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.

The Costs to Communities and Society

Underage drinking costs the citizens of the United States $57-62 billion each year. The impact to Illinois citizens is $2.8 billion. These expenses are related to medical care, work loss, criminal justice, and property damage, among others, due to injuries, high-risk sex, violence, traffic crashes and other consequences of youth alcohol use.

Three-quarters of the total cost of underage alcohol use is related to binge drinking. Violence (homicide, suicide, aggravated assault) and traffic crashes attributable to underage alcohol use represent the largest costs for the state and nation. These expenditures are mostly imposed on those other than young drinkers through, for example, publicly funded programs, insurance premiums and claims, and pain and suffering to family members and victims.

PROBLEMS AND COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH UNDERAGE DRINKING

Underage alcohol-related problems cost U.S. society an average of $4,680 per underage drinker or $2,210 per U.S. resident ages 14-20. In Illinois, this translates to $2,283 per year for each youth, or $3.94 per drink consumed by underage drinkers which is significantly less than the taxes collected per drink ($0.85-$0.90).
REFERENCE SOURCES

• “Underage Drinking in the United States,” Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), March 2015