

# “Is Everybody Really Doing It?”

## Using a Social Norms Approach to Successfully Reduce Youth Risk Behaviors

**Presenter:**

**H. Wesley Perkins, PhD, Professor of Sociology,  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York**

Effective prevention of substance abuse and related problems among youth and young adults requires coordinated efforts using science-based strategies. The "Social Norms Model" has emerged as a science-based approach focusing on the influence of perceived peer norms and has provided notable success in many initiatives including higher education, secondary schools, and community settings. Based on more than two decades of research with thousands of middle school, high school, and college students as well as studies of other young adults and parents in community settings, Dr. Perkins will describe the harmful misperceptions of peer norms that are so pervasive in schools and communities and how the perception of peer norms is the most important factor predicting risk behavior. He will then discuss the causes and consequences of peer misperceptions and the potential for program interventions to challenge these misperceptions. Research clearly shows the importance of harnessing the positive power of peers through the promotion of accurate social norms.

Putting the social norms approach into practice is not without challenges, however. In the second part of Dr. Perkins' presentation he will deliver an overview of the survey instrument being provided to local schools for collecting data to help implement the approach. He will also provide extensive examples of various strategies to disseminate the social norms intervention, discuss common mistakes, present important considerations in the assessment of interventions, and conclude by noting key elements of successful interventions employing this model.

**September 27<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**10:00am to 3:00pm  
Southwest Behavioral Health Center  
474 W. 200 N.  
St. George Utah  
Room 206**

**\*Lunch will be provided\***

## H. Wesley Perkins, PhD

Professor Perkins is Professor of Sociology at Hobart & William Smith Colleges (PhD, Yale University) and Project Director of the Alcohol Education Project and the Youth, Health and Safety Project, initiatives providing research, educational resources, and strategies to reduce risk-related and problem behaviors among youth and young adults throughout the U.S. and internationally. This Project has received multiple national awards from the U.S. Department of Education as a Model Prevention Program. Dr. Perkins has published extensive research in professional journals on promoting health and well-being and numerous publications on prevention of violence and substance abuse among youth. He developed the theory underlying the social norms approach to preventing risk behavior and edited a book on *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse*. Dr. Perkins has delivered over 400 guest lectures, keynote addresses, research presentations, and workshops for universities, secondary schools and professional conferences and has consulted with hundreds of secondary schools, institutions of higher education, and community health agencies about social norms interventions throughout the United States, Canada, England and Scotland. Dr. Perkins received the Outstanding Service Award by the Network of Colleges and Universities Committed to the Elimination of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse for career contributions to prevention work and his work has been frequently cited in U.S. press and television news coverage including the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, CNN, NPR, New York Times Magazine, Newsweek, and Time Magazine.

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### Websites:

<http://people.hws.edu/perkins>  
<http://www.AlcoholEducationProject.org>  
<http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org>

### YouTube video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVIBfY35dGw&feature=plcp>

### Training Provided by:

