or event.

Researchers have studied this occurrence and questioned the origin of the irresponsibility being displayed by students who chose to partake in unsafe activities associated with alcohol.

This study may help to educate young adults on the risks associated with alcohol as well as provide an opportunity to demonstrate maturity. The program may help 18-20 year olds make responsible decisions with alcohol. Hopefully, the program will provide an opportunity to bring a change in the culture of America and help to promote responsibility and moderation with alcohol. The proposed program could help to lower the rates of incidents of unhealthy activities like binge drinking and DUI's in America and more specifically in California.

## Chapter II: Statement of the Problem

### Literature Review

Articles reviewed for the literature review indicate that young adults are partaking in unhealthy activities in association with alcohol. Research conducted in the articles reviewed substantiates the need to create and implement a program that will help young adults learn how to make healthy choices and decisions with alcohol. In addition to making healthy decisions, a program is needed to teach young adults about responsibility and moderation.

Previous researchers have found that young adults or college age adults are prone to binge drink, get DUI's, get into auto accidents, and participate in celebratory drinking. All of these activities can be dangerous to themselves and others.

#### Binge Drinking

Several studies have been conducted on the dangerous activities of college age adults (18-24) and alcohol. The most common dangerous activity this age group participates in with alcohol is binge drinking. Binge drinking is having five or more servings of alcohol in one sitting or occasion (Fromme, Wetherill, & Neal, 2010).

It was reported in one study that although underage drinkers drink on fewer occasions, when they drink they tend to binge (Wechsler & Nelson, 2010). Binge drinking is not exclusive to underage drinkers; it actually spans well into the legal drinking age population. Many would assume that binge drinking occurs mostly among underage drinkers. However, an increase in binge drinking among adults aged 18-24 has been observed (Wechsler & Nelson, 2010). Binge drinking does occur in higher rates in the 18-24 aged population than any other age group. Within the 18-24 age group, binge

drinking occurs more frequently among college age students than their non-college attending peers (Wechsler & Nelson, 2010).

In another study nearly half of all students (freshmen-seniors) reported that they had binged at least once during a two week period (Fromme, Wetherill, & Neal, 2010). During a five year span students who binged within a 30 day period increased from 41.7 percent to 45.2 percent (Hingson, 2010). Even with the current laws and limitations, young adults are still participating in dangerous activities like binge drinking. Even more interesting than the rise in statistics of binge drinking, another study noted that students tend to feel the need to drink more because they feel that heavy drinking is the norm among college students (Hingson, 2010).

As a result of binge drinking, young adults are subject to unintended consequences like vomiting, hangovers, blackouts, injuries, rape, violence, and driving under the influence or becoming a passenger of someone who has been drinking (Lewis, Lindgren, Fossos, Neighbors, & Oster-Aaland, 2009).

### *DUI's and Auto Accidents*

Hingson (2010) report a series of statistics in his study that illustrate that even though MLDA laws are in place, the rates of DUI's and alcohol related accidents are steadily increasing. In a five-year span, DUI rates for college students and their non college-attending peers in the 18-24 age group rose 3 percent. In the same span of years deaths from unintentional injuries including traffic accidents increased from 1,442 in 1998 to 1,825 in 2005. In another report by the same author, one fourth of all college students in the United States drove while under the influence of alcohol at the beginning of the century (Hingson, Zha, & Weitman, 2009). On average, 1,100 young adults die

from alcohol related auto-accidents while 300 die annually from alcohol-related accidents that don't involve and automobile (Main , 2009).

The rise in rates clearly illustrates that the laws are not working and alternatives need to be sought.

### *Celebratory Drinking*

Lewis, Lindgren, Fossos, Neighbors, & Oster-Aaland (2009) noted a recently observable phenomenon on college campuses. They observed the occurrence of what they termed celebratory drinking. Celebratory drinking is when students drink more than usual on critical days in the students' lives like the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, holidays, spring break, or the weekend. Lewis, Lindgren, Fossos, Neighbors, & Oster-Aaland (2009) also noted that when a student is participating in celebratory drinking, they are typically partaking in binge drinking by having 5 or more drinks in one sitting or occasion.

