

Youth and Alcohol: Know the Facts... They're Sobering

# UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION

## *ACTION GUIDE AND PLANNER*



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

# UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION *ACTION GUIDE* *AND* *PLANNER*

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# FOREWARD

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), through its Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), is committed to providing leadership and developing tools for substance abuse prevention. One of our most important goals is the prevention and reduction of underage drinking.

CSAP realizes that individuals working in the field of prevention have limited time and resources to obtain information and ideas crucial for implementing their prevention programs. To assist prevention professionals in their efforts addressing underage drinking, CSAP developed the *Underage Drinking Prevention Action Guide and Planner*. This publication will assist prevention professionals in identifying strong messages, coordinating outreach efforts with other organizations and groups, and making youth alcohol prevention a priority.

The Underage Drinking Prevention Action Guide and Planner can substantially improve the planning and management of prevention programs, consolidate and focus prevention interventions, and potentially serve as the foundation for science-based prevention activities. CSAP urges those working in prevention to carefully review, consider, and use the information in this publication to strengthen their continuing efforts to help prevent underage drinking.

Ruth Sanchez-Way, Ph.D.  
Director  
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

# UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION *ACTION GUIDE* *AND* *PLANNER*

In its ongoing effort to assist community-based organizations in understanding and effectively addressing the issues surrounding underage drinking, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), through its Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), introduces the *Underage Drinking Prevention Action Guide and Planner*. This *Action Guide* is intended to help communities create programs to prevent the tragedies that underage drinking can cause. It's an issue that demands our attention and action! The solution lies at the grassroots level where all members of a community can work together to create healthy environments.

This *Action Guide* is designed to:

- Provide community organizers with ideas and suggestions for accomplishable underage drinking prevention activities that target communities, businesses, social events, media, parents, and youth.
- Provide community organizers with ways to coordinate prevention efforts with government agencies, local groups, and other grassroots organizations.
- Provide factual information about the issues involved in the underage use of alcohol that can be disseminated through your prevention activities and help inform your audiences.

## Using the Planner

The following section is a monthly planner. Each month suggests a particular theme or issue your organization can use to focus your underage alcohol prevention efforts. A Call to Action component in each month provides ideas for activities that may be appropriate for that month's theme. Also included in each month of the planner section are some relevant facts you may be able to incorporate in a variety of your activities, like speeches, letters, brochures, or public service announcements. Use the calendar to schedule and track what prevention activities you undertake.

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Family Life

When developing strategies and activities to address underage drinking in your community, it is important to focus on family life.

Families have a powerful influence over a young person's decisions about whether or not to use alcohol. In fact, parents' disapproval is the key reason children give for not using alcohol.

However, many parents and other adult caregivers may not recognize the influence they can have over their children's use or may feel inadequately prepared to discuss drinking with their children. They may not know the basic facts about alcohol, how to approach the topic, or what resources exist in their communities. Community groups can play an important role by educating and supporting parents in building young people's resiliency.

## Calls to ACTION

- Promote parenting/family communications programs in your community. Contact the sponsors of such programs to increase their awareness of the connection between parenting skills and underage drinking prevention. Refer them to CSAP's Parenting Is Prevention Web site at [www.parentingisprevention.org](http://www.parentingisprevention.org). Remember to reach out to other caring adults such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and mentors, too.
- Organize local activities to support National Children of Alcoholics Week, held annually in conjunction with Valentine's Day. Work in cooperation with your local mayor's office to release a proclamation or develop a press release announcing the ways in which your group is working to prevent underage drinking in the community. For more ideas, contact the National Association for Children of Alcoholics at (888) 554-2627 or visit them online at [www.health.org/nacoa](http://www.health.org/nacoa).

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- Research suggests that children are less likely to drink when their parents are involved in their lives and when both parents and children report feeling close to each other.<sup>1</sup>
- Adolescents drink less and have fewer alcohol-related problems when their parents discipline them consistently and set clear expectations about drinking.<sup>2</sup>
- Parents' drinking behaviors and favorable attitudes about drinking have been associated with adolescents' initiating and continuing alcohol use.<sup>3</sup>

"A child who reaches age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol, or using drugs is virtually certain never to do so."

— Joseph A. Califano, Jr.,  
Chairman and President,  
National Center on Substance Abuse  
and Addictions at Columbia University

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>Hawkins, J.D., et al. 1997. Exploring the effects of age of alcohol use initiation and psychosocial risk factors on subsequent alcohol misuse. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 58(3):280-290.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Andrews, J.A., et al. 1993. Parental influence on early adolescent substance use: Specific and nonspecific effects. *Journal of Early Adolescence* 13(3):285-310.

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Relationships

Remember that interpersonal relationships are typically very important to teens and young adults when you are establishing prevention messages and activities for youth. Many young people drink because they believe it will relieve their feelings of social discomfort and make it easier to approach someone of the opposite sex, go on a date, or enjoy a party. However, drinking alcohol actually presents many new risks in such situations. Alcohol can impair adolescents' ability to make sound judgments, placing them at increased risk for unplanned pregnancy, sexual assault, or contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Arguments and misunderstandings between teens can also be fueled by alcohol, leading to fights, injury, dating violence, and even death. Teens need to know the real risks posed by alcohol and learn positive ways to handle their insecurities over personal relationships.

## Calls to ACTION

- Form a Youth Advisory Task Force to determine the number of positive, alcohol-free social activities for young people in your community. Ask the Task Force to recommend additional activities that would be likely to attract youth participation. Help youth plan, organize, and secure sponsorship for these activities.
- Collaborate with local HIV/AIDS organizations to write and place an op-ed on the risks of engaging in sex while under the influence of alcohol. Pitch the piece to high school and college newspapers, gay community publications, and the "alternative" press popular with teens and young adults in your community. Include a list of community substance abuse and HIV/AIDS resources for youth.

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"Parents need to be explicit about the relationship between sex and substance abuse.... The message to teens is even clearer: If you're drunk or high, you can't make good decisions about sex."

— Sarah Brown,  
Director,  
Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy

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- Researchers estimate that alcohol use is implicated in one- to two-thirds of sexual assault and “date rape” cases among teens and college students.<sup>1</sup>
- Forty-four percent of sexually active Massachusetts teenagers said they were more likely to have sexual intercourse if they had been drinking, and 17 percent said they were less likely to have safe sex after drinking.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol use in adolescents is a strong predictor of both sexual activity and unprotected sex. Teenage girls who drink are more likely to have sex and have it without a condom than girls who do not drink alcohol.<sup>3</sup>
- Half of the girls who have sexual intercourse by the age of 16 are intoxicated at the time and half later regret their action.<sup>4</sup>

### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). April 1992. *Youth and Alcohol: Dangerous and Deadly Consequences*. Washington, DC: HHS.

<sup>2</sup>Strunin, L., and Hingson, R. 1992. Alcohol, drugs, and adolescent sexual behavior. *International Journal of the Addictions* 27(2):129-146.

<sup>3</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1999. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Summary*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.

<sup>4</sup>Sachs, H.C., MD. April 2000. Teens trying drugs and alcohol. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 17(4):45.



# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Popular Culture

When crafting prevention messages and programs, it is important to understand that popular culture plays a powerful role in young people's lives.

Youth between the ages of 8 and 18 spend almost 7 hours per day with various types of media.<sup>1</sup>

Through movies, television, music, advertising, and other outlets, youth are exposed to an extraordinary array of messages—many of which glamorize alcohol use. Drinking is frequently portrayed in the media as cool, sophisticated, or humorous.

Rarely are the negative consequences or health risks of alcohol use shown. Young people need to learn how to be critical thinkers about media messages, to question sources of information, and to look for missing information. Community groups can help youth understand the risks associated with alcohol use and resist pressures to drink.

## Calls to ACTION

- Send a letter to broadcasters and advertisers letting them know your feelings about how television, movies, or magazine advertisements normalize and glamorize underage drinking.
- Write an article for a local parenting magazine, Parent/Teacher Association newsletter, or faith community bulletin encouraging adults in your community to watch television, attend concerts, and go to the movies with young people. Urge adults to note when underage drinking is portrayed in the media and to use these experiences as opportunities to talk with youth about the real consequences of alcohol use. Remind adults to be respectful of young people's opinions and to listen to their observations.
- Support the teaching of media literacy in your local schools or sponsor after-school programs that help young people learn how to analyze messages that glamorize unhealthy behaviors such as underage drinking. For more information, contact the Center for Media Literacy at (800) 226-9494 or visit [www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org).

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“The media message to youth is clear: alcoholic beverages are essential to social acceptance, of minimal harm to health, and a reward at the end of a normal day’s work, a school exam, a sports victory, or for any relaxing moment. The risk for excessive alcohol use is never stated or even implied.”

— American Academy of Pediatrics,  
Committee on Substance Abuse

- More than 9 out of 10 (93 percent) of the 200 most popular movie rentals in 1996 and 1997 included depictions of alcohol use. When alcohol use was portrayed, no consequences were associated with consumption in over one-half (57 percent) of the movies.<sup>2</sup>
- A review of top-selling popular songs found alcohol mentioned in 47 percent of rap music lyrics.<sup>3</sup>
- In recent television programs, 9 out of 10 drinkers are portrayed as either experiencing no effects at all or only positive personal and social outcomes from their alcohol consumption.<sup>4</sup>

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>Roberts, D.F. and Christenson, P.G. February 2000. *Here's Looking at You Kid—Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco in Entertainment Media*, a literature review for the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Menlo Park, CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

<sup>2</sup>Roberts, D.F.; Henrikson, L.; and Christenson, P.G. April 1999. *Substance Use in Popular Movies and Music*. Rockville, MD: Office of National Drug Control Policy—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Gerbner, G. October 1996. *Television Violence and Alcohol Use Declines, but Smoking Still Shown as Risk-Free*. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention News Release.

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol Availability

It is illegal in all 50 States for youth under the age of 21 to buy or publicly possess alcohol. In communities where proven law enforcement techniques to stop underage alcohol purchases have been used, many of the problems linked to underage drinking have been reduced. The effective management of alcohol availability is a community problem. In practical terms, it means placing reasonable limits on the retail distribution of alcohol, on the operation of alcohol outlets, and on the management of events at which alcohol is sold.

### Calls to ACTION

- Create a youth planning committee to assist you in observing April's Alcohol Awareness Month. Let youth develop messages to increase their peers' awareness of the effects of alcohol on their health, academic performance, and athletic abilities. For sample materials, contact the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) at (212) 206-6770 or visit them at [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org).
- Engage youth in a discussion about where they think underage drinkers in your community get alcohol. Ask them for suggestions about how to make alcohol less accessible to youth. Find a reporter who might find "Youth Talk About Underage Drinking" an interesting human interest story for a local paper.
- Assist your local law enforcement agency in conducting a "compliance check survey" to determine the number of businesses that correctly require identification and refuse service to underage buyers. This activity involves sending trained underage police cadets or other underage volunteers into stores to attempt to purchase alcohol. Create a press release to announce general compliance statistics to the public. Be sure to recognize those outlets that are obeying the law. For more information on conducting compliance check surveys, visit the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Web site at [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org).

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- Since 1975, minimum purchase age laws have prevented more than 17,000 traffic fatalities by reducing the availability of alcohol to young people.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly 90 percent of 10th graders and 75 percent of 8th graders think that alcohol is either “fairly easy” or “very easy” for them to get.<sup>2</sup>

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). 1997. *Traffic Safety Facts*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.

<sup>2</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). 1996. National Survey Results on Drug Use from *The Monitoring the Future Study, 1975-1998: Volume 1: Secondary School Students*. Rockville, MD: NIDA.

“To condone teenagers’ drinking beer or any kind of alcoholic beverage in one’s home because ‘they are going to drink anyway’ is, in my view, a feeble excuse. Furthermore, providing minors with alcohol is in violation of the law. If the children were mine, I would insist on hosting the party in my home and providing the snacks, the soft drinks—and the supervision.”

