

For more copies or additional information, contact:

Maine Office of Substance Abuse
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Information and Resource Center
159 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
Ph: 1-800-499-0027 or 207-287-8900
TTY: 1-800-215-7604 or 207-287-4475
Email: osa.ircosa@maine.gov
Web: www.maineosa.org

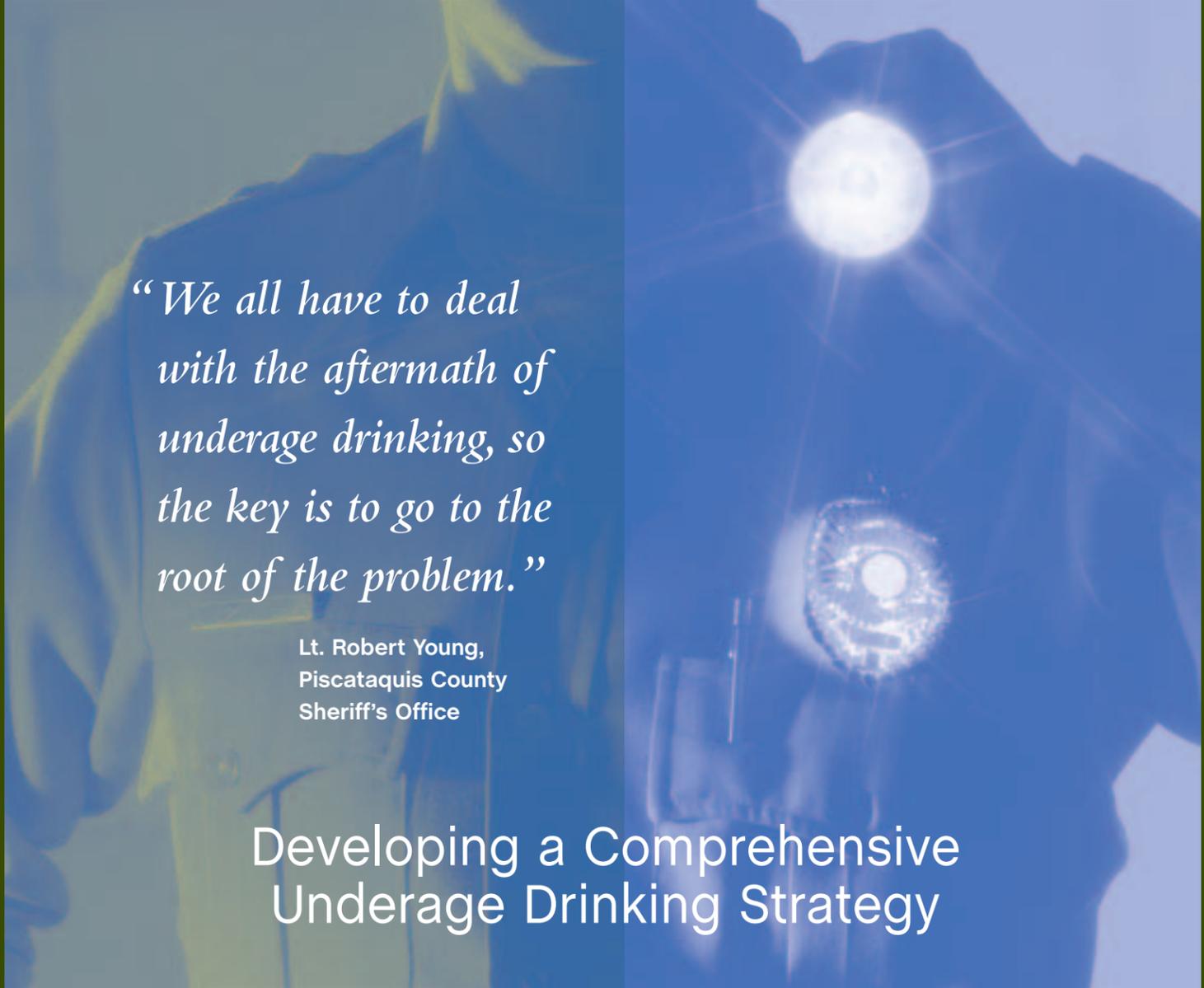
Printed: February 2005

In accordance with federal and state laws, the Maine Office of Substance Abuse (DHHS) does not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, color, creed, gender, age, or national origin in admission or access to treatment, services, or employment in its programs and activities.