The authors found that students typically drank more alcohol during the week leading up to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and on their birthday more than they would the rest of the semester. The majority of the participants reported having hangovers, vomiting, and blackouts as a result of celebratory drinking.

Celebratory drinking is common as it gives the students a reason to drink whether it is for the end of finals, Cinco de Mayo, St. Patrick's Day, Spring Break, or even a celebration of the week ending. Celebratory drinking is providing a rationale to binge and potentially get hurt or sick.

Binge drinking, DUI's/auto accidents, and celebratory drinking are all forms of unhealthy and dangerous activities that college-aged youth are participating in while under the influence of alcohol. These activities can be harmful and deadly under any

circumstances. The young adults who partake in these activities are providing an opportunity to put themselves and others at risk of getting seriously hurt or injured.

Participating in these types of activities are not only reckless but they can be habit forming and can lead to a dangerous lifestyle. As previously stated, drinking alcohol is part of a young adults experience of maturing; however, many young adults whether they are in college or not are picking up and participating in unhealthy and reckless activities while drinking alcohol. It is very important that a program be created and implemented to help educate young adults on the skills needed to demonstrate responsibility and moderation with alcohol.

#### Definition of the Problem

The problem is that young adults are not being properly educated and prepared to consume alcohol. As a result of the lack of training and education, young adults are prone to develop unhealthy habits with alcohol usage. Without proper education on alcohol consumption, young adults are also prone to peer pressure to engage in unhealthy practices with alcohol. The result of these unhealthy habits can form into deadly consequences such as alcoholism, acts of violence, driving under the influence, and even death.

Providing a program that will help educate young adults about alcohol will help them make educated decisions and choices about alcohol (Hingson, 2010). In addition to better decision-making, the participants of the program will also serve as an example of proper alcohol demeanor and usage to their peers, which would help promote a change in culture of socially accepted ways to act with alcohol.

### Major Stakeholders

There are several stakeholders. The stakeholders are divided into four parts. Those parts include those that can mandate change, those that can implement the mandated changes, program participants, and residents of California.

The first part of stakeholders is those that can mandate change. Legislators are stakeholders because they can mandate the creation of this program for licensing to purchase and consume alcohol. This study is for the state of California so state legislators would be included in this part of stakeholders. California voters are also included in this part of stakeholders because they are able to vote for the change in laws that would allow the participation of young adults in the proposed program.

The second group of stakeholders includes those that can implement the mandated changes. This part of stakeholders would include the proposed program officials and administrators. In addition to the proposed program's administrators, program staff will also be included in this part of stakeholders. The administration will be able to implement the mandated changes in the program and direct the staff to carry out the changes while teaching the curriculum to the participants.

The third group of stakeholders is the participants of the proposed program. This is the most important stakeholder group because the participants are the recipients of the information and will be the ones who will spread the information among their peers. The proposed program will directly affect the participants, as they are the target audience.

Finally, the fourth group of stakeholders is the residents of California. The creation of this proposed program will affect the residents of California because they are subject to dealing with the outcomes of the decisions made from participants. The

decisions that participants make can change the lives of the fellow Californian residents because if the participant decides to commit a crime or act of violence while under the influence of alcohol then it would be the residents of California that would suffer as a result (i.e. drunk driving).

### Goals

There are three goals in order to provide a program for young adults aged 18-20 to become educated and licensed to purchase and consume alcohol. The first goal is to educate participants on alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences (AARC). The second goal is to have participants demonstrate AARC. The third and final goal is to create a change in culture of alcohol in California.

### Objectives

There are eight major objectives in order to provide a program for young adults aged 18-20 to become educated and licensed to purchase and consume alcohol. The first objective is to create curriculum that covers AARC. The second objective is to acquire office space to hold program meetings. The third objective is to assign staff to teach the curriculum to participants. The fourth objective is to incorporate professionals from the community (i.e. doctors, police, firefighters, professors, etc.) as well as family members of victims of alcohol misuse. The fifth objective is to test participants on the curriculum to demonstrate their knowledge on AARC. The sixth objective is to provide participants who have successfully completed the course and can demonstrate AARC with a license to purchase and consume alcohol. The seventh objective is to register all license holders with the California Department of Justice. The eighth objective is to double the number of participants within 10 years.