— Abigail “Dear Abby” Van Buren,  
*Los Angeles Times*,  
May 5, 1991

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and the PHYSICAL Effects of Drinking

Many young people do not understand the serious health risks posed by alcohol use.

Alcohol can cause a loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and blackouts. It can also lead to risky behaviors, like having unprotected sex. This may expose young people to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases or cause unwanted pregnancy. Community groups can help educate young people about the physical effects of drinking and teach them to make healthy decisions.

## Calls to ACTION

- Recruit prevention professionals, doctors, emergency room personnel, law enforcement officers, recovering youth, or youth impaired-driving crash survivors to serve on a “speakers bureau” about the effects of alcohol on underage youth. Promote use of the speakers bureau to schools, youth-serving organizations, civic groups, and your State’s prevention partners.
- Work with local businesses, like tuxedo and limousine rental companies, during the prom and graduation season to disseminate cards or brochures outlining the harmful physical effects of alcohol. Remember to be careful in how you present your information so that youth are more likely to hear it. Cards or brochures that sound belittling or moralizing are not likely to be effective.
- Organize an aggressive outreach effort to enlist parents’ support of alcohol-free proms and graduation parties. Encourage parents to hold informal discussions with their children about the physical effects of alcohol and why alcohol is illegal for those under 21. Provide fact sheets, sample discussion points, and other materials to adults interested in participating.

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- 33 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders report having ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.<sup>1</sup>
- Among 12- to 17-year-olds who are current drinkers, 31 percent have exhibited extreme levels of psychological distress and 39 percent have exhibited serious behavioral problems.<sup>2</sup>
- Forty percent of children who start drinking before the age of 15 will become alcoholics at some point in their lives. Delaying the use of alcohol until the legal age helps avoid many of the associated problems. If the onset of drinking is delayed by 5 years, a child's risk of serious alcohol problems is cut in half.<sup>3</sup>

"Underage alcohol use is a significant threat to the health and safety of our children. It is time for us to come to grips with this widespread, devastating public health problem."

— Steven A. Shroeder,  
M.D. President/CEO,  
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1997. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 47(SS-3):1-89.

<sup>2</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 1999. *The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents*. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.

<sup>3</sup>Grant, B.F. 1998. National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's Epidemiologic Bulletin No. 39 The Impact of a Family History of Alcoholism on the Relationship Between Age at Onset of Alcohol Use and DSM-IV Alcohol Dependence, Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Alcohol Health and Research World* 22(2).

# FOCUS On...

## Alcohol and the SECONDHAND Effects of Drinking

As a society, we are beginning to realize and accept the fact that alcohol use affects not only the drinker but others *who do not drink* as well. Just as smoking tobacco has secondhand effects, alcohol affects people close to the user and the public at large. Secondhand effects include the tragedies of drunk driving, fetal alcohol syndrome, failed family relationships, and rising healthcare costs. Society's tolerance for these secondhand effects is changing and can be seen in new approaches to workplace policies, laws, and interpersonal relationships. This month, see how you can incorporate this issue into your organization's messages and activities.

## Calls to ACTION

- Speak out about your concerns about secondhand alcohol effects. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about the costs of underage drinking to the community as a whole. These costs include potential vandalism, litter, injury or death from drunk driving, interpersonal violence, and loss of one of the community's most valuable resources—the health and future of the youth themselves.
- Sponsor a college preparation workshop for parents of high school seniors. Encourage them to learn about the alcohol culture on and off campus before sending their children off to school. Advise them to read the student newspaper, note articles about the school's alcohol policies, and look for advertisements that offer cheap alcohol or discounts to students. Urge parents to ask college officials tough questions: How many alcohol violations were handled in the past year? How many students were medically treated for alcohol violations? Are there ample activities for students that do not involve drinking?

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- Alcohol-related problems cost every person in the United States \$633 per year, whether he or she drinks or not.<sup>1</sup>
- Twenty-one percent of workers report that their productivity has been affected by co-workers' drinking, including being injured or put in danger, having to re-do work, or having to cover for a co-worker.<sup>2</sup>
- In some colleges, as many as 87 percent of nonbinge drinkers experience one or more secondhand effects of other students' misuse of alcohol. These effects include having sleep or study interrupted, having property vandalized, or being the victim of a physical or sexual assault.<sup>3</sup>

"We once thought drunk drivers were a part of life, and smokers had to be tolerated. Today people feel comfortable speaking out against drunk drivers and smokers because we now know the harm they cause others is not an acceptable price to pay for their behavior."

— Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). 1998. *The Economic Costs of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992*. BKD265.

<sup>2</sup>Mangione, T. 1998. *New Perspectives For Worksite Alcohol Strategies: Results From a Corporate Drinking Study*. Boston, MA: JSI Research and Training Institute.

<sup>3</sup>Weschler, H.; Austin, B.; and DeJong, W. 1996. *Secondary Effects of Binge Drinking on College Campuses*. Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Girls

Does your organization have prevention efforts specifically focused on girls? While girls' substance use once lagged behind boys', research studies conducted in the past decade have shown that adolescent girls and boys are now equally likely to drink alcohol. However, there are significant differences in how alcohol is consumed and how it affects girls. For example, girls are more likely to drink to fit in with their friends than adolescent boys, and even small amounts of alcohol are more intoxicating to girls than boys, regardless of their size. Community groups need to be aware of these gender differences and tailor some of their prevention efforts specifically to girls.

## Calls to ACTION

- **Girl Power!** is a national public education campaign sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to help encourage and empower 9- to 14-year-old girls to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs and be physically active through positive activities and identifying their own interests and aspirations. Coordinate a **Girl Power!** day in your community. Invite adult female role models to talk to girls about the importance of making healthy life decisions. Hold workshops on topics such as substance abuse, nutrition, physical activity, positive relationships, and goal setting. Organize a youth forum to discuss underage drinking and what girls can do to prevent it.
- For more ideas, order the **Girl Power!** Community Education Kit by calling SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 729-6686 or by visiting the **Girl Power!** Web site at [www.health.org/gpower](http://www.health.org/gpower).
- Contact local guidance counselors and find out if schools in your community provide substance abuse prevention programs addressing the unique needs of adolescent girls. If not, help support gender-specific activities and initiatives in your local schools.
- Work with local businesses to sponsor internships for girls or invite girls to shadow employees for a designated period of time. Host brown-bag lunches to discuss careers, job skills, and interviews. Include discussions of how substance use can affect girls' plans for the future.

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● Thirty-eight percent of girls ages 12 to 17 have used alcohol at least once. Of these, nearly 19 percent are current users and 7 percent are binge drinkers (have consumed five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past month).<sup>1</sup>

● Half of the girls who have sexual intercourse by the age of 16 are intoxicated at the time and of these, half later regret their action.<sup>2</sup>

● Among 8th grade girls who drink heavily, 37 percent report attempting suicide, compared to 11 percent who do not drink.<sup>3</sup>

“There is a desperate need to focus on teenage girls because the reasons they abuse alcohol and drugs are often unique to them.”

— Patti Munter,  
President,  
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 1998. *1998 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Washington, DC: SAMHSA.

<sup>2</sup>Sachs, H.C. MD. April 2000. Teens trying drugs and alcohol. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 17(4):45.

<sup>3</sup>Windle, M.A. 1992. Alcohol use, suicidal behavior, and risky activities among adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 2(4).

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Boys

Although girls are now as likely as boys to drink alcohol, there are important differences in *how* they drink. Boys are more likely to begin drinking alcohol at a younger age, more likely to move on to binge drinking, more likely to drive under the influence of alcohol, and more likely to initiate sex under the influence, often without protection. Drinking and the capacity to drink in quantity, is often viewed as proof of courage or manliness. However, challenges to “hold your liquor like a man” can have devastating short- and long-term results. Adults need to clearly communicate no-use expectations and community groups need to be aware of the risks adolescent males face and tailor some of their prevention efforts specifically to boys.

### Calls to ACTION

- Organize a Boys’ Task Force on Alcohol to survey alcohol problems for boys in your community, including availability, marketing, school policies, and treatment resources. Ask the Task Force to develop a report and a set of recommendations based on their findings. Deliver the report to the mayor’s office, the media, the city council, and/or the local/county health agency.
- Contact middle school, high school, and after-school athletic program directors and coaches to discuss and develop policies regarding alcohol use among team members. Encourage coaches and others working with boys to educate boys about the serious risks of underage alcohol use, including impact on athletic and academic performance.
- Sponsor a club for boys that includes community service projects such as planting trees or cleaning up a local river. Work with the media to develop stories about the benefits of adults spending time with boys in such positive activities.

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- Boys are more likely than girls to begin drinking before age 13.<sup>1</sup> The earlier underage drinking begins, the greater the risk for developing a serious alcohol-related problem, including addiction.
- Overall, male high school students are significantly more likely than female high school students to report episodic heavy drinking.<sup>2</sup>
- A survey of high school students found that 18 percent of females and 39 percent of males say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex if the girl is stoned or drunk.<sup>3</sup>

“We have really encouraged our coaches to talk to kids on a regular basis about drug and alcohol abuse. At my pre-season meeting, I tell them that I see a noticeable difference with the squads whose coaches talk to them and those that don’t.”

— Larry Munksgaard,  
Athletic Director,  
Southeast High School,  
Lincoln, Nebraska

### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. June 2000. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 49(SS05):1-96.

<sup>2</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. August 1998. 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, Alcohol and Other Drug Use Among Youth. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 47(55-3):1-89.

<sup>3</sup>Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Last accessed on September 21, 1999. *Dangerous and Deadly Consequences*. [www.ncadd.org/youthalc.html](http://www.ncadd.org/youthalc.html).

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and the College Experience

Many college-aged young people perceive collegiate drinking as one of the “rites of passage” into adulthood. In fact, the heaviest drinking population in the United States is young, white males enrolled in college. Alcohol companies frequently target college students with marketing efforts such as campus newspaper advertising, sports event promotions, and even scholarship funds. Bars near campuses also promote heavy drinking through pricing specials. Alcohol-free campus policies can push drinking problems into surrounding communities, exacerbating age-old tensions between the town and the student community. With about half of college students not yet of legal drinking age, and the other half legally entitled to purchase and consume alcohol, administrations can find alcohol control policies difficult to implement or enforce.

### Calls to ACTION

- Work with local colleges or universities in your community to establish a “town/gown” underage drinking prevention coalition. Work together to limit student access to alcohol, examine school and community traditions that may fuel binge drinking, and support the efforts of local law enforcement.
- Collaborate with local campus social boards to create popular late-night social and recreational options for underage college students in the community.
- Spearhead local efforts to tag kegs so that alcohol purchasers can be identified.
- Support a ban on alcohol sales, advertising, and promotion at local college sporting events. Ask local merchants to eliminate cheap drink promotions for college students.

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- A survey of students at 119 colleges found that 44 percent of students are binge drinkers (have five or more drinks per occasion).<sup>1</sup>
- As many as 360,000 of the Nation's 12 million undergraduates will eventually die from alcohol-related problems, many of which began in college. This is more than the number who will get M.A.s and Ph.D.s combined.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol on college campuses is a factor in 40 percent of all academic problems and 28 percent of all dropouts.<sup>3</sup>

“Why would we expect our students to listen to us when a lifetime of advertising has convinced them that drinking beer and having fun are one and the same thing? Why should students listen when local bars offer ‘happy hours’ and other low-price beer promotions?”

— William DeJong, Ph.D.,  
Director,  
The Higher Education Center for  
Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>Weschler, H.; Lee, J.; Kuo, M.; and Lee, H. 2000. *College Binge Drinking in the 1990s: A Continuing Problem. Results of the Harvard School of Public Health 1999 College Alcohol Study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard School of Public Health.

<sup>2</sup>Eigen, L. February 1991. *Alcohol Practices, Policies and Potentials of American Colleges and Universities*. An OSAP White Paper. Rockville, MD: Office for Substance Abuse Prevention.

