

**Alcohol Policy Implementation Committee
Meeting Notes
March 14, 2003**

Attendance: Lea Stewart, Joan Carbone, Brian Rose, Laura Kull, JoAnn Arnholt, Elizabeth O'Connell-Ganges, Lisa Laitman, Lee Schneider, Jay Kohl, Tom Giordano, Pratik Shah, Adrienne Coleman, Bill Scott, Michael Smith

Announcements: Lea Stewart announced that proposals from NJ Dept Health and Senior Services are being received through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and should / will be routed to Lea Stewart, Lisa Laitman, Fern Goodhart and Laura Kull. Vice President Dennis should be notified upon the return of any proposal.

Discussion

The focus of the discussion at this meeting related to the role of police (RUPD) in responding to on-campus emergency calls, whether that role tended to work as a disincentive for students to call for help (for fear that police response would also lead to criminal or judicial problems) and whether anything could be done to change the reality and perception of the police role so that students would be more inclined to call for help when a peer is potentially in need of emergency attention.

Jay Kohl addressed some initial comments to the Committee and began by noting that he had some concerns as to the confidentiality provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) as they might apply to the sharing of information from EMS calls with non-medical staff at the University. Jay will be investigating these concerns independently and will report back as warranted. Jay further explained that there are two purposes behind having police respond to EMS calls on campus:

1. The police are “medical first responders” with equipment (defibrillators) and training and their simultaneous dispatch with EMT’s improves the chances that someone will arrive with help quickly. As first responders who share the same radio frequency with EMS staff, police can also assist EMT’s in locating the specific room or area where response is needed.
2. The police are also there to insure the safety of the EMTs and all others responding to the scene.

Committee members expressed the concerns they had heard from students to the effect that police responding to emergency calls have used the opportunity to investigate possible criminal wrong-doing by conducting plain view searches of the response area, questioning people as to what they were ingesting and so forth. Tom Giordano noted that some of this information was perhaps needed to help understand the medical situation (i.e. searching for pills that victim may have ingested), such that it would not always be

safe to simply avoid such investigative techniques.

In the specific context of fraternity houses, students on the committee spoke of the perception that, should police respond to a fraternity house to someone who is “passed out”, they will enter the premises and look around under the guise that there may be other under 21 people in need of assistance.

All present agreed on the goal that more should be done to encourage students at locations other than residence halls (e.g. fraternities, other adjacent to campus residences) to call for emergency help when needed.

Someone asked whether RUPD would still be summoned if the call for assistance went instead to New Brunswick. In practice, the call would still result in an EMT dispatch, that call would likely be bounced to Rutgers EMS and RUPD would then respond.

The Committee and guests then had a wide-ranging discussion concerning how to balance law enforcement interests on the one hand and the interest in encouraging students to summon for help when needed on the other. The group agreed in principle on the following strategies:

1. Public Safety would undertake some further training of police in an effort to help officers exercise better discretion in terms of striking the proper balance between the primary role (responding to a medical emergency call) and what may be a secondary role in this context (law enforcement). The Committee recognizes that each situation will be different so that blanket statements of what the police will and will not do are not appropriate.
2. Student Life staff will undertake initiatives to facilitate increased communication and dialogue between campus police and students in an effort to help both constituencies better understand the perspectives and responsibilities of the other. For example, police might share statistics on the number of interactions they have with students that do NOT lead to arrest to help defeat myths about what the police “do”. It was noted that it will be important for students to see police in contexts other than pure law enforcement situations so that trust can be developed (e.g., a series of “town meetings”). More trust should enhance the willingness of students to summon help when needed.
3. In the specific context of fraternities, the Committee believes it would be useful to have fraternity representatives and patrol officers meet under the direction of both OFSA and senior leadership within RUPD. Objectives would be to (a) allow dialogue to both explain and diffuse “stories” of police tactics that have been perhaps blown out of proportion, (b) allow students to hear that officers are being encouraged by leadership to exercise better discretion in measuring their response to situations that are primarily health-safety issues and (c) open lines of communication to help build trust.
4. Health educators, including EMS staff, can provide information and education to students on such issues as the true risks with the approach of letting

someone “sleep it off” while watching her/him. Students can also be educated about the medical importance of providing accurate information to EMT’s or police about what a non-responsive student may have ingested. Existing peer educator networks can also assist in providing such education.

5. Also mentioned was the possibility of having representatives of the Committee attend a police training session.

The Committee then moved on to a discussion of related issues that may need to be addressed in this context of responding to acutely intoxicated individuals. Specific issues mentioned were:

- a. The limits or perhaps absence of insurance coverage for the cost of EMT services, emergency room treatment, etc.
- b. Providing information (either general or case-specific) to parents
- c. There is a disparity between the number of students listed on EMS transport reports and those referred to Lisa Laitman’s office.
- d. Committee strategies have to be comprehensive so that dangerous drinking behavior is not simply shifted from one location to another.

The meeting concluded with a review of a survey being taken by administrators at George Mason University.