### Measures of Effectiveness

To measure if the program is successful, effectiveness, competence, and recidivism will be used. The success of the program will be measured on the effectiveness of completion of goals and objectives. This will be done after 10 years of the initial start of the program. The goals and objectives will be reviewed to see if they were successfully completed or achieved in the 10-year span.

The level of competence will be measured by how many participants successfully attained license to purchase and consume alcohol. The attainment of license should symbolize the successful completion of the program with the knowledge to successfully attain the license demonstrating that they are competent of alcohol AARC.

The rate of improvement in the rates of alcohol related crimes would be measured after 10 years of the initial start of the program. The successes of this program will be measured by the presence of a decrease in alcohol related crimes, which include acts of violence, driving under the influence, and auto accidents/deaths. A comparison of data obtained on the participants and a matched control group of non-participants in the same age group will be implemented to assess if the proposed program has an impact over and above any changes that might affect all 18 to 20 year olds.

In addition to the monitoring of rates of alcohol related crimes, participants will also be monitored to see if after completing the program and attaining the license, if they too commit crimes while under the influence of alcohol.

### Potential Solutions

There are a couple of potential solutions. One solution is to have better monitoring and enforcement of current minimum legal drinking age laws. The second

potential solution would be to have parents actively participate in educating teens about alcohol and the values of AARC. This could help to prepare teens to make better choices with alcohol when they become adults. The third potential solution could be to make the consequences stricter for alcohol related crimes in California. This could serve as a deterrent of alcohol misuse.

## **Chapter III: Program proposal**

### Theory Behind the Program

Albert Bandera's Social Learning Theory (as cited by Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2011) provides a theoretical strategy behind this program. The proposed program will base its teaching and practices on four key aspects of the social learning theory:

Attention – Participants will be taught curriculum from trained staff, hear presentations from professionals from the community (doctors, police, professors, etc.), and see and hear stories from family members of victims of alcohol related crimes. Participants will be able to read, hear, and see the realities of alcohol usage during this program.

Retention – Participants will be tested weekly on the materials covered as well as take a test at the successful completion of the program to demonstrate their retention of the information covered throughout the program.

Reproduction – Program curriculum will cover ways to be responsible with alcohol rather than being based on abstinence. Upon completion of the program, participants should be able to successfully demonstrate knowledge and application of responsible behavior associated with alcohol. Participants can then model said responsible behaviors and knowledge to their peers helping to create a culture of change.

Motivation – The participants of the program will knowingly be motivated at the attainment of license to purchase and drink alcohol legally prior to age 21.

However, the goal of the program is to motivate them to be responsible when consuming alcohol.

The choice of applying the social learning theory as a theoretical strategy to build the proposed programs teachings is made in part due to the fact that other strategies have failed in other drinking education programs. Hanson (2007) examined the effectiveness of the Drug Abuse Resistance Program (D.A.R.E.) which used abstinence theory as the main strategy to reduce the use of drugs and alcohol. The author further explained that by applying abstinence strategy may have actually been counteractive and pushed participants to try drugs and alcohol because of the forbidden allure of them.

The proposed program is not abstinence based; rather, it is socially based as it allows participants to not only receive the information given to them it also allows them to apply it in their own lives. The information that participants will receive will not discourage drinking all together; rather, it will educate them on the risks associated with reckless drinking. The proposed program understands that abstinence education is not entirely effective based previous programs like D.A.R.E. and would like to try an alternative approach based on the the four previously key aspects of Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

#### Program Overview

The program will need funding, materials, trained staff, professionals from the community, and family members of victims of alcohol related crimes to be successful. Participants of the program will voluntarily sign up for this program, as it is not a mandatory program for all 18-20 year olds. Participants will be required to pay to participate in the program. Participants will be taught the same curriculum at all sites by a

trained staff on the subject of alcohol AARC (Awareness, Accountability, Responsibility, and Consequences). AARC serves as the core values and guidelines of the program.