This information is available in alternate formats upon request.

Funding for the Rural Underage Drinking Enforcement Project in Piscataquis County, as well as for the development and printing of this document was provided by a grant from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Program.

Credits:
MYDAUS Survey and Quantitative Research: Pan Atlantic Consultants
Brochure Design: Cheri Bryant Design



“We all have to deal with the aftermath of underage drinking, so the key is to go to the root of the problem.”

Lt. Robert Young,
Piscataquis County
Sheriff's Office

Developing a Comprehensive Underage Drinking Strategy



A Story of Proactive Enforcement and Extraordinary Success



Report Commissioned by the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, January 2005

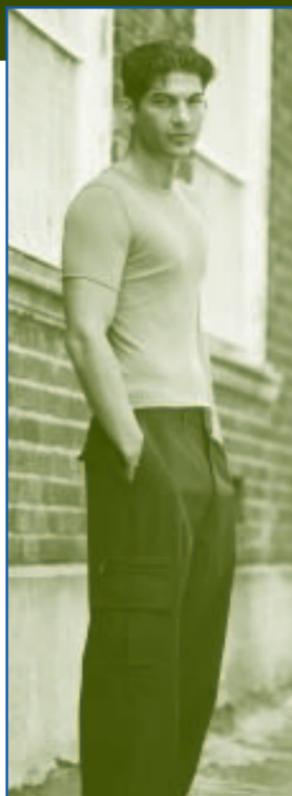
Introduction: A Recipe for Success

The most impressive results of law enforcement occur when the source of a problem can be identified and stopped before it has a chance to spread.

This brochure is a case study of a recent Maine success story in which a strategic law enforcement approach accomplished positive outcomes.

CONTENTS:

1. The Problem: We All Have to Deal with the Aftermath
2. The Solution: Designed By Law Enforcement, For Law Enforcement
3. Results: Evidence of Success in Piscataquis County
4. How You Can Achieve Success in Your Area



It provides the background, program design and results achieved when the Piscataquis County Sheriff's office implemented a comprehensive underage drinking enforcement strategy. As of January 2005, this initiative has been in place for more than two years and has seen a reduction not just in underage drinking, but in a wide range of crimes and high-risk behaviors.

The best news is that the recipe for Piscataquis County's successful approach is affordable and straightforward. The plan that achieved this success is within the reach of every law enforcement agency in Maine, and there is support available for those ready to tackle the problem of underage drinking in a way that has been demonstrated to work.

1.

The Problem: We All Have to Deal with the Aftermath

The consequences of underage drinking have been well documented across the United States. In Maine, we have been working to strengthen the collaborative relationships between prevention and enforcement because we know that the effort invested in keeping kids from using alcohol will pay off in many ways.

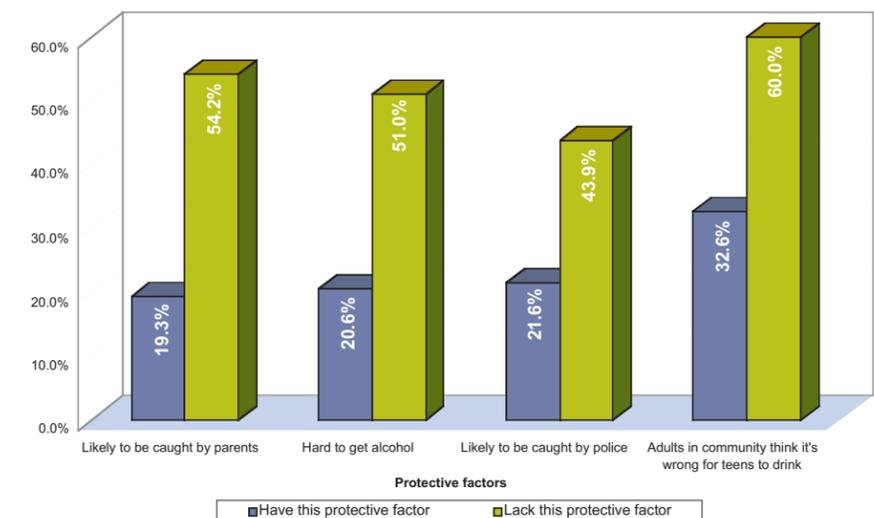
Since the early 1990s, the Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) has tracked substance use among Maine middle and high school students, along with the associated risk and protective factors that influence decisions to use or not to use. The data reveals a significant and far-reaching problem. Consider the facts:

- Alcohol is the leading drug of choice among Maine teens. In 2004, 14% of 6-8th graders and 42% of 9-12th graders reported using alcohol at least once in the past 30 days.
- Some youth drink in very high risk patterns. For instance, 29% of 12th graders reported binge drinking (5+ drinks in a row) at least once in the past 2 weeks.