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, D. 1994. *Breaking the Tradition on College Campuses: Reducing Drug and Alcohol Misuse*. Fairfax, VA: George Mason University.

# FOCUS ON...

## Linking with Other COMMUNITY Resources

Coordinate your organization's prevention efforts with other groups to reach specific sub-populations. When communities look at the issues and problems that threaten their well-being, they may not fully recognize the part that underage drinking may play in those problems. For example, agencies and coalitions addressing youth violence may not know that alcohol is a key factor in homicides, physical or sexual assaults, and manslaughters. Or, groups dealing with teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS may not recognize the extent to which the disinhibitory effects of alcohol contribute to these problems. From litter to homicide, all communities face issues where alcohol plays a role. Being aware of how alcohol contributes to these problems, combining resources with existing organizations, and creating coalitions to fight them effectively is the prevention challenge for our times.

## Calls to ACTION

- Locate an existing resource list of community services from a local health department, religious coalition, law enforcement agency, or social services agency. From this list, seek out like-minded people likely to be receptive to information on how underage drinking impacts the problems they are addressing. Bring your facts, figures, and "stories" about underage drinking to their meetings and try to incorporate your agenda with theirs. A decade of prevention research from the 1990's has taught us that coalitions often succeed where individuals don't.
- Sponsor a booth at a community fair with another organization devoted to adolescent health. Use the opportunity to educate people on the link between that issue and alcohol. Develop a giveaway product such as a bookmark with a local statistic or a quote from a local sheriff, minister, or elected official that links underage drinking with another problem.
- Find the people in your community who are involved with National Red Ribbon Week (the last week in October) or call the National Family Partnership at (800) 705-8997 ([www.nfp.org/main/redribbon.html](http://www.nfp.org/main/redribbon.html)). Join in their plans to inform and motivate adults and youth to reduce substance abuse.

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- Alcohol is a key factor in 33 percent of suicides, 50 percent of homicides, 62 percent of assaults, 68 percent of manslaughters, 50 percent of head injuries, and 41 percent of traffic fatalities. It also plays a large role in domestic abuse and injury, child abuse and neglect, and workplace injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- Some types of youth-perpetrated homicide declined when States raised the minimum drinking age. Additionally, beer consumption rates are often used to predict youth homicide rates.<sup>2</sup>
- For youth, a higher drinking age is associated with fewer deaths due to suicide, pedestrian injuries, and other unintentional injuries.<sup>3</sup>

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup> Prevention Enhancement Protocols System. August 1999. *Preventing Problems Related to Alcohol Availability: Environmental Approaches, Parent and Community Guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, M. and Rebhun, L. 1995. *Alcohol and Homicide: A Deadly Combination of Two American Traditions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, N.E.; Pieper, C.F.; and Robertson, L.S. 1992. The effect of legal drinking age on fatal injuries of adolescents and young adults. *American Journal of Public Health* 82(1):112-115.

“This is an auspicious time for the coalition movement and the prevention field at large. We have constructed a national infrastructure of community coalitions and together we are taking on substance abuse and violence.”

— General Arthur T. Dean,  
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)



# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol, Culture, AND Traditions

Most American communities are a mosaic of diversity and include a broad range of cultures and traditions. These traditions shape how people see the world and can influence their attitudes toward alcohol use. For example, some cultures believe that it is masculine for men to drink, but place sanctions on women for the same behavior. In other cultures, use of alcohol by teenagers may be viewed as a relatively harmless rite of passage and not as an illegal and sometimes dangerous practice. For some groups, like the lesbian/gay community, bars are still a common meeting place. Alcohol may also be used to try to cope with feelings of internalized homophobia found in some members of the lesbian/gay community. Community groups need to be sensitive to cultural differences and recognize that effective prevention programs are not “one size fits all.”

## Calls to ACTION

- Develop a local media campaign to recruit adult mentors for young people from different cultural groups. CSAP’s *Your Time—Their Future* public education materials include print, radio, and television public service announcements showing adults and children of many ethnic backgrounds spending quality time together. Call SAMHSA’s National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 729-6686 or order these materials online at [www.health.org](http://www.health.org).
- Coordinate a local Alcohol Awareness Day in partnership with local cultural organizations. Include workshops on how different cultural beliefs and practices affect young people’s alcohol consumption. Involve leaders of culturally-focused faith communities, men’s and women’s clubs, businesses, and civic organizations. Reach out to the leaders of the lesbian/gay community as well.

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- Acculturation has an enormous impact on drinking patterns. Research shows that while many new immigrants have low alcohol use rates, drinking rates rise among those who become assimilated into the mainstream U.S. culture.<sup>1</sup>
- Although highly variable among tribes, alcohol abuse is a factor in the five leading causes of death for American Indians, including motor vehicle crashes, cirrhosis, suicide, and homicide.<sup>2</sup>
- Alcohol is the main substance used by Hispanic/Latino youth. Approximately 2 out of every 10 Hispanic/Latino teens report using alcohol recently.<sup>3</sup>
- Many stereotypes of racial/ethnic groups are highly inaccurate. For example, use of alcohol and other drugs is low among urban African Americans under age 16 who stay in school.<sup>4</sup>

"To be considered a competent professional, [we] must know more than the universal harm alcohol and other drugs can exact on the human body. Unless prevention messages and treatment modalities are provided within a cultural context, professionals are unlikely to change attitudes or redirect behaviors."

— Dr. Frances Larry Brisbane,  
Dean, School of Social Welfare,  
SUNY at Stonybrook

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). January 1994. *Alcohol Alert No. 23 PH 347: Alcohol and Minorities*. Bethesda, MD: NIAAA.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 1998. *Preliminary Results from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Washington, DC: SAMHSA.

<sup>4</sup>Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP). Last accessed on September 19, 2000. *Prevention Primer on African American Youth*. [www.health.org/govpubs/phd627/afroamer.htm](http://www.health.org/govpubs/phd627/afroamer.htm)

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and Impaired Driving

Of all the substance abuse prevention success stories, the lives saved from preventing impaired driving crashes are perhaps the most dramatic. It is estimated that more than 18,000 lives have been saved from establishing minimum drinking age laws and that the odds of a teenager dying in an alcohol-related crash are half of what they were 15 years ago. Yet, there is still so much more to do. Adults must not become complacent when fewer and fewer high school seniors say they think it is harmful to have five or more drinks once or twice each weekend. The youth population is expected to increase by 8 percent by 2005. It is even more important then, to make sure that prevention messages reach young people to help achieve even lower rates of death and injury from impaired driving. Incidents of alcohol-related traffic accidents often increase during the holiday season, so prevention efforts focused on this issue during this time of year can be particularly critical.

## Calls to ACTION

- December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month. Work with your State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office or State Highway Safety Commission to plan local activities and distribute information. For ideas, visit the [www.3dmonth.org](http://www.3dmonth.org) Web site or call the National Coalition Against Drunk Driving at (202) 452-6004.
- Team up with local movie theaters to produce and show anti-drinking and driving messages during the prom, summer break, and holiday season.
- Encourage local reporters to interview teenagers who have been in impaired driving crashes, either as drivers or victims, and write a story about how it changed their life.

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- For every 100,000 licensed drivers, young drinking drivers are involved in fatal crashes at approximately twice the rate of drivers age 21 and older.<sup>1</sup>
- Even small amounts of alcohol are dangerous for young, inexperienced drivers. In 1998, more 18-year-olds died in low blood alcohol concentration (between .01 and .09) alcohol-related crashes than individuals of any other age.<sup>2</sup>
- About 3 in every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.<sup>3</sup>

“In order to further reduce teenage alcohol-related fatalities, we’ve got to convince young people that underage drinking is uncool, unsafe, unlawful, and socially unacceptable.”

— Millie Webb,  
President,  
Mothers Against Drunk Driving

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). 1999. *1998 Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>NHTSA. 1999. *Traffic Safety Facts 1998—Alcohol*. (DOT HS 808 950). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.

# FOCUS ON...

## Alcohol and You

Adults who are involved in underage drinking prevention need to be aware of the role alcohol plays in their own lives. Many adults are drawn into prevention work because of personal or family history with alcohol, which can mean that they are vulnerable to the same problems they work to prevent in others. Even “experts” can be caught unaware by a drinking problem in their workplace, family, or community, and can be at as much of a loss to know what to do about it as anyone else. Community groups, agencies, and programs must pay attention to their own policies and practices toward alcohol as they set out to keep underage youth from drinking.

## Calls to ACTION

- Ask groups and organizations involved in your prevention efforts to review their own policies regarding alcohol. First, be sure they have one. Ask: Do you serve alcohol at group functions? If so, under what circumstances? Do you accept support from alcohol-related businesses? If so, what guidelines apply? What procedures are in place for helping a member, volunteer, or employee who has signs of an alcohol problem?
- Support and promote National Alcohol Screening Day. Set an example—go through the screening yourself and let others know you have done so. For information on National Alcohol Screening Day, visit the Screening for Mental Health, Inc. Web site at [www.nmisp.org/alcohol.htm](http://www.nmisp.org/alcohol.htm) or call (781) 239-0071.

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- There are approximately 14 million alcoholics in the United States.<sup>1</sup> They are people of every age, cultural group, profession, and faith, including community organizers, counselors, teachers, treatment providers, and others in the alcohol prevention field.
- The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends **no more** than one drink per day for adult females, **no more** than two drinks per day for adult males, and lists several types of individuals—including children and adolescents—who should avoid alcohol completely.<sup>2</sup>

“The best way to teach youth is by adult example.”

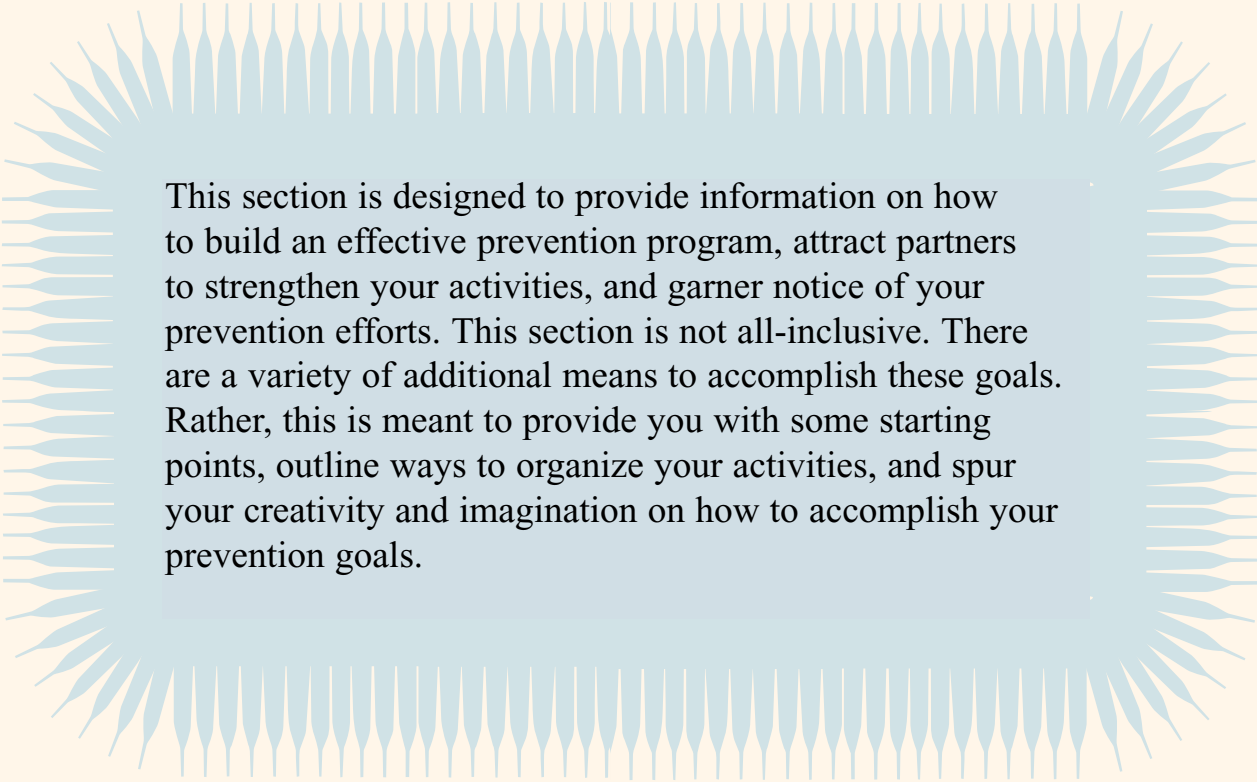
— Mary Jo Podgurski,  
Founder and President,  
Academy for Adolescent Health, Inc.