Upon successful completion of a ten-week 40-hour course, the participants will be able to take a rigorous test on the subject of alcohol to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of alcohol AARC. Participants would then be given a license, which would allow them to purchase and consume alcohol publicly in the state of California.

A key aspect of the program will be that every license recipient must register with the local authorities and the California Department of Justice and have it permanently recorded. If said license holder is ever convicted of a crime while under the influence of alcohol, then they would be subject to stricter penalties and consequences. The rationale is that the license holder should have known better.

#### Funding

California state taxpayers will not fund the program. The funding will come directly from the alcohol industry. California State legislators will need to amend the California Alcoholic Beverage Tax Program with the California Board of Equalization. The California Alcoholic Beverage Tax Program is a per-gallon excise tax collected on the sale, distribution, or importation of alcoholic beverages in California. Revenues from the tax are deposited into the Alcohol Beverage Control Fund and are withdrawn for use by the State's General Fund or used to pay refunds under this program (State Board of Equalization, 2010). All beer, wine, and distilled spirits will be subject to an additional two percent sales tax that will be implemented at the point of sale. The sales tax will be paid directly from the profits of all alcohol manufactures, wine growers, importers, wholesaler, and distillers who sell their product in the state of California.

However, there will not be any type of public sponsorship from the alcohol companies. For example, “This program is brought to you by Coors.” The program will essentially be helping to create potential consumers of the alcohol products so there is no need to apply public sponsorship, it would be excessive.

### Budget and Personnel

Personnel would need to be separated into two categories: Central Headquarters Staff and On-Site Staff.

#### Central Headquarters Staff

Central Headquarters would be ideally located in Sacramento where it can be close to the state capitol and the state legislators. Being located in close proximity to the state capitol would keep the program on track with current alcohol beverage legislation. Personnel would consist of administrative personnel, board of directors, and support staff. Administrators would be selected from professionals around the nation. The administrators would have to have demonstrated that they are driven to create and apply the values of alcohol AARC (Awareness, Accountability, Responsibility, and Consequences). The board of directors would represent professionals who are aware of alcohol misuse this would include medical professionals, counselors, police officers, professors, and so forth. Support staff would include office assistants, media relation’s staff, on-site consultants, legal advice staff, and various other office staff. The proposed annual budget for the Central Headquarters would be approximately \$10 million. The \$10 million would include paid salaries for all staff, office materials and equipment, utility bills, office lease, and any other expenditures associated with the operation of the program.

### On-Site Staff

On-site staff consists of a program manager, support staff, clerical staff, teaching staff, and volunteers. Every site will have the same staff assigned to each location. Program managers would oversee daily operations of the on-site program. Program managers will be in charge of making sure that the program is being run properly and in accordance to the regulations given by the Central Headquarters. Operations will be the same from site to site to maintain consistency. Support staff would include office assistants, media relation's staff, and various other office staff. Support staff would be in charge of implementing orders given by the program manager, which would include correlating with local organizations to raise awareness of the program. Teaching staff would have to pass accreditation to teach the class. Such accreditation would come from the Californian Board of Education. Teaching staff will be in charge of implementing the approved curriculum and materials to participants. Teaching staff will also be in charge of monitoring the progress of the participants, grading of course work, and overseeing the daily activities conducted at the program sites across the state of California. Teaching staff will also be in charge of making final recommendations for licensing for participants who have successfully completed the program with a grade of 80 percent or higher. Teaching staff will also be in charge of guiding participants through the program.

In addition to the paid staff, volunteers from the community will also be vital to the success of the program. Volunteers would include members of the local police/sheriffs, fire fighters, paramedics, professors, counselors, as well as family members of victims of alcohol related crimes. The listed volunteer types would represent

different facets of the big picture pertaining to alcohol usage and misuse. Proposed total annual budget for On-Site Staff salaries would be approximately \$750,000.