In addition, the MYDAUS data can help point out potential areas where communities can take action to reduce underage drinking.

Changing perceptions can directly reduce teen drinking: Teens who think they may be caught by their parents or police are much less likely to drink than those who don't think they'll be caught. Additionally, teens who don't receive a clear message from adults in their community (that underage drinking is wrong) are twice as likely to drink as those who do. The Piscataquis County solution was designed to increase these protective factors among their young people.

% of Students, With and Without Specific Protective Factors, Who Used Alcohol During the Past 30 Days (MYDAUS 2004)



2.

The Solution: Designed By Law Enforcement, For Law Enforcement

The Piscataquis County solution was based on research about Maine’s underage drinking problem. The Piscataquis County Sheriff’s Office joined four other Maine Sheriffs in partnering with the Office of Substance Abuse on an underage drinking grant project, funded by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

“When we call parents to the scene, they’re surprised by what they see. It’s not what they expect, and it’s not what they remember from growing up.”

Lt. Robert Young, Piscataquis County Sheriff’s Office

In addition to working with the Office of Substance Abuse to understand the complexities of the problem statewide, a Piscataquis County task force was established to examine the problem in more detail locally. The task force was led by the Sheriff’s Office and included all four municipal police chiefs in the county, the Warden Service and Rangers from local wilderness areas and state parks, juvenile and adult probation officers, the District Attorney’s Office, and school officials. The task force also analyzed existing strategies, barriers, challenges, and successes; gaps were identified, and creative solutions were designed.

The strategy designed by the Sheriff’s Office and the Task Force consisted of four main components:

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF A WRITTEN DEPARTMENT POLICY ON UNDERAGE DRINKING

A new written policy laid out clear expectations for officers, including:

- Investigate underage drinking complaints as crimes, including aggressive action to investigate the source of the alcohol
- Treat all underage drinking incidents consistently
- Call parents whenever juveniles are involved
- Write summonses whenever there is probable cause

The Sheriff made it a high priority to ensure that the policy would be implemented fully and consistently. Patrol meetings were held with the full department staff to outline the importance of addressing underage drinking. This approach ensured that everybody in the department was clear on the expectations for how underage drinking incidents would be handled. Strong leadership and clarity of expectations made it possible for supervisors to ensure that the policy was consistently followed by officers on patrol.

2. TARGETED ENFORCEMENT DETAILS

Specialized and multi-jurisdictional details were implemented including:

- Collaborations with wardens and rangers to target underage drinking spots in wilderness areas
- Home checks in tandem with the adult Probation Officer to check on probation clients suspected of hosting underage drinking parties
- Community-policing-style “Underage Drinking Patrols” in which 1 or 2 officers are on duty specifically for the purpose of checking suspected party locations, monitoring stores when appropriate, and talking with youth and community members to gather information
- Experimentation with traffic-based enforcement tactics modeled on OUI-style road-blocks, with the goal of intercepting alcohol that might be transported illegally to parties by underage drivers

3. DEVELOPMENT OF A “CALLOUT TEAM”

The Sheriff’s Office established a system for weekend nights and other targeted occasions allowing for up to 10 off-duty officers to be called out to respond to a party in progress whenever one is discovered. This practice ensures that underage drinking parties are not ignored due to a lack of sufficient on-duty staff to handle dispersal safely and effectively.

The callout team was used more frequently initially, but over time the parties appear to have become more limited, resulting in less frequent need for the callout team. Additionally, the Sheriff’s Office has observed that overtime callouts for other crimes often related to large drinking parties appear to have decreased simultaneously, indicating that the initial investment in this approach has paid off.

4. INCREASED COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS

The new department policy created an expectation that parents of every juvenile present would be called whenever an underage drinking party was discovered.

