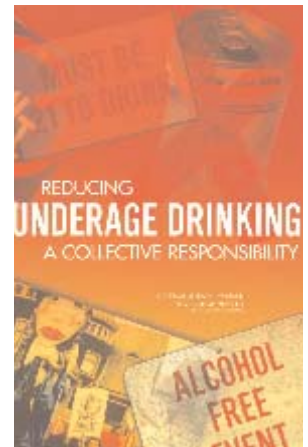


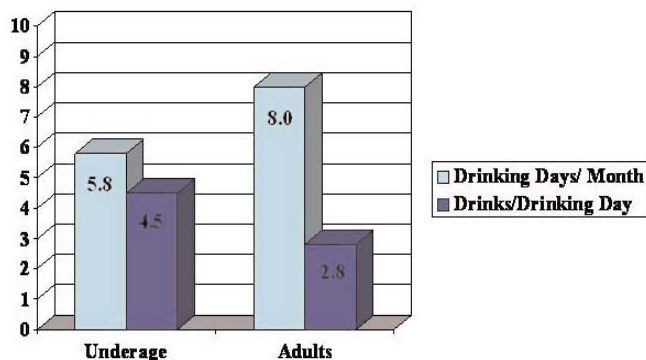
# REDUCING UNDERAGE DRINKING: A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The prevalence and toll of underage drinking in America is widely underestimated: it costs the nation a conservatively estimated \$53 billion annually. More young people drink alcohol than smoke tobacco or use marijuana. Almost half of high school seniors report drinking in the last 30 days, compared to those who report smoking tobacco (27 percent) or using marijuana (22 percent). Underage drinking is not just a problem among older teens. Almost one in five eighth graders report recent use. Youthful drinkers tend to drink more heavily than adults, increasing the risk of harmful consequences. Despite the magnitude of the problem, the federal government invests 25 times less in underage drinking prevention (\$71.1 million in FY 2000) than on prevention of illegal drug use (\$1.8 billion in FY 2000).



**The problem of underage drinking in the United States is endemic and, in the committee's judgment, is not likely to improve in the absence of significant new intervention.**

Youth Tend to Drink More Heavily Than Adults



Source: National Household Survey, 2000

While a substantial decline occurred in the 1970s and 1980s in the proportion of youth who report drinking, there has been very little change in the past decade. In fact, the proportion of high school seniors reporting current drinking (within the past 30 days) was the same in 2002 as it was in 1993 (48.6 percent). This stability of risky behavior suggests that the problem is not likely to improve in the absence of significant new intervention.

Against this backdrop, Congress requested the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine to review the evidence on various programs aimed at underage drinking and to recommend a strategy to reduce and prevent it. The proposed strategy views reducing underage drinking as a collective responsibility. It identifies 10 components for action by national, state, and local government; the alcohol and entertainment industries; retailers, restaurants and bars; colleges and universities; schools; law enforcement agencies; community organizations; and parents and other adults.

## A FOCUS ON STATES AND LOCALITIES

Significant action will be required at the national level on many of these components, especially in developing and implementing an adult-oriented media campaign, conducting research, and monitoring progress. While states can augment the federal initiatives in these areas, the committee's strategy specifies three additional areas where states and localities play a significant complementary and reinforcing role:

- State-level leadership,
- Community mobilization, and
- Restricting youth access to alcohol.

***State-level Leadership.*** States have an important leadership role—both in creating coordinated state-wide action and in providing guidance and resources to local communities. States receive money from a variety of federal government sources to help prevent and reduce underage drinking, and many states invest their own resources as well. However, many states have not designated a lead agency to establish a common vision and ensure a coordinated prevention response among the variety of state agencies, including health and human services, traffic safety, criminal justice, law enforcement, the alcohol beverage control body, and others.

The strategy proposed in this report recommends that states:

- ***designate a lead agency*** to coordinate and spearhead its activities and programs related to underage drinking and produce an annual report that describes relevant activities and progress;
- ***support community mobilization efforts;***
- ***raise state excise taxes on alcohol***, indexed to inflation, particularly on beer, the beverage of choice among underage youth; and
- ***evaluate the effects of laws and programs*** designed to restrict youth access to alcohol.

The committee also suggests that states produce annual reports that describe their activities and examine signs of progress in implementing their prevention strategies.

***Community Mobilization.*** Community coalitions aimed at curbing underage drinking are valuable adjuncts to state and local government interventions. Such coalitions, which include people with diverse perspectives, interests, and responsibilities, can provide the

political will and organizational support for implementing strategies that have been proven to work against underage drinking. They also contribute to a local culture in which underage drinking is considered a serious and unacceptable problem, which lends support for heightened enforcement of the laws against underage drinking. By providing a context that supports recommended interventions, community mobilization efforts increase the overall likelihood of success of such interventions. The strategy recommends that:

- *Community leaders assess their community's particular problems and resources and tailor their efforts to combat underage drinking accordingly* using effective approaches including community organizing, coalition building, and strategic use of the mass media to support policy changes and enforcement;
- *The inclusion of colleges and universities* in collaboration and implementation efforts for a range of interventions; and
- Elementary, secondary, and high school education programs should *be evidence-based and should avoid interventions that rely on provision of information alone or fear tactics.*

**Restricting Access.** By urging greater emphasis on restricted access, the report offers a wake-up call for parents and other adults from whom youth generally obtain alcohol—parents who allow drinking parties in their homes, strangers who buy beer for teenagers waiting outside a liquor store, or sales clerks or bartenders who sell alcohol to minors. States and localities can reduce availability of alcohol by strengthening laws and ordinances that restrict youth access to alcohol and by promoting compliance through education and enforcement. Stronger and more comprehensive laws restricting youth access to alcohol will be effective only if they are clearly communicated and strictly enforced.

