Alcohol Awareness: An Orientation
Alcohol Facts

• The most commonly used addictive substance in the U.S.
  o 17.6 million people (1 in 12 adults) suffer from alcohol use disorders or dependence
  o Millions more engage in risky binge drinking patterns that could lead to alcohol problems

• Alcoholism is the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the nation
Alcohol Facts

• Up to 40% of U.S. hospital beds used to treat alcohol-related health conditions
• Can damage emotional stability, finances, career, and personal relationships
• Underage use is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined
Alcohol’s Effect

• Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant

• Rapidly absorbed and circulated throughout the body, including the brain

• “Getting drunk” results from drinking more alcohol than the body can break down
Alcohol’s Effect

• Factors affecting how people react to alcohol
  ○ Age, gender, race or ethnicity
  ○ Physical condition (weight, fitness level)
  ○ Amount of food eaten before drinking alcohol
  ○ How quickly alcohol is consumed
  ○ Use of other drugs
  ○ Family history of alcohol problems
Alcohol-Related Problems

- Dementia, stroke and neuropathy
- Cardiovascular problems, including hypertension
- Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety and suicide
- Social problems, including unemployment, family problems, child maltreatment, fights and homicide
Alcohol-Related Problems

• Unintentional accidents and injuries
• Increased risk for many kinds of cancer
• Liver diseases, including cirrhosis
• Gastrointestinal problems, including pancreatitis and gastritis
• Alcohol abuse or dependence – alcoholism
Understanding Alcohol Intake

• A standard alcohol drink contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol (0.6 ounces)
  o 12 ounces beer or cooler
  o 8 ounces malt liquor
  o 5 ounces of wine
  o 1.5 ounces or “shot” of distilled spirits

• What matters is the amount of alcohol consumed, not the type of alcoholic drink
Alcohol Intoxication is Dangerous

- Impaired brain function results in loss of balance, coordination and motor skills, poor judgment, reduced reaction time
- Causes dilation of blood vessels resulting in rapid loss of body heat
- Damage to a developing fetus if consumed by a pregnant women
- Increased risk of disease and other injuries
Dangers of Binge Drinking

• Drinkers who mix alcohol with energy drinks are three times more likely to binge drink

• One in six adults binge drinks four times a month

• More common among young adults 18–34, but drinkers aged 65+ bring drink more often

• More common among those with household incomes of $75,000 or more
Dangers of Binge Drinking

• 92% of U.S. adults who drink excessively report binge drinking

• 70% of binge drinking episodes involve adults age 26 years and older

• Men are twice as likely as women to binge drink

• Binge drinkers are 14 times more likely to report alcohol-impaired driving
Dangers of Binge Drinking

• 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under age 21 is in the form of binge drinking

• More than half of the alcohol consumed by adults is in the form of binge drinking
What Can Parents Do?

• Call other parents to ensure social events are alcohol-free and chaperoned by responsible adults
• Refuse to supply alcohol to anyone under 21
• Lock up your alcoholic beverages
• Make sure alcohol is not brought onto your property by your teen’s friends
• Report underage drinking
People Who Should Not Drink

• Children and adolescents under 21
• Anyone who cannot limit their drinking
• Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant
• Individuals who plan to drive a car, operate machinery, etc.
• Those taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol
People Who Should Not Drink

• Individuals with certain medical conditions
• Persons recovering from alcoholism
Understanding Alcoholism

• Alcoholism is a brain disease

• Like many other diseases, like diabetes and hypertension, it is chronic and lasts a lifetime

• Has symptoms and usually follows a predictable course

• Relapse is not unusual

• Cannot be cured at this time
Understanding Alcoholism

• The alcoholic is frequently in the grip of a powerful craving for alcohol

• Most alcoholics can't just stop drinking through "willpower"

• Most alcoholics need support and treatment to recover from their disease
Symptoms of Alcoholism

• Craving – a strong need, or urge, to drink
• Loss of control – being unable to stop drinking once drinking has begun
• Physical dependence – withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness and anxiety after stopping drinking
• Tolerance – the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high"
Recovery from Alcoholism

- Recovery from substance dependence is a voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterized by sobriety, personal health, and citizenship (Betty Ford Institute)

- Recovery from alcohol and drug problems is a process of change through which an individual achieves abstinence and improved health, wellness and quality of life (SAMHSA)
Guiding Principles of Recovery

• There are many pathways to recovery
• Recovery is self-directed and empowering
• It involves a personal recognition of the need for change and transformation
• Recovery is holistic
• Recovery has cultural dimensions
• It exists on a continuum of improved health and wellness
Guiding Principles of Recovery

• Recovery is supported by peers and allies
• Recovery emerges from hope and gratitude
• It involves a process of healing and self-redefinition
• Recovery involves addressing discrimination and transcending shame and stigma
• It involves (re)joining and (re)building a life in the community
• Recovery is a reality – it can, will and does happen!