This includes calling parents of those juveniles who were not drinking, in order to raise awareness of the kinds of situations their children are in. When practical, parents are invited to the scene so that they can see first-hand why such parties are high-risk environments. When parents call with complaints of unfairness, they are invited for a meeting to discuss the issue. Any allegations of inconsistency on the part of officers are investigated fully.

The Sheriff’s Office also uses resources provided by the Office of Substance Abuse, including the Parent Media Campaign materials and an associated PowerPoint template, to develop presentations for parent groups at the local schools. The presentations emphasize the rationale for a comprehensive and aggressive focus on underage drinking, and empower parents to take steps to influence the decisions of their children.

Parental response to all of these initiatives has been overwhelmingly positive.

3.

Results: Evidence of Success in Piscataquis County

In 2004, the results of the grant project which funded the Piscataquis County initiative were independently analyzed and reported by Pan Atlantic Consultants, a Portland-based research firm that also conducts the bi-annual MYDAUS survey for the Office of Substance Abuse (OSA).

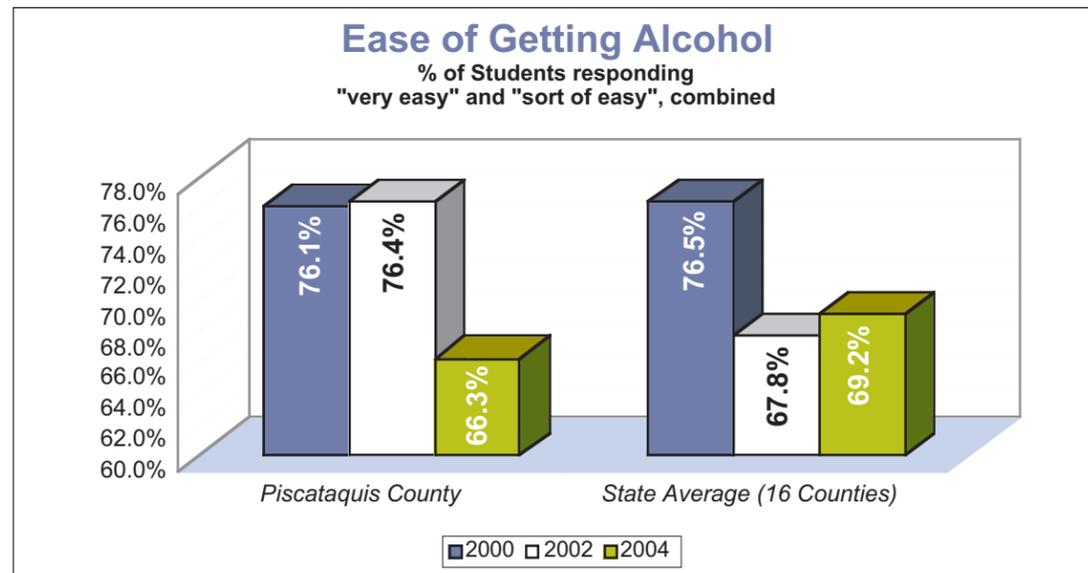
The Piscataquis County program was chosen as a model for analysis because, among the five counties working with the OSA on this underage drinking enforcement grant, the results achieved there, between 2002 and 2004, stood out as remarkable. It is important to note that there were very few if any other new prevention programs implemented in Piscataquis County during the same time-frame, and therefore the results are more directly attributable to the program efforts described in this document.

“In the past, on a Saturday morning, you knew there had been a party on Friday night by the reports of

stolen cars, fights, property damage and sexual assault. That’s where we’ve seen a significant difference.”