*Footnotes:*

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). 1994. *Alcohol Health and Research World* 18(3).

<sup>2</sup>United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). 2000. *Nutrition and Your Health: U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans* 5th edition. Washington DC: USDA and HHS.

# PROMOTING YOUR PREVENTION EFFORTS



This section is designed to provide information on how to build an effective prevention program, attract partners to strengthen your activities, and garner notice of your prevention efforts. This section is not all-inclusive. There are a variety of additional means to accomplish these goals. Rather, this is meant to provide you with some starting points, outline ways to organize your activities, and spur your creativity and imagination on how to accomplish your prevention goals.

## Why Focus on Underage Use of Alcohol?

Preventing the use of alcohol by young people is a critical objective for all American communities. The statistics concerning underage drinking are alarming, and the consequences of this consumption are all too often tragic. Alcohol use by young people leads to injury, drowning, unplanned sexual activity, criminal activity, and victimization. Alcohol is a leading problem among schoolchildren and school dropouts today, and alcohol-related traffic fatalities claim many young lives. Underage drinking makes our schools less effective, our highways less safe, and our communities' futures less certain.

While numerous accurate and strong messages about the dangers of illicit drugs can be found in the media, in our homes, in schools, and other places, youth often hear mixed messages about alcohol. In fact, youth frequently receive tacit approval to use alcohol because it is frequently perceived as an inevitability, a rite of passage, or a lesser evil than drugs.

Even if we try to give children the right information about alcohol, we are up against the mixed messages they receive about drinking from movies, television, magazines, music, their peers, possibly their parents' behavior, and other sources. Because of these mixed messages, many teens do not fully grasp or accept how dangerous alcohol use can be. Studies from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) show that many teens do not understand the concept of alcohol content; they think they can sober up by drinking coffee or getting some fresh air. Other teens have difficulty differentiating between alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages. They need factual information from credible sources about alcohol and how it can harm their health.

## How Do Teens Get Alcohol?

It is against the law in all 50 States and the District of Columbia for people under 21 to buy or publicly possess alcohol. Despite the fact that it is illegal, underage drinking is prevalent and starts early. The average age when youth first try alcohol is 11 years old for boys and 13 years old for girls. Some children start drinking at even younger ages. By the time they are high school seniors, more than 80 percent of all teens have used alcohol at some point and approximately 64 percent have been drunk.<sup>1</sup>

Many young people are given alcohol by a family member or take alcohol from the family liquor cabinet. They may receive it from friends at parties, usually at private homes, with or without parental supervision. Other young people simply walk into a store and buy alcohol without ever being asked for identification. Others use fake IDs or ask friends or siblings to make the purchase for them.

## What Is Law Enforcement Doing to Prevent Underage Drinking?

Law enforcement officers do not need to be convinced that alcohol consumption by youth is common and problematic. All too often, they have seen the devastation that drinking can cause among the immature and inexperienced—the tragic aftermath of traffic crashes and other alcohol-fueled incidents and the trauma of assaults, rapes, and other crimes committed under the influence of alcohol.

All 50 States and the District of Columbia have a minimum alcohol purchase age of 21. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) determined that raising the minimum age for purchasing alcohol from 18 to 21 has produced a significant achievement in public health and safety. NHTSA studies have found that the changes in State laws resulted in a 13 percent decline in youth fatalities in car crashes—a decline primarily attributable to decreases in the blood alcohol levels of young drivers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>National Institute on Drug Abuse. 1998. National Survey Results on Drug Use from the *Monitoring the Future Study*, 1975-1998, Volume I: Secondary School Students. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. 1998. Traffic safety facts 1997: A compilation of motor vehicle crash data for the *Fatality Analysis Reporting System* and the *General Estimates System*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation.



However, in spite of these clear gains in public safety, underage drinking persists. This is due in part to the fact that minimum purchase age laws are only as good as the strategies used to enforce them. Law enforcement experts have identified several effective strategies for restricting youth possession of alcohol. Community groups need to be aware of these strategies and support law enforcement officials in their efforts to implement them.

## Zero Tolerance Laws

All States and the District of Columbia have a “zero tolerance” policy with regard to drivers under the age of 21 found to have any measurable blood alcohol content (defined as 0.02 percent or higher). Young drivers who are found to have a blood alcohol content higher than 0.02 percent can have their license immediately seized and revoked and be subject to significant fines. This enforcement strategy is connected to Federal highway dollars to ensure continued State support. There is variation on this policy among the U.S. territories and possessions. For information on laws specific to these areas, community groups may contact their respective Regional Alcohol and Drug Awareness Resource (RADAR) Network Centers. Contact information can be obtained at [www.health.org](http://www.health.org).

## Enforcement of Commercial Availability

Many strategies are used to prohibit commercial sales of alcohol to teenagers, including:

- Requiring positive ID from people purchasing alcohol,
- Imposing fines and penalties on stores that sell to minors,
- Prohibiting people under age 21 from entering bars and nightclubs, and
- Requiring all alcohol servers and sellers to be at least 21 years of age.

These laws are typically enforced through vendor education programs, police patrolling of establishments where liquor is sold, and compliance checks using trained police cadets or volunteers who

are—or appear to be—underage.

## Enforcement of Social Availability

Teens often obtain alcohol at parties or from their parents’ homes. Therefore, many States have instituted laws prohibiting any person from furnishing alcohol to minors and imposing fines on homeowners who host teen drinking parties. Also, many States prohibit alcohol consumption at public places like beaches and parks or require adults who serve alcohol at functions held in such places to obtain permits that include responsible beverage service guidelines. In order to prevent adults from buying kegs of beer for young people, many communities require vendors to tag each beer keg so that the buyer can be identified. If the keg is later found at a party where minors are drinking, the buyer may be subject to sanctions.

## Enforcement of Youth Alcohol Possession Laws

In addition to zero tolerance laws affecting drivers under the age of 21, several other laws restrict youth alcohol possession. Many States revoke the driver’s licenses of young people found possessing or attempting to purchase alcohol. If a youth does not yet have a driver’s license, the ability to obtain one may be delayed. States also prohibit the production, distribution, or possession of fake IDs.



### Learn More About Underage Drinking and Law Enforcement:

There are many excellent resources available on effective law enforcement strategies to reduce and prevent underage drinking. To learn more, visit the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Web site at [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org) or contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse at [askncjrs@ncjrs.org](mailto:askncjrs@ncjrs.org) or (800) 638-8736.

## What Factors Affect Underage Drinking?

### Family:

Although parents, parental figures, and other caring adults sometimes underestimate their impact and influence on the attitudes and behavior of youth, numerous research studies and surveys show that young people rank these adults in their lives as the primary reason or among the top reasons for not using alcohol. That is why it is critical for parents and caring adults to articulate their expectations to youth about alcohol use. With their own behavior, parents establish what is considered normative behavior with alcohol for youth. So, it is important that parents understand the impact their current behavior is likely to have on their child's future behavior. Not only do parents and caring adults directly impact a youth's decisions about alcohol, but they also influence those decisions in a variety of indirect ways. For instance, knowingly or unknowingly, young people typically choose friends based on their perception of their own family's values. This group of friends also impacts a youth's decisions to use or not use alcohol.

#### *Talking to Young People About Alcohol:*

Parents and other caring adults in your community need to know how important it is for them to talk and listen to young people. Remind them to do the following:

- In talking with youth, state that alcohol is a drug and that drinking can lead to serious, even fatal, consequences.
- Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. It affects virtually every organ in the body, and chronic use can lead to numerous preventable diseases, including alcoholism.

- Even one or two drinks in an hour or two can impact motor control, coordination, judgment, and reaction time, which can lead to a variety of impaired decisions, accidents, and other negative consequences.
- Draw a firm line. Alcohol use by anyone under age 21 is unacceptable. Parents and guardians need to set reasonable but clear policies concerning the use of alcohol and drugs, communicate the consequences, and enforce them.
- Model healthy behavior in your own life. Children, even at very young ages, imitate and are influenced by adult actions and behaviors.
- Recognize that young people are very concerned about being accepted by their peers. This need to fit in with the group, just as it affects their choices in clothing and music, is often the reason for their first experimentation with alcohol. Teach the concept of what a true friend is to help diminish unrealistic perceptions of peer pressure.
- Correct the myth that all young people drink. Research shows that 70 percent of people ages 12 to 20 haven't had a drink in the past month.<sup>3</sup>
- Correct the myth that alcohol helps people cope. In reality, the use of alcohol and drugs doesn't solve any problems and frequently leads to more problems.
- Challenge the notion that alcohol helps you relax and feel good. In fact, alcohol can cause slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts. It also lowers inhibitions, which can lead to poor judgment and choices.
- Be aware that control, physical abilities, and independence are particularly important to young people, as are their driver's licenses. Remind them that drinking is a good way to lose all of these.
- Don't be naïve. Respond or seek help if you see signs of alcohol abuse.

<sup>3</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 1999. Summary Findings from the 1998 *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Know the Physical Impact of Alcohol:

It's important to know the facts of how alcohol affects a person. Listed are some of the effects drinking alcohol can have on a 150-pound person. However, recognize that girls and women are typically more affected by alcohol than boys or men, even when they are the same size or weight. (One drink equals 1 ounce of 100-proof liquor, one 5 ounce glass of wine, or one 12 ounce bottle of beer):

<b>2 drinks</b>	blood alcohol level - .05%	feeling less inhibited; some changes in judgment and decision making; loosened restraint; reaction time and fine motor skills slightly impacted; dulled senses.
<b>4 drinks</b> (note - above the legal limit for driving)	blood alcohol level - .10%	ability to concentrate, problem solve, and reason are negatively impacted; exaggerated feelings of anger, fear, and anxiety; ability to retrieve and record finer points of memory is impacted; clumsy actions; slurred speech; reaction time is noticeably slower.
<b>8 drinks</b>	blood alcohol level - .20%	motor functions are significantly impacted; significantly impaired judgment, perceptions, and ability to retrieve and record memories; blackouts; nausea.
<b>12 drinks</b>	blood alcohol level - .30%	impairs the brain's ability to manage even some basic bodily functions; confused, stuporous behavior; possible alcohol poisoning; blacking out; passing out.

### Environment/Community:

Some public health advocates today believe that it is very difficult for individuals to change their behavior when they are surrounded by social, cultural, and physical environmental factors that work against that change. In the long run, many believe it is simply more productive to change environmental factors—like the availability of alcohol to minors—than to change individual behaviors.

To be successful, you must understand how social norms encourage teen drinking. Social norms are standards of behavior that we are taught, either consciously or unconsciously by our parents, peers, school policies, law enforcement policies, religious institutions, cultural traditions, the mass media, advertising, and marketing practices. These behavioral standards affect all of us, but they have a particularly strong effect on young people who are testing boundaries and striving to fit in.

### Community Standards:

Collectively, all members of a community set standards for expected and acceptable behavior. These standards or norms exist in every community for nearly every behavior, including alcohol and drug use. For any underage drinking prevention effort to

be successful, it is necessary to recognize negative norms and develop specific action steps to address them.

