

# The Impact of Underage Drinking

**The Impact of Underage Drinking** is a series of information pages designed to provide general information about some of the consequences of underage drinking.

According to the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey, alcohol continues to be the most widely used drug among Illinois youth. Survey results show that in the past year more students drink alcohol than use cigarettes, inhalants, and marijuana combined.

Underage drinking is the focus of the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success program. Through this program, communities in Illinois are provided with resources to prevent the onset and reduce the progression of underage drinking and its related problems.

## Social Consequences

Youth who drink alcohol increase their risk for a wide variety of negative social consequences. The issues they face range from problems with family and friends to physical harm, legal trouble and financial difficulties.

Frequent heavy underage drinkers are more likely than their nondrinking peers to:

- Be in fights (62% vs 23%)
- Be injured in a fight (13% vs 2%)
- Feel unsafe or threatened at school (19% vs 6%)
- Be hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend (23% vs 6%)
- Report being forced to have sex (18% vs 5%)

Studies also report that high school and college age drinkers reduce their future job earning potential by two to nine percent. Even those underage drinkers who do not develop alcohol dependence problems as adults may experience lower standards of living over the course of their lives because of the impacts of their high school and college drinking. These impacts may include:

- Loss of driver's license
- Arrests or prison records
- High medical costs for injuries, sexually transmitted diseases or addiction
- Lower school grades, suspensions or expulsions
- Unplanned pregnancies



## **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CONSEQUENCES**

Frequent alcohol use can jeopardize a young person's ability to make prosocial decisions. Research shows that frequent and heavy use of alcohol has been linked with low self-esteem, depression, anti-social behavior, and anxiety. The consequences of their drinking may have lifelong impacts on their social and family relationships in adolescents.

- They may be stigmatized by their peers as aggressive, violent or inappropriate in their behavior while drinking.
- Family members who struggle to help or control an underage drinker's behavior can become resentful, feel guilty or blame themselves and other family members for the drinker's problems.
- Teens who use alcohol are more likely to have sex, have sex with more partners, and not use birth control or protection from sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Teen parents often are isolated from their peers due to their childcare responsibilities.

## **LEGAL CONSEQUENCES IN ILLINOIS**

In Illinois, underage drinkers and their parents or other adults who supply them with alcohol, are at risk for facing legal issues related to their drinking.

- It is against the law for adults to knowingly permit, authorize, or enable consumption of alcohol by an underage person. If a death or injury results from underage use of alcohol that is provided by a parent or other adult, there may be criminal charges.
- Possession of alcohol by those under 21, even if they are not drinking, can result in suspension of their driver's license, community service and/or fines.
- Drivers under the age of 21 caught with any trace of alcohol in their system will lose their driving privileges under Illinois' Zero Tolerance Law. If convicted of Driving Under the Influence (DUI), they face losing their driver's license for two years for a first conviction. These consequences may impact their ability to attend school or a job.
- Possessing a fake ID or providing an ID to someone under the age of 21 for the purpose of buying or consuming alcohol is a Class A Misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and fines up to \$2,500.

## **REFERENCE SOURCES**

- R. Hingson, and D. Kenkel. 2004. Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility
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- [Substance Use and Sexual Health Among Teens and Young Adults in the United States](#), The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, March, 2013
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- [Effects and Consequences of Underage Drinking](#), U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, September 2012