#### Resources and Materials

Materials needed for the success of this program would include the acquisition of office space or facilities to conduct the program at. In addition to a facility to conduct the program, equipment would also be needed to be purchased. Computers, projectors, curriculum materials, manuals, pamphlets, and writing utensils will be needed to successfully run the program as well. Proposed total annual budget for On-Site resources, materials, and expenditures would be approximately \$100,000.

#### Activities for Participants

Participants will be subject to activities that are found in typical collegiate classrooms. Activities would include lectures, group activities, homework assignments, presentations, guest speakers, and the writing of a research paper. The curriculum taught to the participants will follow the AARC guidelines. In addition to class room activities will also be required to log 20 hours of unpaid volunteering with an organization or events that can be associated with alcohol usage. For example, participants could volunteer at local chapters of Alcohol Anonymous meetings or homeless shelters where people have fallen victim to alcoholism.

#### Implementation

The operation of the program will be the same at every site in California. The participants will receive the same materials, assignments, and requirements to successfully complete the program. Participants would also need to successfully

demonstrate that they understand the material and all the AARC guidelines by taking a weekly test on the materials covered.

Teaching staff will test participants weekly on all material covered as well as all the presentations conducted during the week. Said staff would also be in charge of implementing a required research paper from all participants on the subject of AARC. The research paper should demonstrate that the participants have a full grasp of the AARC values and guidelines. Teaching staff will also be responsible for contacting and scheduling members of the community to come in and speak to the participants about the realities of alcohol use and misuse. For example, a police officer can talk about the legal ramifications of alcohol misuse as well as present pictures or footage of alcohol related crimes and accidents. Teaching staff will also be responsible for contacting and scheduling family members of victims of alcohol related crimes and accidents to speak to the participants about the realities of alcohol use and misuse.

At the end of the program participants who have a cumulative grade of 80 percent or higher on all course work and materials will be able to take a test to acquire a license to purchase and consume alcohol. If participants are given a license, they will be required to register with the California Department of Justice and local authorities as a license holder which subjects them to stricter penalties and consequences if they commit a crime while under the influence of alcohol.

## **Chapter IV: Alternative Selection**

An educational program is very important for young adults to learn alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences. There is reason to believe that the proposed program will be more successful than the current status quo, at lowering the occurrence of the reckless activities that young adults participate in while drinking.

The proposed program will submit monthly and annual reports and evaluations to monitor the progress of the program. There are some limitations and spillovers associated with the proposed program.

### Criteria for Recommending Alternatives

The criteria for recommendation of alternatives will be based on efficiency, effectiveness, and feasibility. Efficiency of the program will be measured by how long it takes to reach its goals and objectives. The efficiency of this program will be measured by how long it takes for the goals and objectives to be achieved. The goals and objectives must be achieved within ten years of the start of the program. Ten years shall pass from the initial beginning of the program to measure the completeness of the goals and objectives.

Effectiveness of the program will be measured after ten years. Data will be collected from the beginning of the program and throughout the ten years. Data should suggest that the program is impacting the numbers of alcohol related crimes and accidents. A presence of a decrease in the rates should be sufficient to justify the success of the program. However, the challenge would be in proving that the program is the main cause for a decrease in rates.

Feasibility of the program will be measured by how well it can be passed by California voters into legislation. The ability to pass, develop, and administer the proposed program will help to determine if the program is more feasible than the status quo.

#### Comparison to Status Quo

Hingston (2010) provides a complete record of programs that have been researched with similar goals and objectives as the proposed program. Since there are currently no other programs that completely mirror the proposed program, the programs that Hingston mentions will be referred as the status quo.

#### Individual-Level Interventions

Hingston (2010) explains that individual level interventions such as counseling and motivational techniques can be effective at lowering or minimizing the quantity and frequency of alcohol consumed by college students. However, the author noted that individual level interventions are only successful if the individual is motivated to practice positive drinking habits or techniques. If the individual does not maintain their motivation then individual level interventions will not succeed.

The proposed program understands that the participants need a means for motivation. The proposed program has addressed this need by providing a license to those who successfully complete the program and pass the test to demonstrate their knowledge of alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences.