### How Can I Find Out What Norms Affect Underage Drinking In My Community?

One of the best ways to identify the norms that encourage or contribute to teen drinking in your community is to conduct a situational analysis. A situational analysis is a simple systematic method of collecting information about your community from a range of sources. Your situational analysis should include a thorough look at your community's population, government, social service agencies, laws, advertisements, alcohol sales, promotional practices, businesses, religious communities, media, and educational resources. It should also identify opinion leaders in important "subcommunities" within your community.

You can collect information through informal methods, such as talking to colleagues, neighbors, friends, and so on, or through more formal means, such as surveys and questionnaires. Studying existing data, such as census results or statistics collected by local schools or social service or enforcement agencies, will also prove helpful.

(continued on page 38)

## Questions Your Community Situational Analysis Should Address:

### *What are the problems related to underage drinking in the community?*

- What is the extent of underage drinking in your community? Which groups of young people are using alcohol? When and where does underage drinking take place?
- How is alcohol marketed in your community? Are young people the target of any of this marketing? Who is doing the marketing?
- How many establishments that sell alcohol are within walking distance in a typical neighborhood?
- What messages do young people within your community receive about alcohol from the media, advertising, enforcement officials, businesses, clubs, their peers, events, and so forth?

### *What are the law enforcement issues?*

- Is the 21-year-old drinking age strictly enforced in your community?
- Do members of the community support the police in their efforts to enforce the drinking age?
- What happens to vendors who habitually sell alcohol to minors?
- What happens to minors who purchase alcohol? Is the infraction taken seriously?

### *What are the resources and factors you need familiarity with to understand the issues in your community?*

- Who are the influential vested citizens in your community?
- What is the racial/ethnic, age, educational, and economic makeup of your community?
- Where do young people most commonly obtain alcohol?
- What existing resources are available in your community—social service organizations, government agencies, youth-serving programs, faith communities, civic groups, volunteer organizations, anti-drunk driving groups, and so on?

### *What are the opportunities to provide education and build skills?*

- Is alcohol education part of the elementary and secondary school curricula in your community? If so, how effective is the education? Does it involve parents and other caring adults? Does it give children the opportunity to role play?
- Are there easily accessible instructional materials for parents on how to talk to their children about alcohol?
- What are parental attitudes toward alcohol in your community? For instance, is alcohol considered a “safe” alternative to drug use?
- When adults serve alcohol in their homes to other adults, are nonalcoholic alternatives also offered? Are underage youth typically served alcohol in private homes?
- Are there other community attitudes, actions, or behavior patterns concerning alcohol that may provide tacit approval of underage drinking?

## Examples of Negative Norms and Ways Your Community Can Change Them

**Norm:** Enforcement of the 21-year-old drinking age in our community is lax.

**Action:** Contact your local law enforcement agency, Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) board, and local elected officials to express your concerns. Suggest ways in which enforcement could be tightened, such as requiring double ID, conducting surveillance operations, educating vendors and servers, or imposing stiff fines on businesses that sell to youth and on youth who purchase. Let the police and other enforcement officials know that your organization or network will support their efforts.

**Norm:** Young people are bombarded with messages in which drinking appears enticing to them.

**Action:** Counteract pro-alcohol messages with health and safety messages targeted to young people. Speak to them in their language and through appropriate channels. Ask the local media to donate free space and time for public service messages encouraging healthy lifestyle choices by young people. “Counter advertisements”—advertisements that show the real consequences of substance use and counter pro-use influences—can be extremely effective in reducing youth use. Contact local cable channels, college radio stations, locally owned movie theaters, and other alternative media outlets that might be willing to air counter advertisements.

**Norm:** Keg parties are a popular form of entertainment for young people in our community and often lead to binge drinking and drinking and driving by teenagers.

**Action:** Contact your local law enforcement agency and ABC board to express your concerns. Suggest that all vendors be required to tag their kegs and record the purchaser. Request that police conduct impaired-driving checkpoints in areas where keg parties are known to commonly take place. Educate parents concerning the dangers of keg parties and potential host liabilities. Explore the option of developing a flyer or pamphlet that outlines these dangers and liabilities that can be given out by the vendor with each keg purchase. Consider having the names of adult violators published in the local media.

**Norm:** Young people learn about alcohol from unreliable sources and do not know that alcohol can be a dangerous substance.

**Action:** Work with your local board of education and school administration to ensure that thorough, quality alcohol education is provided for all students, beginning in elementary school and continuing through high school. Evaluate the effectiveness of this education and work to steadily improve it.

**Norm:** The State or county fair allows easy access to alcohol for underage youth.

**Action:** Work with fair organizers and your local law enforcement agency to strengthen their enforcement efforts. Limit the number of locations on the fair grounds where alcohol can be purchased. A beer garden approach allows you to limit where alcohol is purchased and consumed. Provide training to staff on positive ID practices. Make sure non-alcoholic alternatives are available. Work with organizers to place prevention messages in strategic locations.

Many high schools participate in annual surveys on drug and alcohol abuse and receive data specific to their schools. Contact your local principal to see if this information is available.

For more ideas on constructing a situational analysis instrument, go to page 36 of this guide.

## How Can I Create An Effective Community Network?

Once you have conducted your community situational analysis, it is useful and wise to build a network of community members and organizations who are united in the mutual goal of changing community norms that encourage underage drinking. In building such a network, you will be multiplying your voice in a way that will be difficult for the rest of the community to ignore.

Here are some steps for building community networks:

- Does a community coalition already exist? If there is an appropriate one, join it. If there's not, create your own.
- In creating a network, identify potential network partners, particularly youth organizations and youth leaders.
- Create your sales pitch—why should these potential partners join your underage drinking prevention efforts?
- Invite each partner to participate by e-mail, letter, and if possible, a personal visit.
- Once members are signed on, carefully define the role that each can play. Take advantage of each organization's natural strengths in terms of audience and ongoing communication tools.
- Keep all members informed and motivated.
- Share success stories and “thank you's.”
- Be open to suggestions from the members. This will make the network's communication more interactive and dynamic.

To find your network's focus, direction, and who should be involved, know what's going on in your community. Stay alert to community bulletin boards and attend community meetings and forums. Learn who the key people are, such as the elected officials, civic organization leaders, and prominent local volunteers. It will be critical to ensure that all segments of your community are represented in your network in order to bring the network's message to the community and the resources of the community to the network.

Be a recruiter at all times. Be on the lookout for individuals, agencies, groups, and organizations that can act as intermediaries between your underage drinking prevention messages and the community. Such organizations can provide access to their members, employees, clients, and so on. They also may have resources that they can lend to the effort. Partnering with highly visible intermediaries enhances your program's credibility.

## Identify People Such As...

- Parents and family advocates.
- City council members and other elected officials.
- Teachers, principals, school administrators, and school board members.
- Leaders of community organizations.
- Concerned local businesses and merchants.
- Neighborhood organization leaders and officials.
- Faith and spiritual members.
- Leaders of ethnic and cultural organizations or communities.
- Respected elders.
- Law enforcement.
- Active citizens.
- Youth leaders of all types.

Once your community network is in place, you can begin working together to foster healthy behavior in young people. Your community network should strive to:

- Present clear no-use messages regarding underage drinking.
- Support law enforcement officials in enforcing the 21-year-old drinking age.
- Identify specific community norms or factors that permit or encourage teen drinking and target your efforts toward changing those norms.
- Provide young people with the real facts about the dangers of drinking.
- Teach young people the skills they need to resist the pressure to drink, including media literacy skills to help them recognize and understand the messages they receive from advertising, news, entertainment programs, educational materials, and alternative media, including the Internet.
- Provide young people with safe, healthy, and fun alternatives to drinking alcohol.
- Educate parents and other adults about the warning signs of alcohol use by children, the effects of their own attitudes about alcohol use on their children's behavior, and where to go for help if needed.
- Inform citizens of the seriousness of underage drinking and motivate them to change those community norms that implicitly or explicitly encourage teen drinking.

## Finding Out What Has Been Successful in Other Communities

Why reinvent the wheel? One of the best ways your community group can work to prevent underage drinking in your community is to model your efforts on successful programs implemented in other communities. There are several excellent resources available offering information about the best practices developed or implemented by other prevention programs:

The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's (CSAP's) Decision Support System (DSS) for Substance Abuse Prevention is a new enterprise deploying a highly interactive software program over the World Wide Web. The DSS matches prevention providers' needs with appropriate content and tools. It provides user-friendly training and technical assistance for:

- Integrating knowledge resources and databases about substance abuse prevention;
- Selecting, using, and evaluating science-based prevention programs;
- Managing prevention service information systems.

More information on the DSS can be accessed online at [www.preventiondss.org](http://www.preventiondss.org) or by calling (301) 443-0380.

CSAP maintains the National Registry of Effective Prevention Programs (NREPP), a database that provides information about research-based substance abuse prevention programs. The system is designed to promote partnerships and help communities adapt proven programs to meet their local needs. NREPP can be accessed online at [www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms](http://www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms) or by calling CSAP's Model Programs Dissemination Line at (877) 773-8546.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) supports and conducts biomedical and behavioral research on the causes, consequences, treatment, and prevention of alcoholism and alcohol-related problems. NIAAA can provide recent and relevant information and research findings on underage drinking as well as on treatment and prevention approaches at [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov) or by calling (301) 443-3860.

The U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program also maintains information on model school-based substance abuse and violence prevention programs. This information can be accessed online at [www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS) or by calling (202) 260-3954.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy's (ONDCP) Drug-Free Communities Program is designed to strengthen community-based coalition efforts to reduce youth substance abuse. Information can be accessed online at [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov) or by calling (202) 395-7253.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides information, training, and technical assistance in enforcing underage drinking laws. Information can be accessed online at [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/enforcing/enforcing.html](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/enforcing/enforcing.html) or by calling (202) 616-3663.

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) is a membership organization of over 5,000 community coalitions dedicated to fighting the problems of substance abuse and violence. CADCA maintains a database of best practices. To find out what community groups like yours have done, visit CADCA online at [www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org) or call (703) 706-0560.

## How Can I Raise Public Awareness of Underage Drinking?

One of the most important things your community network can do is to make the general public aware of the seriousness of underage drinking and motivate them to change those community norms that may encourage it. To communicate successfully, you must:

- Choose your goals. Before you begin, know specifically what you want to accomplish.
- Define your audience and learn as much about the group as you can. The more carefully you define your audience, the better chance you have of communicating effectively with it.
- Determine your message and keep it short, simple, and direct.
- Describe the desired behavior. Specifically, in a direct way tell your audience what you

want them to do and motivate them to action. Appeal to their self-interests and the issues that are relevant to them.

- Determine the media best suited to distributing your message. There are numerous ways to communicate with your audience—newspapers, radio, television, Web sites, events, and so on. Select the media best suited to delivering your message.
- Repeat your message frequently. The effectiveness of any communication program builds over time.

The news media can be a critical partner in your effort to raise public awareness of underage drinking. Learning what works in a publicity campaign will greatly increase your chances of successfully placing your message with the right media outlets—those that reach and have credibility with your target audiences.

## Targeting Messages, Selecting Media Outlets, and Building Media Lists

Competition for media space and the public's attention is keen. To successfully deliver your message, you must carefully target your message for both the media and the audience. Begin by identifying those groups of people you want to reach and which media and messages are likely to be the most persuasive. Some audiences, such as prevention professionals or beverage vendors, have specific trade newsletters targeted to them. Other audiences, such as suburban parents, typically read the daily newspaper or local parenting magazines.

People pay attention to those messages that support their values and needs. It is critical to consider and know your audiences. What are their values? What issues concern them? If you recruit a local figure or official to be a spokesperson for the program, select one who will be recognized, accessible, and credible to your target audiences. That may require having more than one spokesperson.

Media outlets come in all shapes and sizes. We all know of the traditional daily newspapers and evening news programs on TV, but there are numerous other types of media outlets that can be



critical to the success of your local campaign. Consider alternative outlets for your message such as employee newsletters, faith community bulletins, Parent/Teacher Association circulars, and community organization newsletters.

