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NEW REPORT PROVIDES REVEALING DATA ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN WASHTENAW AND LIVINGSTON COUNTIES

Report Analyzes Factors that Influence Underage Drinking:

Findings Expected to Help Local Agencies Develop Strategies and Partnerships to Address Root Causes

YPSILANTI, MI., March 24, 2008 - Washtenaw County Public Health Department officials today released a new report that provides data and analysis about the prevalence and consequences of underage drinking in Washtenaw and Livingston counties. The report discusses factors that facilitate or discourage underage drinking and specifically highlights rural areas in Washtenaw and Livingston counties where findings suggest that underage drinking, and its consequences, is significantly more prevalent than elsewhere in these counties.

Underage and Under the Influence: The Alcohol Climate in Livingston and Washtenaw Counties is the result of a collaborative effort among the Washtenaw Community Health Organization (WCHO), the Livingston/Washtenaw Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency and the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. Community members and representatives of substance abuse prevention agencies were encouraged to participate in the process of gathering and reviewing regional, state and local data

through the Strategic Prevention Framework funded by the Michigan Department of Community Health. These individuals played an important role in prioritizing geographic areas in which to intervene to reduce underage drinking beginning in 2008.

Key highlights from the *Underage and Under the Influence* report include:

- Motor vehicle crash rates associated with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) in 16-20 year old drivers in the Dexter Pinckney areas are 75-150 percent higher than averages for Washtenaw and Livingston counties.
- Motor Vehicle Crash (MVC) rates associated with 16-20 year old drivers who are DUI tend to be highest in the more rural parts of both counties.
- Minor in Possession (MIP) arrest rates in Washtenaw County are highest in the 48198 Zip Code (east Ypsilanti, Willow Run region). Liquor law arrest rates during 2005 in Washtenaw County are highest in the Pinckney police jurisdiction.
- Binge drinking rates for adults in the more rural areas of Washtenaw County are more than 50% higher than the county average.
- Binge drinking rates in 8th graders surveyed in Livingston and Washtenaw counties doubled by the 10th grade and then doubled again by the 12th grade.
- Nearly half (44%) of Livingston County adult drinker aged 18-34 binge drink.
- Liquor licenses per capita in Washtenaw County tend to be highest in non-urban regions of the county.

The report examines data associated with geographically based attributes – broad community factors that have been shown to influence underage drinking. These factors include:

- Liquor license rates per capita
- “Selling to minors” violation rates
- Law enforcement officers per capita

The report also assesses factors related to alcohol use and its consequences that are affected by environmental circumstances. These factors include:

- Retail and social access to alcohol
- Enforcement of liquor laws
- Price and promotion
- Perceptions of risk and harm

- Social and family norms

“This cooperative effort combined the skill and knowledge base of the Livingston/Washtenaw Substance Abuse Coordinating Agency, which has provided a long history of leadership in substance abuse prevention efforts throughout the two counties, along with the Public Health Department’s facility for assessing primary prevention needs and opportunities,” said Ellen Clement, Health Officer of the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. “We hope and anticipate that this information provides evidence and is a catalyst for more effective underage drinking prevention partnerships and strategies throughout Livingston and Washtenaw counties.”

The release of this report is very timely as local communities are in the early stages of planning to address the issues identified in this report. The communities of Dexter and Pinckney will celebrate Alcohol Awareness Month during the month of April, 2008 and the *Pinckney Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking* will host a Town Hall meeting on April 10, 2008 from 6-8 pm at the Hamburg Township Library and the Dexter Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking will host a Town Hall meeting on April 15, 2008 from 6-8 p.m. at Mill Creek Middle School to alert the community to new information on the risks of underage drinking and to begin discussions about ways to address the issue.

The close link between substance abuse and mental illness makes *Underage and Under the Influence* a companion report to *Mind Matters: A Public Health Approach to Mental Health and Well-being*, which was released by the Health Department in February 2007. Both reports are available online at the Washtenaw County Public Health Department website at www.publichealth.ewashtenaw.org.

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