Lt. Robert Young, Piscataquis County Sheriff’s Office

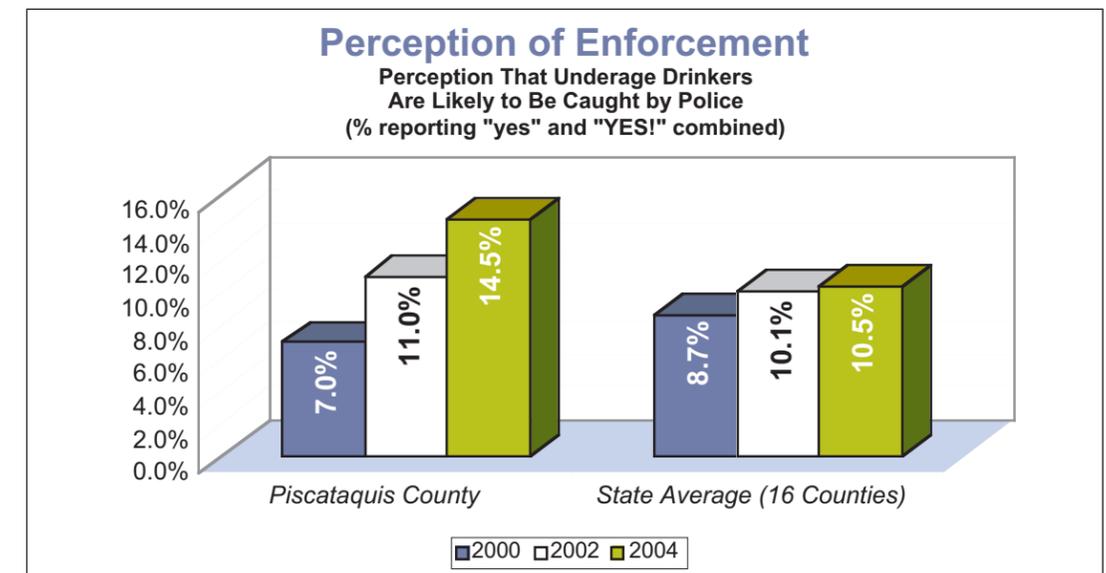
1A. INDICATORS OF CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

Since implementation began, Piscataquis County experienced a 10 percentage point drop in the proportion of high school students reporting that it is easy to get alcohol.

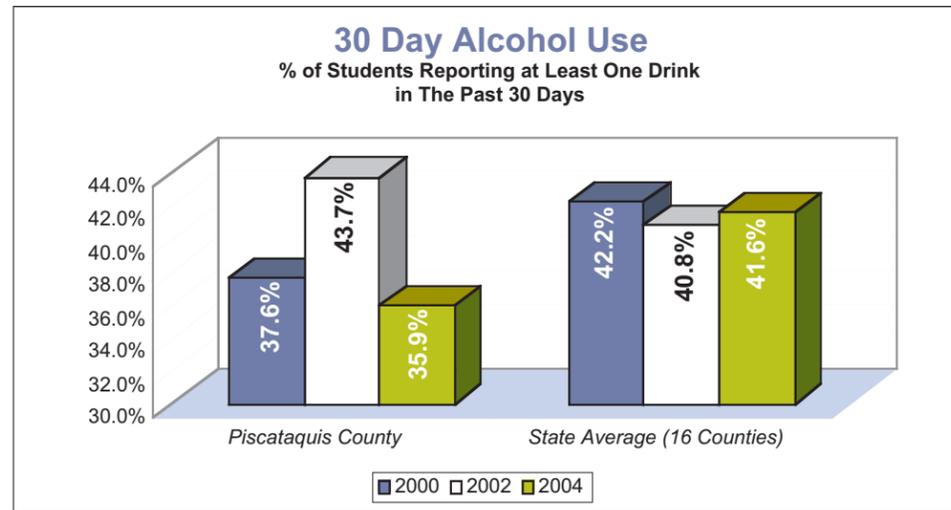
1B. INDICATORS OF CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

In 2004, high school students reported a stronger perception that underage drinkers will be caught by police in Piscataquis County, both compared to previous years and compared to the state average.

