

Underage Drinking: A Crisis Education Can't Afford

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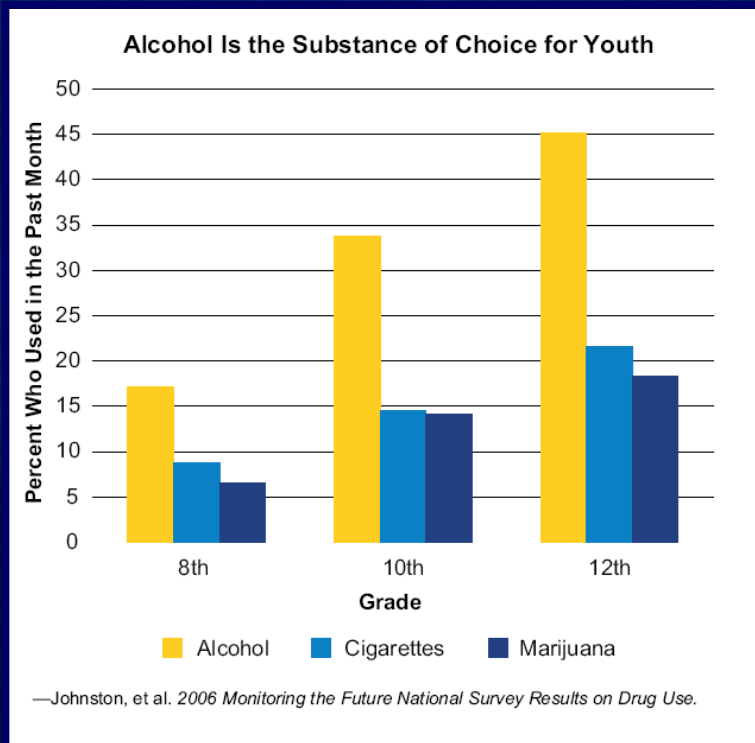
U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action:

“We can no longer ignore what alcohol is doing to our children. The adverse consequences of underage drinking are wide-ranging and include academic failure, risky sexual behavior, injuries and even death... This Call to Action is a call to every American to join with the Surgeon General in a national effort to address underage drinking early, continuously, and in the context of human development.”



**Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu,
M.D., M.P.H. 2007 - The Surgeon General's Call to
Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*

Underage Drinking in the U.S.



Source: U.S. Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking

- Today, nearly 10.8 million youths, ages 12-20, are underage drinkers.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, underage drinkers ages 12-20 consume almost 20% of all the alcohol purchased in the U.S.
- In 2004, the National Research Council verified alcohol as the most commonly used drug among America's youth.

Underage Drinking in Bexar County

- Alcohol abuse presents a major problem for youth in Bexar County. A local survey finds that 26% of high school students participate in binge drinking.
- Binge drinking constitutes consuming five or more drinks within a two-hour period.
- In Bexar County, 4.5 percent of 1,274 students in the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey admitted to binge drinking at least three times in the previous 30 days.

Source: 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

A Gateway to Academic Failure

- **Adolescence is a time of mental development. New research suggests that the brain continues to develop into the 20's (Giedd 2004).**
- **Youth who drink alcohol can deter proper brain development because the brain is particularly vulnerable during adolescence. On average, a young person has the first drink at age 12.2 years.**
- **So long as adolescents continue to drink, the potential to perform well in school and on standardized tests may decrease.**

Source: The U.S. Surgeon General's Call For Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking 2007

A Gateway to Academic Failure

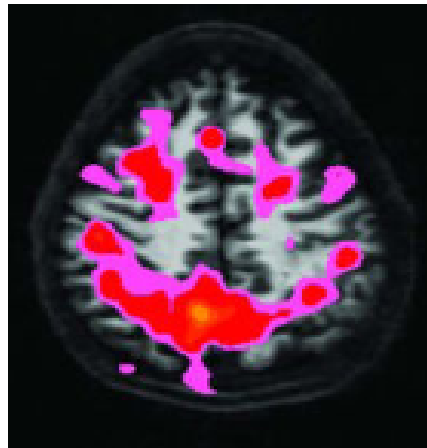
- **Almost one-fifth of 8th graders and 42% of 10th graders have been drunk at least once.**
- **Ninth grade girls (36.2%) report consuming almost as much alcohol as 9th grade boys (36.3%)**
- **Research indicates that adolescents who abuse alcohol may remember 10% less of what they have learned than those who don't drink.**
- **High school students who use alcohol or other drugs frequently are up to five times more likely than other students to drop out of school.**

Sources: Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine; Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse; CDC – 2006 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance

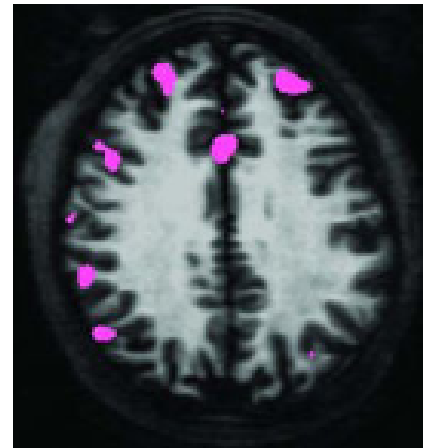
Alcohol's Effect on Brain Activity

Figure 7:
Images of Teen Brain Activity When Performing Memory Tests ⁴²

15-Year-Old Male Non-Drinker



15-Year-Old Male Heavy Drinker



Reprint permission from Susan F. Tapert, Ph.D., University of California, San Diego

