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For Immediate Release

National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

SPRINGFIELD, IL –December is “National Impaired Driving Prevention Month,” a time to raise awareness about the consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, but also to learn how to prevent impaired driving. According to the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 20.7 million people age 16 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year and 11.8 million drove under the influence of illicit drugs.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 37,461 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2016, and 28 percent (10,497) of those fatalities occurred in a crash during which a driver had a blood alcohol concentration over the legal limit of .08. In the United States from 2012 to 2016, nearly 4,000 people have been killed in December crashes that involved drivers with BACs over the legal limit of .08. During December 2016 alone, nearly 800 people lost their lives in traffic crashes involving a drunk driver.

Further, According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), 40 percent of traffic fatalities during the holidays involve a driver who is impaired by alcohol, compared to the 28 percent for the rest of December. There is a 155 percent increase in violations for driving under the influence (DUI) offenders on New Year’s Eve.

During an evening of drinking, it’s easy to misjudge how long alcohol’s effects last. Even after someone stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream, impairing judgment and coordination for hours.ⁱ

“It’s important to remember that impaired driving is 100% preventable,” comments Karel Homrig, Executive Director of Prevention First. “Families, school, and communities can become involved in raising awareness and play a role in the prevention of impaired driving, particularly during the holidays.”

One place for communities to start is to have an open conversation about how underage drinking and impaired driving is affecting the health and safety of community members. Community conversations are a chance for community members to hear the facts, hear from each other, and create a plan for a safe and healthier community.

Often, communities consider their alcohol environment to be established and unchangeable. But when it comes to issues like drinking and impaired driving, communities can create, change, or strengthen their own alcohol environment by developing local alcohol policies to reduce underage drinking, impaired driving, and alcohol misuse. Learn more at the Prevention First Alcohol Policy Resource Center: <https://www.prevention.org/Alcohol-Policy-Center/>.

Prevention First is Illinois’ ONLY nonprofit resource center specializing in preventing alcohol and other drug use among youth and pregnant women.



For communities with a coalition already in place, the coalition can encourage local law enforcement to conduct frequent sobriety checkpoints with strong community awareness. They can also implement alcohol training programs for servers and sellers of alcohol, and organize a media campaign with letters to the editor, social media posts, etc.

Schools can start a Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter by contacting robyn.block@prevention.org, or consider implementing effective programs that provide substance abuse prevention programs, by visiting <http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/landing.aspx>.

Parents can talk to their kids about the dangers of impaired driving. This free toolkit from the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids can help: <https://drugfree.org/article/talk-with-your-kids/>. The Partnership also provides a help line (1-855-378-4373) and live chat at <https://drugfree.org/article/get-one-on-one-help/>.

Parents can also keep themselves safe as they attend parties, and as hosts, keep their guests of all ages safe. Tips include:

- It's okay to host a party with no alcoholic beverages.
- If you do serve alcohol, offer plenty of non-alcoholic beverages, and serve the alcohol away from the non-alcoholic drinks.
- If you serve alcohol, provide food.

If you are attending a party:

- If you plan to drink, use a designated driver, who is someone who has consumed no alcohol.
- Pace yourself. Know what constitutes a standard drink (12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol; or 5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol; or 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol) and have no more than one per hour.
- Have "drink spacers"—make every other drink a nonalcoholic one.

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¹National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. www.niaaa.nih.gov. 301.443.3860 NIH Publication No. 16-5639
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