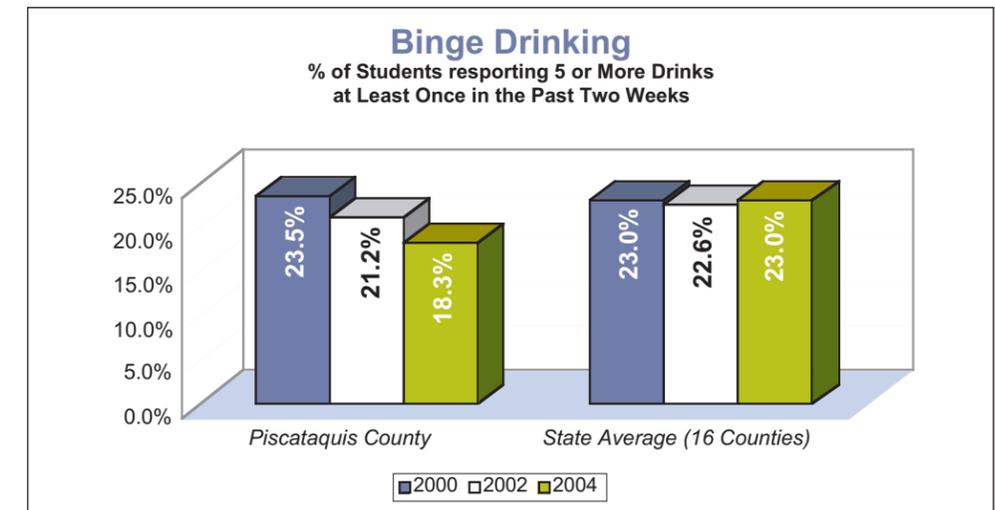
2A. INDICATORS OF DECREASED ALCOHOL USE



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

In 2004, Piscataquis County had a much lower level of current alcohol use among high school students, compared with the state average. Two years ago it was higher than the state average.

2B. INDICATORS OF DECREASED ALCOHOL USE



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

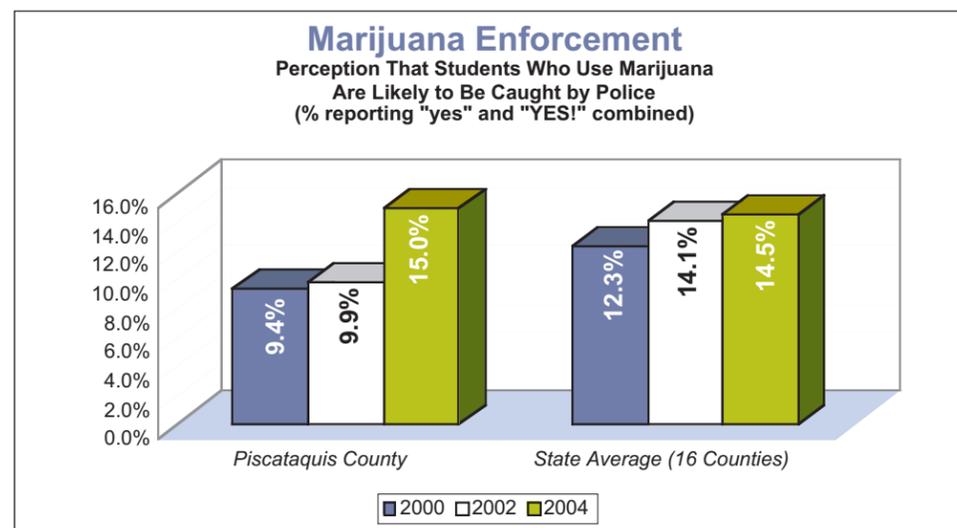
Between 2000 and 2004, Piscataquis County experienced a 5 percentage point drop in binge drinking, while the state average remained the same.

“It’s not like we had a marijuana grant at the same time. We’ve actually been hitting marijuana hard for about 10 years now, but we didn’t do anything differently in this two year period other than

the underage drinking work. We found the two issues were very much intertwined and often those we arrested for furnishing turned out to be involved with marijuana as well.”

Lt. Robert Young,
Piscataquis County Sheriff’s Office

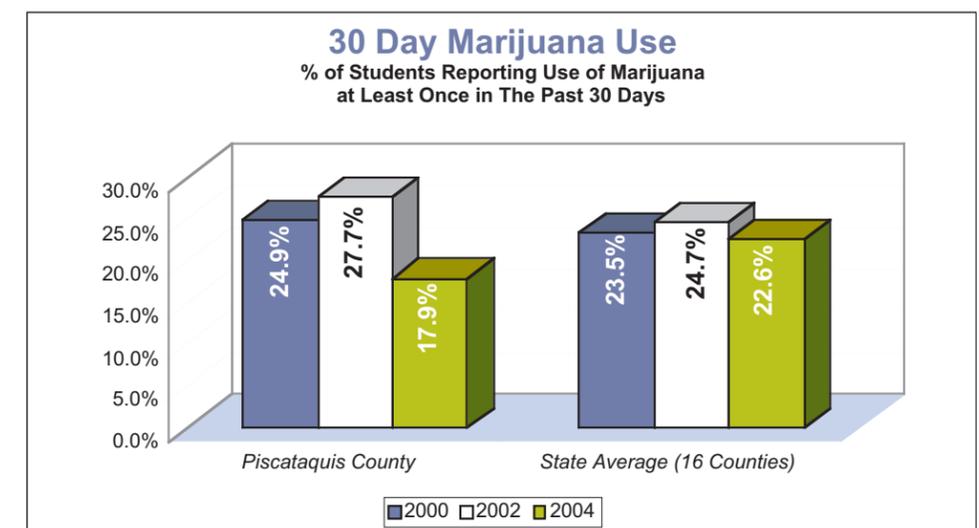
3A. INDICATORS OF DECREASED REDUCTION IN RELATED SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