#### Normative Re-education Interventions

Hingston (2010) points to research that suggest that students overestimate the amount of alcohol consumed by fellow students. This belief has created a false “norm”

among college students, which provides a rationale for them to drink higher quantities of alcohol to maintain the “norm.” Normative re-education interventions are what educators are doing to erase the fallacious ideals that students hold. Educators and researchers work to present the facts and actual statistics to students to show them that their peers are actually consuming lower amounts of alcohol than the false “norm.”

The proposed program’s curriculum and teachings focus on properly educating participants about the realities of alcohol consumption. The proposed program focuses on erasing the misconceptions of the false levels of alcohol consumption among college age adults.

#### Parent Initiatives

Hingston (2010) investigated research that noted the success of programs that included parental involvement. Parents were given informative materials which they could go over and educate their teens about the risks and consequences of drinking. The author noted that the researchers reported that teenagers who received information from their parent from the educative materials were less likely to partake in reckless drinking activities than their peers, who did not receive information from their parents. The proposed program does not have a parental involvement component however, the proposed program does take into consideration that the materials that will be given to participants can be shared with others essentially spreading the information socially. The spread of information can be used by parents for the next generation of teens.

#### Zero-Tolerance Laws

Finally, Hingston (2010) notes that the current zero-tolerance laws are ineffective. The current MLDA 21 laws are a form of zero-tolerance laws. The current laws have

failed to stop activities like binge drinking, DUI's, and other acts of recklessness among college age adults. The main reason for failure is the lack of enforcement on college campuses and in communities across the nation. In order for the laws to be completely effective there needs to be strict enforcement of the laws.

The proposed program is an alternative to the current laws. The proposed program provides an opportunity to educate its participants as well as give them an opportunity to be responsible drinkers. By having license recipients register with the California State Department of Justice and local enforcement agencies the proposed program is helping to ensure that the participants will follow the laws. A failure to adhere to the laws while under the influence of alcohol will subject participants to stricter consequences and penalties than their non-license holder peers.

When comparing the proposed program with the status quo with the criteria of efficiency the proposed program can get the results without wasted time. The proposed program will target young adults. The young adults will be given the opportunity to participate in the proposed program, which will immediately start educating the participants about alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences. Therefore, by being enrolled into the proposed program time will not be wasted. Whereas, the status quo has not been able to successfully educate young adults about alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences.

When comparing the proposed program to the status quo with the criteria of effectiveness the proposed program can successfully achieve the desired results. The focus of the proposed program is to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities like binge drinking, DUI's, and celebratory drinking by targeting the population who

participate in said activities the most. The proposed program can achieve the desired results because it will target young adults and educate them on alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences. The proposed program will also allow participants to model the techniques learned from the program and apply them while among their peers helping to create change in the culture. The current status quo has failed to be effective.

The ability to pass, develop, and administer the proposed program is feasibility. Essentially, the process of this program would begin with legislators proposing the program to the citizens of California for public voting. If the program is voted into legislation; then, the current laws in California could be amended to allow the implementation of the proposed program. Once public understands the severity of alcohol misuse among college age adults, there is little doubt that voters would vote to begin the proposed program in California. There is a need for this program in every state because 1 in 8 college students meet Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM, IV) alcohol dependence or abuse criteria (Hingson, 2010).

#### Monitoring and Evaluating

Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) provide the ideal methods of monitoring and evaluating the progress of the proposed program. The proposed program will be using a combination of Program Process Monitoring, and Program Process Evaluation, and Outcome Monitoring

#### Program Process Monitoring

The proposed program will systematically document the key aspects of the programs performance. This process will observe the outcomes and process of the

program to help determine whether the program is functioning as intended. On-site program managers would be in charge of reporting this information to the program Central Headquarters.

#### Program Process Evaluation

The proposed program will continuously ask key questions to determine if the program is reaching the target population as well as maintain effectiveness. Sample questions would include: Is the program reaching the target population? Are participants receiving quality services? Is the program well organized? Is the program message being clearly understood by participants? Are former participants abiding by the laws?

