

# Underage Drinking Fact Sheet

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- 1.** Alcohol is the most widely abused substance by America's youth.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.** The peak years for alcohol initiation are 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.<sup>1</sup>
- 3.** Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism and two and a half times more likely to abuse alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21.<sup>1,2</sup>
- 4.** 22% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders in Johnson County report binge drinking in the last 30 days<sup>3</sup> compared to 17% for the same age group nationally<sup>4</sup>.
- 5.** The binge drinking rate among University of Iowa students is 69%<sup>5</sup> compared to 44% nationally.<sup>6</sup>
- 6.** Iowa places in the top fifth of the States for both underage use of alcohol and underage binge drinking. The social culture of Iowa's rural areas and college towns has resulted in Iowans having markedly higher levels of acceptance of drinking and lower fear of adverse consequences compared with other Americans.<sup>7</sup>
- 7.** The highest prevalence of alcohol dependence in the U.S. population is among 18-20 year olds who typically began drinking years earlier.<sup>1</sup>
- 8.** Youth who report drinking before the age of 15 are more likely than those who begin drinking at age 21 to engage in risky sexual behavior and to be involved in car crashes, unintentional injuries and physical fights after drinking both during adolescence and in adulthood.<sup>1</sup>
- 9.** The adolescent brain is a work in progress and continues to develop into about age 25.<sup>1</sup>
- 10.** Underage drinking can cause alterations in the structure and function of the developing brain, including damage to memory and learning.<sup>1</sup>
- 11.** A lower dosage of alcohol will damage a young brain compared to a fully mature brain and young brains are damaged more quickly. Alcohol exposure during adolescence is linked with a reduced ability to learn compared with those not exposed until adulthood.<sup>8</sup>
- 12.** Alcohol is implicated in more than 40% of all college academic problems and 20% of all college dropouts. At both two and four year colleges, the heaviest drinkers make the lowest grades.<sup>8</sup>
- 13.** Alcohol is a leading contributor in the three most common causes of teenage deaths: Car crashes, homicides and suicides. These are preventable.<sup>1</sup>
- 14.** Underage drinking cost the citizens of Iowa \$582 million in 2005; including medical care, work loss and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from alcohol use by youth.<sup>9</sup>
- 15.** The minimum legal drinking age 21 law has been associated with fewer teen traffic fatalities, lower youth suicide rates, reduction in crime including homicide and vandalism and reductions in alcohol consumption.<sup>10</sup>
- 16.** Contrary to common belief, nearly every European country has a higher rate of binge drinking, intoxication and alcohol related problems because of heavy drinking among their young people than the United States; indicating that more lenient drinking laws do not lead to more moderate drinking among teens.<sup>1,10</sup>

## REFERENCES:

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