Most public libraries have copies of media directories listing all outlets within a market. Use these directories to build your media list. Your media list should include assignment editors at newspapers, radio and TV producers, and reporters who regularly cover such topics as city hall, education, public safety, health, youth, and the like. Before beginning, check with the mayor's office or local prevention agency to see if they already have a local media list and will allow you to use it. If you need to build your own list, here are some ideas:

#### Traditional Media Outlets

- Daily newspapers.
- Weekly newspapers.
- Supplements to newspapers, like Sunday magazines and weekend calendar sections.
- TV news programs and talk shows.
- Radio stations, especially all-news format stations.
- Local parenting or family magazines.

#### Alternative Media Outlets

- Cable TV community bulletin boards and public access channels.
- College radio stations.
- School newspapers—high school and college.
- Parent/Teacher Association newsletters.
- Community organization newsletters.
- Faith community bulletins.
- Employee newsletters of local businesses.
- Shoppers' circulars.
- Community-based listserves, Internet bulletin boards, or other Internet-based news outlets.

## Making Contact with Reporters and Editors

The most common method of communicating with journalists is through a press release. It is the publicist's basic tool and is designed to interest the media in learning more about an event and/or covering an issue or topic. However, large media operations receive hundreds of press releases every day. To ensure that yours is read, you must use the style and format the media prefers. Here are some suggestions for writing press releases:

- Begin with the most important facts. The first one or two paragraphs (called the lead) should present the who, what, where, when, why, and how. Get to the point immediately. The rest of the release should be written with the most important information coming first, least important details held until the end. Most releases are between four and six paragraphs and never longer than two pages.
- Accuracy is critical. Check your facts and make sure that such things as names, dates, and titles are correct.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs. Be brief.
- Write factually and objectively—avoid editorializing and overusing adjectives.
- Be sure to quote local officials and include local examples and initiatives. The local angle is your strongest selling point with local media.
- Avoid using acronyms as much as possible. If you do use them, make sure they are defined (written out) in the first reference.

Other ways to communicate with journalists include pitch letters—letters that introduce an organization or topic to the reporter—and phone calls. Collect your facts before you call and get to the point quickly. It is often wise to learn a reporter's deadline—usually late afternoon—and avoid calling then. E-mail is now a common method of reaching journalists without interrupting them when they are on a deadline.

Developing a positive, on-going relationship with reporters who are interested in alcohol- or health-related events and information can be vitally important to your events, organization, and network. Schedule an initial “deskside briefing meeting” to introduce yourself and inform them about your group’s goals and objectives. Offer to serve as a background resource for stories related to underage drinking in the community. And, most importantly, acknowledge reporters’ work by sending a letter of thanks when a story about your group’s work is published.

## News Conferences

A news conference can be an excellent mechanism for communicating a news event to a large number of reporters at one time; however, calling a news conference and having no reporters show up is like throwing a party and having no one come. Call a news conference only when you have something truly important or newsworthy to announce and can involve a local official or celebrity who will attract news coverage.

If you decide to hold a news conference, notify all media within your market 3 to 5 days before the event. News conferences are best held in the morning or early afternoon to accommodate reporters’ deadlines. If you hold a news conference, remember to:

- Choose a location that is large enough to accommodate reporters, photographers, and camera crews.
- Ensure that there are enough electrical outlets for microphones and recording devices.
- Display a visual with your community network name and logo in a prominent place near the speaker. Visuals can include a banner, podium sign, undersized campaign poster, or relevant chart or diagram.
- Hand out copies of any prepared text, background information, or fact sheets.

## Serving as a Media Spokesperson

Every organization has someone designated to speak to the news media. This role may sound intimidating, but it does not have to be. The secret to successfully representing your organization to the news media is preparation. To prepare for a media interview:

### Here Are Some Activities That Your Group Can Do to Generate Media Attention:

- Announce the creation of your community network to the news media. Discuss your network’s goal and strategies. Highlight the involvement of any key public officials.
- Release findings from your community situational analysis to the news media. Local findings are frequently newsworthy.
- Relate a national policy initiative or comparative statistics to what is happening in your community. Quote local elected or community leaders. Relate human interest stories involving local residents.
- Initiate stories about the serious consequences associated with teen drinking whenever the local town council, county board of supervisors, or the State legislature is considering a bill that relates to underage drinking. Relate the program or campaign goal to a recent drinking or drinking and driving tragedy that has taken place within the community, or connect an upcoming holiday with the predictable rise in alcohol-related auto crashes or incidents.
- Send information to reporters about prevention programs that demonstrate their effectiveness in your community.
- Conduct your own media campaign developing print and radio PSAs; writing letters, feature articles, and op-ed pieces; and Internet applications like Web sites and listserves.

- Learn as much as you can about the report, show, or publication for which you will be interviewed. In the case of a radio or TV show interview, tape and study previous shows. In the case of a print interview, read the reporter’s earlier work.
- Consider what you would like to teach the audience about underage drinking. Decide what you want to say and how to best say it. Remember, media time and space are limited—get to the point quickly.
- Several days before the interview, send the reporter background information to assist with preparation. Your biography or résumé should be included, along with information on the community network.
- Become familiar with underage drinking statistics—both national and local. Frame them creatively. Latest data are always available at SAMHSA’s National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) (800) 729-6686 or [www.health.org](http://www.health.org).
- Be able to discuss alcohol industry marketing practices and what you would like to see in the way of health-fostering ads for youth.
- From the time you greet the reporter until the time you say goodbye, assume that EVERYTHING you say is on the record and may be used in the story!

## Public Service Announcements

Public service announcements (PSAs) are advertising time and space given free to an issue or cause. In the past, radio and TV stations were obligated by law to provide a specific number of hours per month to public service messages. For the most part, these requirements no longer exist, but most stations still recognize the importance of public service advertising and provide airtime to PSAs.

The format in which the PSA is prepared is extremely important. A TV PSA may be a completed piece of video 15 or 30 seconds long. Such spots can be very effective but are also expensive

to produce. A second type of TV PSA is a visual element with narrative copy, which is much less expensive to produce.

Radio stations are an attractive outlet for PSAs. Radio is far more flexible and lends itself to live-copy PSA scripts that are usually read by the on-air personality as time permits. See the Samples section of this Action Guide for sample radio PSAs.

## Promoting Healthy Lifestyles Through Special Events

Special events—such as festivals, fairs, rodeos, powwows, parades, and carnivals—are an integral part of the public life of most American cities and communities. They occur throughout the year, attract people of all ages, help promote civic pride, and build community spirit.

Unfortunately, many special events—knowingly or unknowingly—promote alcohol use and offer youth easy access to alcoholic beverages. Therefore, special events offer great opportunities to change social norms by raising awareness about underage drinking and promoting healthy alternatives.

After you have identified and assessed the special events that take place within your community, you should be able to select an appropriate event to integrate your underage drinking prevention messages. Meet with event organizers early to explain how the event will be a better one for them, for the sponsors, and for the community with healthy messages and policies. Offer your assistance in making the event a safer, more positive one for the community. Work with them to establish event policies and procedures to curtail underage access to alcohol and incorporate “no-use” messages into the event’s overall publicity. Consider the following:

- Ask event organizers to include mandatory ID checks for all alcohol purchasers, limit the number of purchases per person, and institute penalties for event staff who do not enforce the rules.

## How to Assess Special Events in Your Community:

- Identify special events taking place in your community by checking local newspapers, listening to the radio, and watching television.
- Note the organizers and sponsors of these events.
- Attend or have other members of your prevention group attend as many of the events as you can.
- Observe how messages are delivered at these events through signs, billboards, T-shirts, product giveaways, public address announcements, and so on. How many of these messages involve alcohol promotion?
- See if alcoholic beverages are sold at the event. Notice who sponsors the concessions.
- If alcoholic beverages are sold, see if non-alcoholic alternatives also are readily available and marketed.
- See if IDs are carefully checked at the alcohol sales points to ensure that only persons over age 21 are making purchases.
- Observe the consumption of alcoholic beverages by the crowd. Who drinks the majority of the alcohol at the event?
- Look for the participation of any prohealth organizations in the event. How do they deliver their messages? Are these messages effective?

- Offer to help conduct training for event staff working with beverage sales. Include training on how to spot a fake ID and how to manage youth who attempt to purchase alcohol.
- Assist event organizers in setting up comprehensive carding/screening devices, such as separate stations for ID checks and for beverage pouring, double ID checks by two separate staff members, and uniformed security at sales stations.

- Encourage event organizers to reduce the number of alcohol sales points at the event.
- Ask organizers to eliminate alcohol sales near activities designed for children and to institute a “beer garden” that confines sales and consumption of alcohol to one area.
- Ask event organizers to reduce the number of hours when alcohol is sold. Sales can begin 1 or 2 hours after the event opens and end 1 or 2 hours before it closes.
- Suggest that event organizers declare an “Alcohol-Free Day” during which no alcohol will be sold. Combine this day with your prevention messages and activities.
- Work with event organizers to ensure that nonalcoholic beverages are readily available.
- Recommend that event organizers decrease onsite visibility of alcoholic beverage advertising or balance this advertising with promotion of the event’s no-use policies regarding underage drinking.
- Offer to deliver prohealth and safety messages at the event. Work with event organizers to set up a mini-health fair or exhibit booth to promote good health habits. Suggest that periodic public address announcements be made declaring the event alcohol-safe for minors.
- Encourage event organizers to develop written policies and guidelines regarding alcohol sponsorship, promotion, and availability. Urge them to create signage clearly outlining their alcohol policies and how they will be enforced.

## How Can I Tell If My Efforts Have Been Successful?

Evaluation is an essential part of any prevention program. It will allow you to identify your successes and failures and identify ways to implement stronger prevention programs in the future. Of course, your ability to evaluate will be based on the time and resources you have available, but evaluation is critical to your ability to attract other

## Ideas for Creating Your Own Exhibit Area at a Special Event:

- Hang colorful prohealth and safety posters.
- Create murals with no-use messages or pledges. Invite teens to sign the mural.
- Display life-size cutouts of mannequins wearing hats and T-shirts with prevention messages.
- Set up a booth where young people can design T-shirts, hats, or posters with prohealth messages.
- Give out posters, pamphlets, flyers, bookmarks, pins, and stickers with your prohealth messages.
- Have interactive games, puzzles, banners, questionnaires, or pledge cards for use by event attendees.

organizations, apply for funding, and demonstrate the effectiveness of your program to the community.

Your evaluation process should allow you to measure concrete change in your community. Think in terms of facts that your average citizen can understand: “This year there were fewer alcohol-related arrests made at the annual football game,” or “It has been 6 years since there was an alcohol-related traffic fatality on prom night.” Keep track of how many activities in which your community organization has participated and how many people were affected by these activities. If you hosted a booth at the State fair, how many people visited your booth? Based on event attendance numbers, how many other people received your messages through fair signage or public address announcements? If you wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper, how many people read your letter? If you distributed a flyer through a Parent/Teacher Association mailing, how many

parents received your flyer? How many contacted you after receiving it? These kinds of statistics help community members understand the effectiveness of your prevention efforts.

During the needs assessment phase of your campaign, ask yourself who your target audiences are and uncover their attitudes and actions concerning underage drinking. This baseline data will be critical to you in measuring the outcome of your communications effort. During the evaluation phase, ask yourself if you reached those audiences, what messages they received, and how they acted on the messages, if at all.