Simply having a law is not enough; a substantial educational effort is essential, and it must be accompanied by a credible threat of enforcement. State and local media campaigns and other public information efforts can help to explain not only the content of the law but also the reasons why compliance is important and the consequences of violations.

The recommended strategy urges that states and localities, working with police as appropriate, restrict youth access by:

**Targeting servers and sellers,** with measures such as

- increased compliance checks, supported by media campaigns and license revocation to increase deterrence;
- responsible beverage service programs as a condition of retail outlet licensing;
- new or strengthened server and seller liability laws; and
- regulation of Internet sales and home delivery of alcohol to reduce underage purchases.

**The proportion of eighth graders who report that alcohol is fairly easy or very easy to get is more than 60 percent. For twelfth graders, the percentage is more than 90 percent.**



*Targeting parents and other adults*, to promote compliance with youth access restrictions through

- keg registration laws,
- "shoulder tap" or other prevention programs targeting adults who purchase alcohol for minors,
- stronger anti-loitering measures, and
- measures to hold retailers accountable for loitering.

*Targeting youth* through

- sobriety checkpoints with swift and certain sanctions for young drinking drivers;
- graduated license programs;
- modified laws to allow passive breath testing, streamlined administrative procedures and administrative penalties, such as immediate driver's license revocation;
- media campaigns to publicize enforcement and encourage compliance;
- identifying and breaking up teen drinking parties and holding relevant adults and youth accountable;
- making it more difficult to use false identification by issuing scannable driver's licenses, allowing licenses to be confiscated by retailers, and implementing administrative penalties for using a false ID, and
- increasing access to treatment services for young drinkers who need clinical treatment.

THE TEN COMPONENT NATIONAL STRATEGY:

*Develop a National Adult-Oriented Media Campaign* - A national media campaign aimed at parents and other adults should be established to sustain a broad national commitment and address misperceptions about youth drinking.

*Create a National Partnership Dedicated to Reducing Underage Drinking* - An independent nonprofit foundation funded by the alcohol industry and other private and public partners should be formed with the sole mission of preventing and reducing underage drinking.

*Reduce Underage Exposure to Unsuitable Messages in Alcohol Advertising and Marketing* - The alcohol industry should not place ads where a significant portion of the audience is underage, should not use marketing practices with substantial underage appeal, and should establish an independent review board(s).

*Reduce Underage Exposure to Unsuitable Messages in Entertainment Media* - Entertainment industries should establish rating systems and marketing codes to reduce underage exposure to unsuitable alcohol content.

*Increase Compliance with State Minimum Legal Drinking Age Laws* - States should eliminate loopholes in minimum drinking age laws and states and localities should increase compliance through a range of strategies to limit commercial and social availability.

***continued...***

## THE TEN COMPONENT NATIONAL STRATEGY *continued*

*Implement Evidence-Based Youth Oriented Interventions* - Youth-oriented media campaigns should be evaluated further, school-based approaches should be evidence-based (scare tactics and information-only approaches should be avoided), and treatment for youth should be expanded.

*Mobilize Communities* - Comprehensive community-based approaches should be developed that are tailored to the specific problems and resources in a community.

*Increase Federal and State Excise Taxes* - Taxes should be raised to reduce underage consumption and raise revenues for the strategy.

*Improve Government Coordination and Monitoring* - Federal and state governments should establish coordinating bodies. National surveys should collect brand data and more precise consumption data. HHS should monitor alcohol and entertainment industry practices and report to Congress and the public.

*Implement Expanded and Ongoing Research and Evaluation* - All interventions should be rigorously evaluated and strategy refined based on results; additional research should be conducted.

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### **For More Information...**

Copies of the report, *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, are available for sale from the National Academies Press at (800) 624-6242 or (202) 334-3313 (in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area) or via the NAP homepage at [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu). Full text of the report is also available at [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu). This study was funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of HHS.

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### **For Additional Information About Underage Drinking Prevention ...**

AlcoholPolicies Project, Center for Science in the Public Interest:

[http://www.cspinet.org/booze/iss\\_youth.htm](http://www.cspinet.org/booze/iss_youth.htm)

Alcohol Policy Solutions: <http://www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net/>

Beer Institute: <http://www.beerinstitute.org/ddriving.htm>

Center for Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws: <http://www.udetc.org/>

Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth: <http://www.camy.org/>

Century Council: <http://www.centurycouncil.org/web/underage/underage.html>

Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America: <http://www.cadca.org/>

Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS):

<http://www.discus.org/industry/underagedrinking.htm>

Facing Alcohol Concerns through Education (FACE): <http://faceproject.org/>

Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Information:

<http://www.edc.org/hec/news/>

Join Together: <http://www.jointogether.org/home/>

Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free: <http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org/>

Marin Institute: <http://www.marininstitute.org/Youth/index.htm>

Mothers Against Drunk Driving: <http://www.madd.org/under21/>

National Beer Wholesalers Association: [http://www.nbwa.org/public/promote\\_resp/index.aspx](http://www.nbwa.org/public/promote_resp/index.aspx)

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information:

<http://store.health.org/catalog/results.aspx?h=issues&topic=167>

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