

UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION NATIONAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

TALKING POINTS

Problem

Underage drinking continues to be a national public health issue, especially among adolescents. An estimated 10 million people under the age of 21 in the United States drank alcohol in the past month.¹

Underage drinking puts children at risk for a variety of short- and long-term physical and emotional problems. It also affects and endangers the lives of those around them.²

In the words of The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, "Underage alcohol use is everybody's problem—and its solution is everybody's responsibility."³

Mission

The goal of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) "Talk. They Hear You." Underage Drinking Prevention National Media Campaign is to reduce underage drinking among children aged 9 to 15 by engaging parents in prevention behaviors.

Congressionally Mandated Campaign

The SAMHSA Underage Drinking Prevention National Media Campaign is mandated under the Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP) Act.⁴ The STOP Act was created to engage communities and parents to take on the responsibility of preventing underage drinking. The policy calls for modified enforcement of drinking laws, steps to reduce alcohol's availability to teenagers, increased research on underage drinking, an adult-oriented media campaign, and improved monitoring of alcohol advertising to youth.

Audience

The Campaign will reach parents and caregivers of children between the ages of 9 to 15 through radio, television, and print ads; online PSAs; social media; partnership networks; and direct outreach.

Knowledge Base

The Campaign will add to the current knowledge base about underage drinking prevention. Findings from analyses, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups and interviews with parents, caregivers, and children aged 9 to 15 informed the development of the Campaign.

The Facts

More than 80 percent of children say parents are the leading influence in their decision to drink or not.⁵ Most 6-year-olds know that alcohol is only for adults. Between the ages of 9 and 13, children start to think differently about alcohol.⁶ Many children begin to think underage drinking is OK. Some even start to experiment. It is never too early to talk to your children about alcohol.

Cost to Society

Underage drinking cost the United States \$62.0 billion in 2010. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth.⁷

The Consequences of Drinking

Children who drink alcohol are more likely to:

- » Use drugs.
 - Frequent binge drinkers (nearly 1 million high school students nationwide) are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including using other drugs such as marijuana and cocaine.⁸
- » Get bad grades.
 - Children who use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor school performance compared with nondrinkers.⁹
- » Suffer injury or death.
 - In 2009, an estimated 1,844 homicides; 949,400 nonfatal violent crimes such as rape, robbery, and assault; and 1,811,300 property crimes including burglary, larceny, and car theft were attributed to underage drinking.¹⁰
- » Engage in risky sexual activity.
 - Young people who use alcohol are more likely to be sexually active at earlier ages, to have sexual intercourse more often, and to have unprotected sex.^{11,12}
- » Make bad decisions.
 - Drinking lowers inhibitions and increases the chances that children will engage in risky behaviors or do something they will regret when they are sober.^{13,14}

» Have health problems.

- Young people who drink are more likely to have health issues such as depression and anxiety disorders.¹⁵

Partnership Development

The Campaign will bring together organizations and people who are passionate about preventing underage drinking. Partners will have the opportunity to be part of a network of national organizations, stakeholders, and the federal government to share ideas and resources and to reach more audiences at the community, state, and national levels. Partners will be recognized as national leaders in underage drinking prevention.

References

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