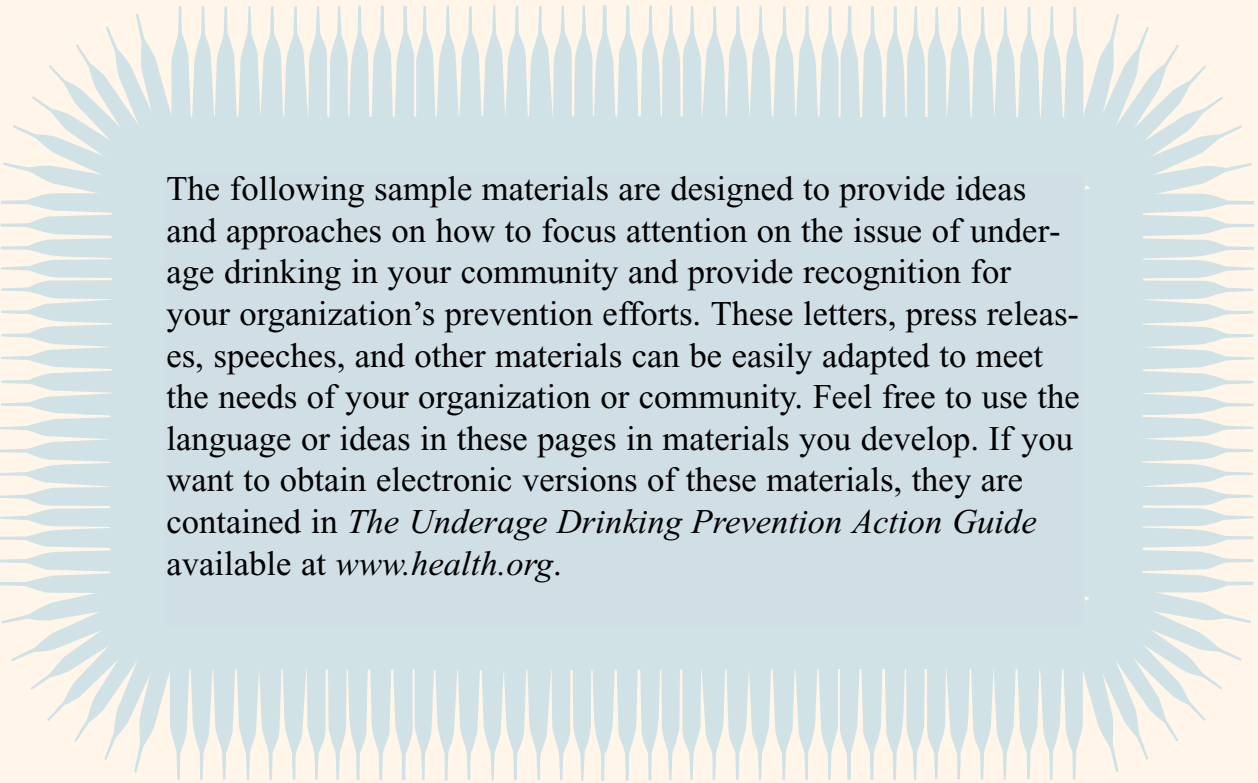
Use your evaluation data to publicize the successes of your efforts and to seek additional community support for your efforts. If possible, create a final report with lessons learned so that other communities can benefit from your experience.



## Evaluation Instruments You May Want to Consider Using:

- Surveys—question members of the target audience directly to see if their knowledge, attitudes, or actions were influenced by your efforts.
- Focus groups and interviews—meet with members of the target audiences to determine the effectiveness of your efforts.
- News media monitoring—collect “clips” (print and electronic) of news media coverage of your efforts.
- Other data collection—other organizations within your community may have ongoing data-collection systems that will provide information to assist you in evaluating your program’s effectiveness. For example, your local school system may take annual surveys regarding students’ attitudes toward and use of alcohol; local law enforcement and beverage control authorities may have relevant data.

# SAMPLES



The following sample materials are designed to provide ideas and approaches on how to focus attention on the issue of underage drinking in your community and provide recognition for your organization's prevention efforts. These letters, press releases, speeches, and other materials can be easily adapted to meet the needs of your organization or community. Feel free to use the language or ideas in these pages in materials you develop. If you want to obtain electronic versions of these materials, they are contained in *The Underage Drinking Prevention Action Guide* available at [www.health.org](http://www.health.org).

# Sample Letter to Sales Outlets

Dear Vendor:

Your help is needed! Every day, several young people die in alcohol-related automobile crashes in this country. In fact, alcohol-related incidents are the major cause of death and injury to underage youth today.

Know the facts, they're sobering. We know that purchase and possession of alcohol by anyone under 21 years of age is illegal in all 50 States and the District of Columbia, but the numbers tell us that we have become complacent, and the results of this complacency are often tragic.

A series of reports prepared by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) revealed that not only do some 10.4 million young people drink in America, but many of them simply walk into a liquor store and purchase alcohol without ever being asked for identification to prove their age. The HHS studies also revealed that many youth do not understand the intoxicating effect of alcohol. These two findings—easy access and ignorance about alcohol's effects—combine to present a frightening prospect for parents, for educators, and for our community as a whole. Ten percent of all drinking in America is done by underage youth.

Underage drinking is a problem for all of us. It makes our highways less safe, our schools less effective, and our future less certain. Name of your organization is creating an Underage Drinking Prevention Program designed to alert all residents to the serious consequences of underage drinking and to motivate people to be part of the solution.

The purchase and possession law for 21-year-olds was enacted to save lives, and when enforced, it works! Please be part of our community-wide effort to save young lives—Don't sell alcohol to minors, and train your staff to check the identification of anyone purchasing alcohol who appears to be close to the legal age. With your help, we will make a difference!

Sincerely,

Your name

Name of city Underage Drinking Prevention Program

# Sample Letter to State and Local Elected Official/Legislator/Enforcement Official

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Alcohol-related incidents claim many young lives each day and our community is not exempt.

The 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, revealed there are about 10.4 million underage drinkers (ages 12 to 20) in America. While the rate of underage alcohol use has remained relatively steady over the past few years, how youth consume alcohol is changing. For instance, there are now approximately 6.8 million underage youth binge drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks in a row) and 2.1 million heavy drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 5 different days in the preceding month). These reports also revealed that youth have easy access to alcohol; many simply walk into a store and buy it without ever being asked for proof of age. Furthermore, the data showed that young people do not understand the intoxicating effects of alcohol; some cannot even distinguish alcoholic from nonalcoholic beverages.

Know the facts, they're sobering. It is clear that underage drinking is a serious problem for all of us. It makes our highways less safe, our schools less effective, and our future less certain.

The law that makes it illegal for persons under 21 years of age to purchase and possess alcohol was enacted to save lives, and, when properly enforced, we know it works. I urge you to evaluate how our community resources can be refocused to help solve the serious problem of underage drinking. As a community we have become complacent, and this complacency is having tragic consequences.

We must arm our young people with information about the harmful effects of alcohol so they can make informed choices when pressured to drink by their peers and by society's mixed messages. We must help our young people make the right choice by strictly enforcing the law. Finally, we need your support in providing funding and in establishing and enforcing underage drinking laws. Call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ for more information on our organization and our efforts.

Sincerely,

Your name

Name of city Underage Drinking Prevention Program



# Sample Speech

Good morning/afternoon/evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today/tonight. I am here to talk about an issue that affects us all. Although the problem involves young people, the causes and the often tragic results belong to all of us.

Alcohol and alcohol-related incidents are a leading cause of death and injury among underage youth in America. In the few hours we spend together this morning/afternoon/evening, somewhere in our country a young person will die because of the combination of alcohol and automobiles.

Know the facts, they're sobering. According to the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, there are about 10.4 million underage drinkers in America. Furthermore, 6.8 million are binge drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks in a row) and 2.1 million are heavy drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 5 different days in the month).

There is no question that underage drinking is a serious problem. The question is what you and I can and are willing to do about it. And that is why I would like to talk to you about an Underage Drinking Prevention Program. The program is designed to give the local community and concerned citizens the tools and strategies to address the underage drinking problem at the grassroots level.

Part of the solution will be to communicate directly with our youth. We want to help them recognize that alcohol is not glamorous and, in fact, that it is dangerous, that it will not make them popular or sexy or successful, but that it could rob them of their future. These are the messages we must get to them, but with the many mixed messages they're already receiving, these messages alone will likely not be enough.

We also have to communicate with the community at large, and, as a community, we have to work together to change those community norms that allow or encourage drinking by underage youth.

I mentioned mixed messages. In our own homes and families, the message about drinking may be a mixed one. Often the message alcohol advertising delivers to young people is not the one we want them to receive. Pay attention to these ads for the next few days. What impression do they leave on youthful minds? They appear to be saying to our young people that drinking this beer or that beer will get you the girl or friends or the sports car. They're leaving the impression that drinking beer goes well with swimming, skiing, and other potentially high-risk recreational activities.

Now, you might say that we all know better than to have a few drinks and then attempt to swim an ocean. But, the sad truth is that many of our young people do not know better. Alcohol-related drownings are a major cause of death among youth.

A lot of attention has been paid to drinking and driving, but it continues to occur. Why would a young person drive when he or she has been drinking? One answer is that most young people do not understand alcohol and its intoxicating effects. Two out of three students cannot distinguish some alcoholic beverages from nonalcoholic ones and most do not understand the concept of alcohol content and do not know the relative strength of different types of alcohol and combinations of alcohol. That's one of the reasons that dozens of young people die each year of alcohol poisoning.

## Sample Speech *(continued)*

Loopholes, laxity, and lip service make the 21-year-old drinking law largely a myth. The result of this laxity is that two-thirds of youth who drink get their alcohol the easy way: They walk into a store and buy it! And I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, it is happening right here in our city/town/community.

Simply put, it's easy for youth to drink alcohol, and that's a problem for all of us. It makes our highways less safe, our schools less effective, and our future less certain. We all have to be part of the solution.

Specifically—

- If you have underage youth, talk to them, and make sure they know the real facts of alcohol use and its very serious consequences.
- Support the enforcement of the purchase and possession law for persons under 21 years of age in your own family, and shop only at those sales outlets in the community that also obey the law.
- And, finally, become active in an Underage Drinking Prevention Program. There are a number of products and activities available to help you spread our important message that alcohol and youth do not mix.

If you want more information, please feel free to speak to me individually today or call me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you for your time and attention. I hope you will agree it was a wise investment in our community and our future.

Thank you.

# Sample Press Release

## Program Announcement

For Immediate Release

Date:

Local Contact:

Telephone:

## New Program Seeks To Change Community Norms That Encourage Underage Drinking

Local citizens and organizations have combined to form the Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Committee and will undertake a community-wide program designed to identify and change those factors and community norms that encourage and allow underage drinking.

The Underage Drinking Prevention Program is designed to raise community awareness of the seriousness of the underage drinking problem and deliver prevention messages to community leaders, public officials, health and prevention professionals, parents, educators, business leaders, and underage youth themselves.

“At a time when our Nation is struggling to contain health care costs, prevention is truly the best investment we can make. And the best place for prevention to begin is with young people and their families,” said Ruth Sanchez-Way, Ph.D., Director, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP).

The primary goal of the program will be to motivate communities to change community standards that encourage youth drinking. Secondary goals will be to (1) deglamorize the promotion and use of alcoholic beverages; (2) increase the number of underage youth who understand the risks associated with alcohol use; and (3) arm these young people with the power to resist the pressure to drink that they often get from peers and media messages.

“Underage drinking is a serious problem and affects all of us, sometimes in the most tragic ways,” said local committee organizer. “This program is designed to rally all parts of the community and to evaluate our community standards that may be encouraging the problem.”

Members of the local coordinating committee are (if available).

*Tailor press releases for use in your city. Quote local leaders and provide a local contact name and phone number.*

# Sample Press Release

## Administrative License Revocation Program

For immediate release

Date:

Local Contact:

Telephone:

## Local Underage Drinking Prevention Committee Recommends Administrative License Revocation Program

The Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Committee today called for new State regulations that would require the suspension or revocation of a minor's driver's license if he or she is convicted of alcohol purchase or possession.

"The privilege of driving is cherished by young people," said committee organizer. "The threat of losing their licenses will, therefore, have a real deterrent effect on young people when they think about drinking."

