

Regular Meeting 09/12/02

TO: Juvenile Welfare Board Members

FROM: James E. Mills, Executive Director  
Browning Spence, Director, Community Planning and Research *HES*

### Pinellas County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

On May 9, 2002, during the Strategic Planning Workshop, Board members voiced serious concerns regarding data that was distributed at a state meeting, which stated that Pinellas County was one of the highest-ranking counties for drug use in the state, particularly among youth.

During the regular June 13, 2002 meeting, Board members discussed potential services to be solicited in the 2002-03 New and Expanded process. As part of that discussion, substance abuse prevention programs were presented as a funding alternative. One of staff's recommendations was the building of a community wide coalition to specifically address adolescent substance use in Pinellas County. During the discussion, the Pinellas County Substance Abuse Advisory Board (SAAB) was suggested as the most appropriate vehicle for the development of a coalition and plan. Staff also recommended budgeting \$75,000 for the support of such a coalition.

On August 13, 2002, staff attended a meeting of the Pinellas County Substance Abuse Advisory Board (SAAB) and requested the SAAB consider assuming the lead role in a county wide community coalition to address the issues of adolescent substance abuse. It was proposed that the SAAB would not only oversee the organization and operation of the coalition, of which the existing SAAB members would provide the core membership, but also house one staff member through the Pinellas County Office of Justice Coordination responsible for developing a community plan to:

- Promote public awareness of substance use patterns in Pinellas County
- Examine and address community values that create opportunity for the abuse of various substances
- Research and present proven strategies to address underage and binge drinking
- Involve youth and parents in development of coalition activities and solutions
- Encourage community advocacy
- Enlist added partners for this effort

There was strong support for the proposal among those SAAB members in attendance. Members were in agreement with the suggestion that a coalition would be a successful approach to bringing together multiple sectors of the community to implement a systematic, collaborative, and sustained prevention effort supported by the whole community. Other benefits of the coalition approach include:

- The coordination, collaboration, and the combination of community resources;

- The reduction and often elimination of competition and the redundancy of community prevention efforts;
- The opportunity to establish a strong base of community support to better guarantee a community solution to a community problem.

Staff will be meeting with County and SAAB leadership to discuss the detailed aspects of embarking on the implementation of this coalition and expect to present an item for the Board's consideration and action at its October regular meeting.

Staff Resource Person: Tracie T. White