On-site program managers will conduct the evaluations monthly as well as annually. The purpose of the evaluation is to ensure that the program is being effective and reaching the target population. The evaluations also allow for program growth and success.

#### Outcome Monitoring

Program growth and success will be measured through outcome monitoring. An initial status will be reported prior to the beginning of the proposed program. The statistics reported would include rates of binge drinking, DUI's, auto-accidents, and all other acts of recklessness involving alcohol in the target population (18-24 year olds). Outcomes will be reassessed annually over the course of 5 years. This would allow program managers as well as researchers to observe the outcome statistics before, during, and after the program.

### Limitation and Spillovers

The main limitation of the research is that there is not a program like the proposed program to compare to. All other programs that are established and pertaining to alcohol usage tend to be available to those who are battling a problem with misuse or dependency like Alcohol Anonymous. Programs that are in existence tend to be only because of misuses and dependency, which this research was trying to avoid all together. This research is trying to propose a program that limit or stop these reckless drinking activities before they become habitual or deadly.

A foreseeable limitation for this proposed program would be public opinion. It would be hard for legislators to recommend the creation of the program because it would be assumed that the program would be only a way for young adults to drink at a younger age. The proposed program is similar to the courses that you take to learn how to drive. You take the course to learn about how to properly control and automobile and how to function on the roads not only for your safety but also for the safety of others. The program will help to prepare young adults make healthy decisions when drinking situations arise. The program will help to educate the participants for their safety and safety of others.

There are some anticipated spillovers. The most prominent would be the public responses to those who have passed the program and obtained a license yet still partake in a reckless activity like DUI's. The general community needs to know that no matter how stiff the penalties in the penal system people will still break the laws. That is true for every law in legislation. There will always be people who break the laws and it is already assumed that there will be a participant who would pass the program and obtain a license

and commit a crime while under the influence of alcohol. Having the participants register with the California Department of Justice and local law enforcement agencies will help to lower the occurrence of misuse of the license.

A positive spillover would be that other states see that the proposed program does in fact work and then create a program similar like the proposed program in their states. This would be great because not only are participants demonstrating responsibility with alcohol they are also proactively working to lower the rate of alcohol related accidents and death caused by reckless drinking.

There are currently no other programs like the proposed program in existence that educate participants and provide a legal license to drink alcohol. However, this proposed program might be what is needed to help lower the rates of accidents or deaths due to reckless drinking. Moreover, this proposed program should help to lower the occurrences of binge drinking and celebratory drinking in California, which can lead to other worse accidents or unintended deaths. Even with limitations and spillovers, the proposed program can be successful in achieving the goal of breaking the cycle of reckless drinking activities and habits by young adults.

## **Chapter V: Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendation**

The proposed program might be successful in lowering the rates of binge drinking, DUI's, auto accidents, death, and other reckless activities due to alcohol. There is a need for this program because the current laws are not working more importantly legislators' needs to start to seriously discuss alternatives to the current laws and the proposed program is ideal.

### Summary

The proposed program can be a success if implemented. The proposed program can help educate young adults about alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences. In addition to the education that the young adults will receive they will be given an opportunity to demonstrate responsibility. College age adults (18-24) seek ways to demonstrate their maturity and the proposed program provides an opportunity to show that they can be responsible. Peers of the program participants can mirror the behavior of the program participants essentially spreading the positive habits and techniques socially helping to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and create a change in drinking habits among young adults.

Overall, the program is based on social learning theory, which teaches young adults to learn through modeling and also being able to model for their age group peers. The program will allow participants to demonstrate positive drinking habits among their peers essentially creating an opportunity for their peers to learn the same positive drinking habits that participants learned through the program. The new positive behavior learned can help to lower the overall rates of reckless drinking activities in the end.

