
From: Halligan, Dorothy [mailto:Dorothy.Halligan@fairfaxcounty.gov]
Sent: Thursday, October 06, 2005 9:49 AM
To: zzMSHA-Standards - Comments to Fed Reg Group
Subject: RIN 1219-AB41

To Whom It May Concern:

I am submitting my comments on any proposed rulemaking that may be addressed in regard to any risks to miners of drug and alcohol use.

Certainly any regulation that penalizes anyone under the age of 18 for alcohol or drug possession by suspending their license privileges until the age of 21 would be advisable on a national level.

Victim witness programs have met with great success in jurisdictions that choose to use the approach to deter crime. This same approach could also be used, in regard to educating our youth about the ramifications of alcohol or drug abuse. When a local teenager is involved in a fatal accident, the car in which the young person was traveling could be displayed in a public place (in front of the local high school) for all to see. Equally, if a young person is involved in an alcohol related accident the proper punitive action, in addition to losing their license, would be to appear at the local high school and middle school, to tell their story. Facing actions of poor judgment and telling the story in a public venue always benefit the perpetrator as well as the audience.

This issue is a community concern. Utilizing the approach of staging public issues as a play production, sponsored by the community (i.e. a story about drug and alcohol abuse and the outcome of its use), can often quite successfully broach the topic through the back door by creating a forum of discussion at the family level, and certainly within the schools. This approach was used in the town in NC where a local woman drove her car into the lake with her two children inside, then reporting that a black man had abducted them. The troupe that came to the town talked to local citizens to gather the information for their script, which they ultimately performed for the community. The performance put words to many of the feelings the townspeople were experiencing but didn't know how to talk about.

Finally, most alcohol and drug abuse is symptomatic of a deeper problem. It would behoove public education (because most young people don't get it at home) to require that students take Psychology 101 at the seventh grade and tenth grade, respectively, in order to reinforce the difficulties of poor self-esteem and not fitting in, that plague all young people. Alcohol and drug abuse is usually the easier softer way of coping with these issues. No government mandate or regulation can successfully broach these issues, but teaching our young people that they exist, and that the feelings are normal, and that there are appropriate ways to deal with them will, over the long term, have a more effective outcome.

Thanks for accepting my comments.

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Dorothy Halligan
1524 John Marshall Hwy
Front Royal VA 22630