Piscataquis County high school students in 2004 reported a much stronger perception that youth who smoke marijuana will be caught by police than in previous years.

3B. INDICATORS OF DECREASED REDUCTION IN RELATED SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES



MYDAUS 2004, Grades 9-12 • Source: Pan Atlantic Consultants

Between 2002 and 2004, Piscataquis County demonstrated a drop of 10 percentage points in current marijuana use among high school students, while that drop in the state average was fairly small.

4.

How You Can Achieve Success in Your Area

KEY ELEMENTS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

The process of developing, testing and refining the Sheriff's Office program has highlighted five key elements of success.

- **Leaders in the department are fully committed** to making underage drinking a priority, and ensuring that the entire department handles underage drinking incidents proactively, consistently, and effectively.
- **Ongoing problem analysis and strategic planning** is conducted to address the continually evolving underage drinking environment. Overarching goals (increasing the deterrent effect, reducing the availability of alcohol to minors, engaging parents, and communicating a clear community message that underage drinking is unacceptable) have remained a steady focus, while new tactics for achieving these goals have been continuously developed.
- **Law enforcement training** has helped to change a traditional mindset in which underage drinking was considered a "nuisance complaint" to be dealt with only when there was nothing more pressing. The Sheriff's expectation that underage drinking should be considered a significant community problem, to be dealt with aggressively and consistently, has also helped achieve this shift in attitude.

KEY ELEMENTS

LEADERS IN THE DEPARTMENT ARE FULLY COMMITTED

ONGOING PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

A COLLABORATIVE ATTITUDE

ACTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY



Model Underage Drinking Enforcement Policy

The design of Piscataquis County's underage drinking strategy has been incorporated into a model underage drinking enforcement policy which can be modified and adopted by any law enforcement agency in Maine. Implementing this policy along with other key elements discussed in this document will create momentum toward similar results in other communities around the state.

A copy of the model policy and additional law enforcement resources related to underage drinking are available on the OSA website at www.maineosa.org/prevention/lawenf.htm or by calling the OSA Information and Resource Center at **1-800-499-0027**.

For additional questions and support for your program development contact:

Becca Matusovich, Prevention Specialist
Maine Office of Substance Abuse, Augusta, Maine
207-287-6415 / rebecca.matusovich@maine.gov

Supporting information on implementation and results in Piscataquis County can be obtained by contacting the Piscataquis County Sheriff's Office:

Lt. Robert Young,
Piscataquis County Sheriff's Office 207-564-3304

- The data in sections one and three represents a portion of the results obtained by statewide surveys conducted by Pan Atlantic Consultants on behalf of OSA.
- Reported data includes information for MYDAUS reporting years 2000, 2002 and 2004 in order to understand the changes over time. The Piscataquis County program was implemented during 2003 and 2004.
- The selected results are not intended to fully represent or account for all of the data collected. If you would like to see the full reports connected with these findings, or if you would like more information about this project, its background, its objectives, or its methodology, please contact OSA.

- **A collaborative attitude** that underage drinking is not simply a law enforcement problem has helped engage a wide variety of stakeholders who each contribute to a more consistent, aggressive, and comprehensive strategy. This has helped create a more widespread understanding that underage drinking is a community problem and everybody can contribute to the solution.
- **Active communication with parents at every opportunity** has been critical to engaging community support for the increased enforcement effort. It has empowered parents to take a stand who previously felt overwhelmed by the perception that underage drinking is inevitable and impossible to prevent. These parents have also helped support the schools in stepping up their efforts to proactively address underage drinking.