### Conclusion

Creating a program that targets young adults and alcohol usage is a worthy alternative to the current status quo. The proposed program will not only provide an opportunity to educate participants about alcohol awareness, accountability, responsibility, and consequences, it provides an opportunity for participants to have the skills needed to make healthy decisions pertaining to drinking alcohol. In addition to the gained knowledge, participants will also be able to demonstrate that they are responsible with the license they would obtain after successfully completing the program. Subjecting license holders to stricter penalties and consequences helps to control misuse of the awarded license. College-aged adults seek ways to demonstrate their maturity because they are no longer children and the proposed program allows them to demonstrate their maturity and responsibility.

In addition to the seeking of ways to demonstrate maturity, young adults are very social in nature and participants have the opportunity to model positive habits to their peers and influence the drinking habits of their social circles. Change begets change, which essentially means that positive behavior, and habits can spread among peers socially and have an impact on the rates of reckless drinking habits and activities.

Overall, the program will attempt to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and crimes, which include binge drinking, DUI's, auto accidents, acts of violence, and even death. The teachings of the program will be filled with facts and reality based teachings. The program will not promote abstinence because to assume that young adults will be completely abstinent of alcohol is not rational. Rather, the program will help

participants learn how to make positive decisions when put into a situation when they are socially pressured to drink.

In addition to the curriculum, the program allows local professionals to present the harsh realities of misuse of alcohol from different perspectives that will allow the participants to come to a realization of the consequences of alcohol misuse. Awarding licenses to participants who have successfully completed the program will allow them to demonstrate their gained knowledge and model the positive habits among their peers essentially spreading positive drinking habits that will help to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and deaths.

#### Recommendations

The minimum legal drinking age laws are not entirely effective to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and habits. The proposed program will provide support to the current laws by providing an alternative method to combat the rates and cycle of bad drinking habits. By targeting young adults with reality-based education and awarding them a license to demonstrate their ability to apply the skills and techniques learned provide a perfect opportunity lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and habits. The proposed program allows participants to take the knowledge and skills learned in the program and spread it socially among their peers through modeling, which will help lower reckless drinking habits.

There are some recommendations to improve the proposed program. Five years after the implementation of the proposed program researcher should evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed program and determine if other states should implement a similar program within their state borders. If there were endless funds available, the

proposed program would be taught in every city in California so all young adults will have access to the program. Another recommendation would be to target seniors in high school with information promoting the enrollment of the program once they become 18 years old and graduate high school. This would ensure that higher number of young adults would participate in the program and learning proper drinking habits, which would lead to a higher population who can successfully demonstrate responsibility and maturity with alcohol. The higher population of participants would ensure that more young adults would learn to model better drinking habits creating a pressure to lower the rates of reckless drinking habits.

The implementation of the proposed program will allow legislators and researchers determine an alternative to the current drinking laws. It provides the opportunity to lower the rates of reckless drinking activities and habits that could prove dangerous to communities in California and across the nation. This program provides a much-needed solution to the current rates and activities of reckless drinking and would be certainly recommended for implementation in the state of California.

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## Appendix A



**CSU Bakersfield**

Academic Affairs

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Research Ethics Review Coordinator  
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**Date:** 13 April 2011

**To:** Steven R. Varela, PPA Student

**cc:** Paul Newberry, IRB Chair  
R. Steven Daniels, Public Policy & Administration

**From:** Steve Suter, Research Ethics Review Coordinator

**Subject: Protocol 11-75: Not Human Subjects Research**

Thank you for bringing your protocol, "**California Drinking License [Program Proposal]**" to the attention of the IRB/HSR. On the form "*Is My Project Human Subjects Research?*" you indicated the following:

I want to interview, survey, systematically observe, or collect other data from human subjects, for example, students in the educational setting. **NO**

I want to access data about specific persons that have already been collected by others [such as test scores or demographic information]. Those data can be linked to specific persons [regardless of whether I will link data and persons in my research or reveal anyone's identities]. **NO**

Given this, your proposed project will not constitute human subjects research. Therefore, it does not fall within the purview of the CSUB IRB/HSR. Good luck with your project.

If you have any questions, or there are any changes that might bring these activities within the purview of the IRB/HSR, please notify me immediately at 654-2373. Thank you.

Steve Suter, University Research Ethics Review Coordinator