Numerous States have used Administrative License Revocation (ALR) programs to curb drinking and driving. ALR programs allow a police officer to revoke the license of an intoxicated driver on the spot if the driver has a blood alcohol content of .08 or higher or refuses to take a Breathalyzer test.

The Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Committee is a community-wide network of citizens and organizations committed to identifying and changing those social attitudes and community standards that encourage underage drinking.

"How readily we penalize young people who break the law and purchase alcohol tells them just how serious we are about preventing underage drinking," stated local committee organizer. "At a time when alcohol is claiming more young lives than any other cause, we as a community have to get tough about enforcing the 21-year-old drinking age. It is important to know the facts, they're sobering."

# Sample Press Release

## Sample News Feature

For Immediate Release

Date:

Local Contact:

Telephone:

## Changing Community Norms Offers Promise For Preventing Underage Drinking

The Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Program is targeted to changing community norms in an effort to prevent underage drinking. Young people's alcohol use is an extremely critical problem. This program is designed to give communities the tools and strategies to prevent youth from beginning to use alcohol and to educate those who do drink about the risks they are taking. The Underage Drinking Prevention Program is a community effort and will provide health professionals, educators, public officials, law enforcement officers, community leaders, and youth with the communication tools and strategies needed to reduce the occurrence and acceptance of underage drinking.

The program's primary goal will be to motivate communities to change norms that may encourage or allow underage drinking. The secondary goals of the program are to increase the number of youth who understand the risks associated with alcohol use and to empower them to resist the pressures to drink that they often get from their peers and from advertising.

Reports from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) reveal alarming information on the number of young people who drink, the amount they are consuming, their lack of knowledge regarding alcohol's effects, and the ease with which underage youth can purchase alcoholic beverages.

The 1999 HHS series of reports on underage drinking documented that there are about 10.4 million underage drinkers in America. Furthermore, 6.8 million are binge drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks in a row) and 2.1 million are heavy drinkers (consuming 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 5 different days in the month). Ten percent of all American drinking is done by underage youth. Several studies suggest that large numbers of underage youth are able to purchase alcohol without proper identification.

Two out of three junior high school age students cannot distinguish some alcoholic beverages from nonalcoholic ones. Most young people do not understand the concept of alcohol content and do not know the relative strength of different types of alcohol.

Each community must recognize the serious consequences of underage drinking. The Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Program is an opportunity for communities to work together and make their highways safer, their schools more effective, and the future of their young people more certain.

# Sample Opinion Editorial

*All newspapers and most television and radio stations carry editorial messages. As appropriate, share these suggested editorials with your local media or tailor one for your community.*

## **General**

Several young people die every day in alcohol-related car crashes. In response to this serious problem, Name of your city has launched a community-based Underage Drinking Prevention Program designed to provide the communications tools and strategies we need to establish programs to prevent underage drinking.

The program's primary goal is to motivate our community to change those norms that encourage and allow underage drinking. Secondary goals include increasing the number of youth who understand the risks associated with alcohol use and empowering them to resist the pressure to drink that they often get from peers and media messages.

All members of our community need to recognize the serious consequences of underage drinking. It makes our highways less safe, our schools less effective, and our future less certain. Our community is joining others that are taking action and establishing a program initially developed by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Let's make it less acceptable and more difficult for youth to drink!

Know the facts, they're sobering.

# Sample Opinion Editorial

## **The Influence of Alcohol Advertising**

Alcohol use by underage youth may be illegal, but it's certainly not uncommon in our community. The question isn't whether youth are drinking, but why? How do we curtail the serious amount of underage drinking that's putting them and our community at risk?

The glamorization of alcohol and mixed messages about its use have a very real effect on our community, particularly our young people.

Advertising is a powerful educational tool in America. Young people (whether intentionally targeted or not) are deluged with promotions for alcoholic beverages from the media, from billboards, and at sporting and entertainment events. Too often, a young person's only information about alcohol comes from advertising and his or her peers. Neither is a very reliable source.

Much of the work must be done at the local level, including in our community. Clear messages will produce clear-headed behavior. Communities should teach youth to be educated consumers of all media messages and should demand equal amounts of healthy lifestyle messages in the media, at special events, during sporting activities, and elsewhere.

# Sample Letter to the Editor

*All newspapers print many of the letters they receive from readers. Writing letters to the editor is one simple way to deliver your message to the community.*

Dear Editor:

All parents worry about their children's health and safety. We worry about them doing well in school and staying away from a host of dangers, including drugs. Unfortunately, there's something else we should caution them about, but too often we fail to do so. I'm referring to alcohol and the dangerous mix of alcohol and underage youth.

Know the facts, they're sobering. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse established that there were about 10.4 million underage drinkers in the United States. Furthermore, 6.8 million in this age group were binge drinkers (5 or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the preceding month), and 2.1 million were heavy drinkers (5 or more drinks on the same occasion on at least 5 different days in the preceding month).

Simply put, we, this community, have made it too easy for young people to put their lives and the lives of others at risk through the use of alcohol. The first thing we must evaluate is the message we are sending to young people concerning drinking. What is the message of our own behavior? What is the message of lax enforcement of the law? And what messages do young people receive through the media?

Name of your city is establishing an Underage Drinking Prevention Program. This program is designed to give a local community the tools and strategies needed to create an effective local effort to curb underage drinking. This grassroots program will attempt to motivate individuals and communities as a whole to change those community norms that encourage alcohol use by young people.

A particularly frightening piece of information is that young people do not understand the intoxicating effects of alcohol. In fact, two out of three junior high school students could not tell the difference between some alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages.

All parents and caring adults need to talk to their children about drinking. Make sure their decisions are based on the facts—and not on a beer commercial or pressure from the friend down the block. Messages and materials are available to help. Contact the Name of your city Underage Drinking Prevention Program local coordinator your address and phone number for more information.

Sincerely,

Your name



# Sample PSAs for Radio

## Length: 10 Seconds Each

- Alcohol use is a leading cause of injury and death among youth in our community. If you're an educator, teach; if you're a parent, counsel; if you're underage, don't drink.
- What's a leading cause of injury and death among youth? Alcohol! Educators...Parents...Young people—Know the facts, they're sobering.
- Underage youth and alcohol don't mix. Alcohol is a leading cause of death and injury among young people. Know the facts, they're sobering.
- The image of drinking is parties, good times, and being cool. But, the reality is car crashes, missed classes, broken promises, and gripping addiction. Know the facts, they're sobering.
- If you're underage, the pressures to try alcohol are real. So are the consequences: car crashes, fights, drownings, rape, and addiction. Do yourself a favor. Know the facts, they're sobering.
- Most teens think alcohol doesn't affect them. Most parents think their teens aren't drinking. Think again. Know the facts, they're sobering!
- Underage drinking makes our highways less safe, our schools less effective, and our future less certain. Alcohol and teenagers don't mix. Share the message with those you love.
- Alcohol use is a leading cause of death among teenagers in our community. Keep 'em alive. Enforce 21. Know the facts, they're sobering.

## Length: 20 Seconds Each

- The consequences of underage drinking are serious. Alcohol-related highway deaths are a major killer of teens and young adults today. Alcohol use is associated with youth homicides, suicides, and drownings. The solution is simple—if you're underage, don't be under the influence! Know the facts, they're sobering.
- The average college student consumes more than 34 gallons of alcoholic beverages a year. Half a million high school students report weekly drinking binges. Alcohol-related crashes are a leading cause of injury and death among teenagers. The numbers just don't add up, and it's everybody's problem!

## Length: 30 Seconds

- The average college student consumes more than 34 gallons of alcoholic beverages a year. Beer consumption by college students is just short of 4 billion beers. If these college beer cans were stacked end to end, the stack would reach the moon and beyond. The typical student spends more money on alcohol than on textbooks. Half a million high school students report weekly drinking binges. Alcohol-related crashes are the leading cause of injury and death in teenagers. Know the facts, they're sobering. For more information, contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at (800) 729-6686 or online at [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

*Add your community organization's tag line and contact information to the end of any of these PSAs.*

# RESOURCES

Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group Headquarters, Inc.  
1600 Corporate Landing Parkway  
Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617  
888-4AL-ANON (meeting information)  
[www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services  
Grand Central Station  
P.O. Box 459  
New York, NY 10163  
212-870-3400  
[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
1230 West Peachtree Street, NW  
Atlanta, GA 30309  
404-487-5700  
[www.bgca.org](http://www.bgca.org)

Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)  
5600 Fishers Lane, Rockwall II  
Rockville, MD 20857  
301-443-0365  
[www.samhsa.gov/csap/index.htm](http://www.samhsa.gov/csap/index.htm)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30333  
404-639-3311  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America  
901 North Pitt Street, Suite 300  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703-706-0560  
800-54-CADCA  
[www.cadca.org](http://www.cadca.org)

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)  
P.O. Box 541688  
Dallas, TX 75354-1688  
214-744-6233  
800-GET-MADD  
[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

National Alliance for Hispanic Health  
1501 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-387-5000  
[www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org)

National Asian Pacific American Families  
Against Substance Abuse, Inc.  
340 East Second Street, Suite 409  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
213-625-5795  
[www.napafasa.org](http://www.napafasa.org)

National Association for Children of Alcoholics  
11426 Rockville Pike  
Suite 100  
Rockville, MD 20852  
301-468-0985  
888-554-COAS  
[www.health.org/nacoa](http://www.health.org/nacoa)

National Black Child Development Institute  
1101 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-833-2220  
[www.nbcdi.org](http://www.nbcdi.org)

## Resources *(continued)*

National Council on Alcoholism  
and Drug Dependence, Inc.  
12 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10010  
212-206-6770  
[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse  
and Alcoholism (NIAAA)  
6000 Executive Boulevard - Willco Building  
Bethesda, MD 20892-7003  
301-443-3860  
[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)  
6001 Executive Blvd  
Bethesda, MD 20892-9561  
301-443-1124  
[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse  
Prevention Project  
330 North Wabash Avenue  
Suite 2100  
Chicago, IL 60611  
800-307-4PTA  
312-670-6782  
[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Office of Minority Health Resource Center  
P.O. Box 37337  
Washington, DC 20013-7337  
800-444-6472  
301-230-7199 (TDD)  
[www.omhrc.gov](http://www.omhrc.gov)  
Parent Resources and Information  
on Drug Education, Inc. (PRIDE)  
3534 South 108<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68144  
402-397-3309  
[www.pride.org](http://www.pride.org)

SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse  
for Alcohol and Drug Information  
P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20847-2345  
800-729-6686  
800-487-4889 (TDD)  
877-767-8432 (linea gratis en español)  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

Students Against Destructive Decisions  
P.O. Box 800  
Marlboro, MA 01752  
800-787-5777  
[www.nat-sadd.org](http://www.nat-sadd.org)

UNITY (United National Tribal Youth, Inc.)  
P.O. Box 25042  
Oklahoma City, OK 73125  
405-236-2800  
[www.unityinc.org](http://www.unityinc.org)

### Internet Resources

CSAP's National Registry of Effective  
Prevention Programs  
[www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms](http://www.samhsa.gov/csap/modelprograms)

Early Childhood Educators' and  
Family Web Corner  
[users.sgi.net/~cokids](http://users.sgi.net/~cokids)

National Network for Family Resiliency (NNFR)  
[www.nnfr.org](http://www.nnfr.org)

Office of National Drug Control Policy  
[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)  
[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)  
For youth: [www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)

Parenting Is Prevention Project  
[www.parentingisprevention.org](http://www.parentingisprevention.org)

Partnership for a Drug-Free America  
[www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org)

Strengthening America's Families  
[www.strengtheningfamilies.org](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration (SAMHSA)  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

The National Parenting Center  
[www.tnpc.com](http://www.tnpc.com)



National Clearinghouse for  
Alcohol and Drug Information  
P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD 20847-2345  
800-729-6686  
TDD 800-487-4889  
línea gratis en español  
877-767-8432

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PAID  
Columbia, MD  
Permit #259

**CSAP** Center for  
Substance Abuse  
Prevention  
**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration