

- Alcohol is the #1 drug of choice among youth. Underage drinking is a leading public health problem in this country.
- According to the 2003 YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey), 28 percent of students surveyed reported having their first drink before age 13. 7% of eighth graders, 18% of tenth graders, & 30% of twelfth graders report being drunk in the past month.
- Many parents underestimate both the extent of the problem and their own children's alcohol-consumption habits.
- Over 95% of US adults who are alcohol dependent started drinking before the age of 21.
- Alcohol is shown on prime-time television programs far more than any other drink or food, and actors, including those portraying adolescents, are shown consuming alcohol on more than 40 percent of network shows (Cornell).
- Each year, over 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking; this includes about 1,900 deaths from motor vehicle crashes, 1,600 as a result of homicides, 300 from suicide, as well as hundreds from other injuries such as falls, burns, and drownings (DOH).
- 2003 YRBS data shows that overall underage drinking is more prevalent among Caucasian and Hispanic high school students than other students of other ethnic groups.
- Results of the 2003 National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NHSDA) indicate that underage (ages 12-17) lifetime alcohol use is highest in the Northeast and the Midwest (both at 44 percent), followed by the South (43 percent), and the West (41 percent).
- 7.4 million (19.6%) US youth binge drink; often beginning around age 13 (National Survey on Drug Use & Health 2004). Among binge drinkers, 39% drink alone, 58% drink when upset, 30% drink when bored, and 37% drink to get high. Binge drinking tends to increase during adolescence, peak in young adulthood (ages 18-22). Girls are binge drinking more often as rates among boys decline. Also, girls are turning to hard liquor (Center on Alcohol Marketing & Youth: Georgetown Univ).
- Underage drinking costs the nation an estimated \$53 billion annually in losses stemming from traffic fatalities (\$19 billion), violent crime (\$29 billion), and other behaviors that threaten the well-being of America's youth.
- Adolescents who drink before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking after age 21. This adds up to be more than 4 in 10 people (NIAAA).
- Even though the legal age to buy alcohol in most states is 21, 66% of teens report they can buy alcoholic beverages (L.A.W. Publications, 1999).

- Developmental transitions, such as puberty and increasing independence, have been associated with alcohol use. Just being an adolescent may be a key risk factor not only for starting to drink, but also for drinking dangerously.
- Children & adolescents who drink are more likely to engage in behaviors that harm themselves and other (i.e. using other drugs; unplanned, unwanted, unprotected sex with multiple partners, school drop-out...).
- Employed youth are more likely than unemployed youth to use alcohol, binge drink, and to use other illicit drugs (SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use & Health). Those working 20 or more hours per week are more likely to drink, and binge drink than those working 19 hours or less per week.
- 142,701 alcohol-related emergency room (ED) visits reported to SAMHSA's Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) system were made by patients ages 12 - 20.
- A major unmet need exists in the treatment of alcohol use disorders: In 2002, 1.4 million youth met the criteria for alcohol abuse or dependence, but only 227,000 received treatment.
- Children warned about alcohol by their parents and who reported being closer to their parents are less likely to start drinking (CSAP).
- To fund proposed activities and to help reduce underage consumption, Congress & State legislatures can raise excise taxes on alcohol - particularly on beer, which studies show is the alcoholic beverage preferred by most youth.

Resources:

- [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism\): www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)
- http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10729.html?onpi_newsdoc0309089352
- http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/lib/pccd/stats/payouthsurvey/2003_pa_youth_survey_report.pdf
- <http://www.thecoolspot.gov>
- CSAP: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention: Centers for the Application of Prevention Technologies <http://captus.samhsa.gov/>
- www.nap.edu

POTADA: Parents of Teenage Alcohol & Drug Abusers: 103 Ross Street, C/O PLF-4th Floor, Pgh. PA. 15219.
 NORTH HILLS Meeting: St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1965 Ferguson Rd. Allison Park, PA 15101
 Tuesdays, 7:30 PM Contacts: Ron 412-963-8235 Kam or Libby 412-486-0419. potada@att.net