

# Family Policy Resource

## The Impact of Underage Drinking on Youth and Society

### DRINKING AND DRIVING

- Alcohol is a major factor in teen traffic fatalities nationwide. In 2002, 29% of teen traffic deaths involved a teen driver who was drinking.<sup>1</sup>

### SUICIDE AND OTHER DEATHS

- Suicide attempts among heavy-drinking adolescents were three to four times greater than among nondrinkers.<sup>2</sup>
- Half of all youth deaths in drowning, fires, suicide, and homicide are alcohol related.<sup>3</sup>
- More teens die as a result of alcohol use than all other illegal drugs combined.<sup>4</sup>

### ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE

- Adolescents are more vulnerable to alcohol addiction because of their underdeveloped central nervous system.<sup>5</sup>
- Young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to become dependent than their peers who don't drink until 21.<sup>6</sup>

### EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN

- While alcohol acts as a sedative to adults, teens show more sensitivity to the stimulating effects of alcohol. Therefore, teens are more likely to drink past the points where adults would end up passing out.<sup>7</sup>
- The negative effect of alcohol lasts far longer in a teen brain than in an adult (up to two weeks).<sup>8</sup>
- The hippocampus, which is responsible for forming new memories, was noticeably smaller in youth who abuse alcohol than in their non-drinking peers.<sup>9</sup>

### RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

- High school drinkers are two and a half times more likely to have had sex in the past three months as compared to non-drinkers.<sup>10</sup>
- Teenage girls who binge drink are up to 63% more likely to become teen mothers.<sup>11</sup>
- Research has associated adolescent alcohol use with high-risk sex.<sup>12</sup>

### SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Alcohol is the #1 date rape drug.<sup>13</sup>
- Alcohol use by the offender, the victim, or both, increases the likelihood of sexual assault by a male acquaintance.<sup>14</sup>
- Approximately one-half of sexual assault cases involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, victim, or both.<sup>15</sup>

### DRUG ABUSE

- More than 67% of young people who start drinking before the age of 15 will try an illicit drug. Children who drink are 7.5 times more likely to use any illicit drug, more than 22 times more likely to use marijuana, and 50 times more likely to use cocaine than children who never drink.<sup>16</sup>

### FINANCIAL COST

- Underage drinking cost the nation \$62 billion in 2001, the most recent year for which estimates are available.<sup>17</sup>
- Underage drinking cost the state of Utah \$218.1 million in 2013.<sup>18</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Lee, Tom, "Ask A Specialist: How Can We Help Our Teens Drive Safely?" *Utah State University-Utah State Today*, 2004 <http://www.usu.edu/today/index.cfm?id=33966>
- <sup>2</sup> "Bad for Behavior," *Parents Empowered*, <http://parentsempowered.org/why/behavior/>
- "In 2014, suicide was the leading cause of death for Utahns ages 10 to 17 and 18-24."** see: Complete Health Indicator Report of Suicide. Retrieved on February 1, 2017 from *Utah Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Informatics*, Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health website. [https://ibis.health.utah.gov/indicator/complete\\_profile/SuicDth.html](https://ibis.health.utah.gov/indicator/complete_profile/SuicDth.html)
- <sup>3</sup> D.A.R.E "Keeping Kids Drug Free." *Missouri Police Chiefs*, <http://www.mopca.com/mpca.nsf/ContentPage.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=4EAF7E1DE6400E6C862577D6006C82B6>
- <sup>4</sup> "Underage Drinking: Dangers & Solutions." *Mountainlands Community Health Center, Inc.* <http://mountainlands.org/2016-alcohol-awareness/>
- <sup>5</sup> Blum, K., Febo, M., et al., "Neurogenetic and Epigenetic Correlates of Adolescent Predisposition to and Risk for Addictive Behaviors as a Function of Prefrontal Cortex Dysregulation." *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*, May 1, 2015. US National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4442554/>
- <sup>6</sup> "Underage Drinking in Utah, the Facts," *Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)*, March 2015. <http://www.pire.org/documents/DETC/cost-sheets/UT.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> "Know! April is Alcohol Awareness Month," *Collaborating For Youth*, citing American Medical Association (2003). Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Use on the Brains of Children, Adolescents, and College Students. <http://www.cfygettysburg.com/the-cfy-news-feed/tag/Drinking%20and%20Driving>
- <sup>8</sup> "The sobering truth about underage drinking." *Parentpowermt*, Montana.gov Official State Website, <http://parentpower.mt.gov/problem.shtml>
- <sup>9</sup> Bonnie RJ, O'Connell ME, "Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility." *National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Developing a Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking*, National Academies Press, 2004. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK37591/>
- <sup>10</sup> "Drinking and Risky Sexual Behavior." *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth*, <http://www.camy.org/resources/fact-sheets/drinking-and-risky-sexual-behavior/>
- <sup>11</sup> "Underage Drinking in the United States: A Status Report, 2005" *The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth*, March 2006, p. 5 [http://www.camy.org/archive2015/research/Underage Drinking in the United States A Status Report 2005/ includes/status0306.pdf](http://www.camy.org/archive2015/research/Underage%20Drinking%20in%20the%20United%20States%20A%20Status%20Report%202005%20includes/status0306.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> "Underage Drinking: A Major Public Health Problem," *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institutes of Health*, Alcohol Alert no.59 <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa59.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> "Alcohol Most common "Date Rape" Drug, Law Enforcement Officials Say, *Partnership for Drug-Free Kids*, 2013. <http://www.drugfree.org/news-service/alcohol-most-common-date-rape-drug-law-enforcement-officials-say/>
- <sup>14</sup> "Underage Drinking: A Major Public Health Problem," *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institutes of Health*, Alcohol Alert no.59 <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa59.htm>
- <sup>15</sup> Abbey, A., Zawacki, T., et al., "Alcohol and Sexual Assault." *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*, <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh25-1/43-51.htm>
- <sup>16</sup> "Start Talking Before They Start Drinking" A Family Guide, *U.S Department of Health and Human Services Ad Council*. [http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/Underage\\_Brochure\\_508final.pdf](http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/media/Underage_Brochure_508final.pdf)
- <sup>17</sup> "Underage Drinking in the United States: A Status Report, 2005" *The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth*, March 2006, p. 10 [http://www.camy.org/archive2015/research/Underage Drinking in the United States A Status Report 2005/ includes/status0306.pdf](http://www.camy.org/archive2015/research/Underage%20Drinking%20in%20the%20United%20States%20A%20Status%20Report%202005%20includes/status0306.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> "Underage Drinking in Utah, the Facts," *Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)*, March 2015. <http://www.pire.org/documents/DETC/cost-sheets/UT.pdf>