

FOREWORD

This document is excerpted from:

The September 2016 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking

Foreword

As the Principal Deputy Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Chair of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD), I am proud to present the 2016 Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking. This is the eighth Report to Congress, which is mandated by the Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-422) and represents the contributions of many federal agencies and all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The Report highlights the activities to reduce underage drinking undertaken by the federal agencies that participate in the ICCPUD. It also includes survey results from the states describing their underage drinking prevention programs, enforcement efforts, and expenditures on underage drinking prevention.

Underage drinking is one of our nation's significant public health problems, leading to thousands of deaths every year through motor vehicle crashes, violence, alcohol poisoning, and other causes. Every day an estimated 2,100 children ages 12 through 14 begin using alcohol. Among 12- to 20-year-olds, 23 percent reported using alcohol in the last month. These young people face a number of harmful potential consequences, including death or injury, impaired brain function, decreased academic performance, and increased risk of developing an alcohol use disorder later in life.

Despite these troubling data, the overall trend is encouraging. Since 2004, past-month alcohol use by underage drinkers has declined by 21 percent, and past-month binge drinking (the consumption of four drinks in a row for a female or five for a male) has decreased by 30 percent. This trend is promising and suggests that policy changes at the local, state, and federal levels as described in this Report to Congress may be having an effect.

One area of concern that stands out against the general trend of improvement is binge drinking among college students. More than 29 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days. College students binge drink at higher rates than their same-age peers who are not attending college, suggesting that aspects of the college environment influence drinking practices.

The progress that has been made in preventing and reducing underage drinking, and the problems that remain, make clear the need for continued efforts to address underage drinking and protect our young people from its harms. The most effective approach will be sustained cooperation at all levels of government, and in our universities, schools, communities, and families, to implement strategies that have proven to be effective. It is my hope that this annual Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking will provide critical information for all concerned Americans about the scope of the problem and meaningful solutions to address it.

Kana Enomoto

Principal Deputy Administrator

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration