



VOICES UNITED

KEEPING YOUTH SAFE

From Easy Access to Alcohol, Marijuana & Other Drugs

White Paper on Ecstasy

2014

Background:

To date the main strategy used is Harm Reduction. Even the Director for the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) conceded that there has been no programmatic Prevention or Intervention strategies developed regarding Ecstasy, Club Drugs or the Rave scene. Examples of Ecstasy Harm Reduction are:

1. 'Dance Safe, 'groups that attend Raves and test pills to make sure there are no damaging impurities in the drug'.
2. In the Bay Area, including in Santa Clara County, RockMed, a nonprofit, trains volunteers to look out for people who may need help – providing water for hydration and escorting to the onsite EMTs. Dressed with red RockMed T-shirts, volunteers are recognized as people that will help those in trouble.

Santa Clara County Field Research:

In September 2013, working with the Mountain View Police Department and the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health, Voices United attended 'Beyond Wonderland' EDM (Electronic Dance Music) event at Shoreline. This provided the setting for both observing behaviors and recruiting participants for further focus group studies. Transcripts of the focus groups are available.

Findings:

- 25,000 people attended a full 8 hours both days, and a large number of attendees were both young and Asian. Focus groups re-enforced that this is a common occurrence in Santa Clara County.
- Shoreline also sold alcohol, not a good mix with ecstasy or any other drug.
- Shoreline provided an amnesty box before entering the event where attendees could dispose of drugs without questions being asked.

- The crowd loved the music regardless of drug use. Given the mix of drug use (probably multi-drug use) coupled with a ‘friendly’ atmosphere, the scene was set for potential exploitation of the vulnerable.
- Focus group participants who had stopped using did so because the negative consequences of the drug use outweighed the good.
- Focus group participants were very protective of younger novice Rave attendees/ecstasy users, often providing advice, water or, when necessary, protection.
- Female users are frequently at risk of sexual predators.
- Gay males, attending gay only Raves, often expect sexual activity as part of the event.

Follow-up:

Voices United designed and distributed:

- The Ecstasy ‘Tips for a Safer Rave’ card.
- Developed and advertised a section on our website about how Alcohol does not mix well with other drugs: www.voicesunited.net/alcohol/does-not-mix.
- Created a PhotoStory PowerPoint of the Rave in chronological time showing the progression of alcohol/drug use in the crowd. It is available for viewing at Voices United trainings for counselors and school personnel.

Opportunities for Next Steps:

- Connect with RockMed to discuss collaborative efforts.
- Given that a high proportion of young Asians are attending Raves, how can we reach into the community – to the youth, to the parents, to the schools?
- There are outreach/educational opportunities:
 - ✓ Utilize attendees’ tendencies to be protective of the young and novice users to provide speaking points regarding drug use, mixing drugs, and the potential for harm (physically, sexually).
 - ✓ Utilize the **Ecstasy Tips for a Safer Rave** card to connect with EDM event attendees
- Find ways to connect with the gay men’s community re-Circuit Parties.