Source: <http://www.faceproject.org/Resources/PDF/CAMYAnnualRpt04FINAL.pdf>

Alcopops: Enticement to Underage Drinking

- Alcopops are ready-to-drink flavored malt beverages.
- Containers resemble nonalcoholic beverages.
- Colorful, sweet drinks taste like fruit punch, lemonade, and sodas.
- Sweet flavors and appealing labels entice teenagers to consume a dangerous combination of alcohol, caffeine, and other stimulants.



Source: Marin Institute, <http://www.marininstitute.org>

Alcoholic Energy Drinks: Deceptive, Less Expensive, Dangerous

- On average, alcoholic energy drinks are 30-40 cents cheaper than non-alcoholic “twins”
- Combination of stimulant and depressant is dangerous – intoxication level is masked, creating “wide awake drunk” feeling
- Increased toxicity and potential for alcohol poisoning



Source: Marin Institute, <http://www.marininstitute.org>

Attorney Generals' Letter

A Communication From the Chief Legal Officers
Of the Following States:
Alaska • Arizona • California • Connecticut • District of Columbia • Guam • Idaho
Illinois • Iowa • Kansas • Kentucky • Louisiana • Maine • Maryland • Michigan
Mississippi • Nevada • New Mexico • New York • Ohio • Oklahoma
Oregon • Rhode Island • South Carolina • Tennessee • Texas • Utah
Vermont • Washington • West Virginia • Wyoming

August 20, 2007

The Honorable John J. Manfreda, Administrator
Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau
1310 G Street, NW
Room 300
Washington, D.C. 20220

Re: **Alcoholic Energy Drinks**

Dear Mr. Manfreda:

We, the undersigned attorneys general, write to express our serious concerns about the formulation and marketing of alcoholic beverages that contain caffeine and other stimulants. We ask that the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) expand its efforts to prevent misleading health-related statements from being made in connection with these beverages. We further request that TTB investigate the formulation of alcoholic energy drinks and other flavored malt beverages to determine whether these drinks are properly classified as malt beverages under federal law.

Nonalcoholic energy drinks containing high levels of caffeine constitute a rapidly growing segment of the beverage market. These beverages are particularly popular with teens and young adults. Unfortunately, alcoholic beverage manufacturers have taken advantage of the youth appeal of these drinks by engaging in aggressive marketing campaigns for pre-mixed alcoholic energy drinks. These campaigns claim that such beverages increase a person's stamina or energy level. However, they do not mention the potentially severe, adverse consequences of mixing caffeine or other stimulants and alcohol.

We believe that alcoholic energy drinks constitute a serious health and safety risk for America's youth. According to evidence cited by TTB in a final rule issued in 2003, "Alcohol is the nation's number one drug problem among youth, and it is involved in teen automobile crashes, homicides and suicides, the three leading causes of teen death."¹ The Surgeon General recently reported that approximately 5,000 people under the age of twenty-one die each year from alcohol-related injuries. Alcohol also contributes to risky sexual behavior, poor school performance, and other psychological and sociological dysfunctions among youth.

1 Health Claims and Other Health-Related Statements in the Labeling and Advertising of Alcohol Beverages, 68 Fed. Reg. 10,076, 10,083 (June 2, 2003) (testimony of Dr. David Satcher).

2 The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, U.S. Department of



Concerned Attorney
Generals from 30
states addressed the
Alcohol and Tobacco
Tax and Trade Bureau

Underage Drinking: A Gateway to Other Risk-taking Behaviors

- Youths who consume alcohol often engage in other risk-taking behaviors such as unprotected sex, violence, suicide and abuse of other substances, including tobacco and drugs.
- Alcohol consumption forms part of an unhealthy diet that can contribute to obesity and developing diabetes.
- Risks associated with underage drinking lead to long-term, costly consequences:
 - \$19 billion from traffic crashes
 - \$29 billion from violent crime

Sources: The U.S. Surgeon General's Call For Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking 2007; Institute of Medicine National Research Council

Suicide Rates

- Adolescents experience significant biological changes as well as the transition between dependence and independence, leading to feelings of inadequacy and confusion.
- Uncertainty about the future may increase the sense of being overwhelmed and upset. This may lead to thoughts of suicide.
- Common risk factors contributing to the decision to commit suicide include mental illness, a stressful situation or recent loss, access to family handguns, a history of attempts of suicide, problematic family interactions, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Source: *Dallas Indicators Teen Suicide Rate* Source: *Beyond ABC: Growing Up in Dallas County, 2007*, a report issued by *Children's Medical Center, Dallas*.

Suicide Rates

- In Texas, 13 percent of the 156 teen suicides in 2004 were in the age range of 10 to 14.
- The actual numbers of teen suicide may be even higher, since teen suicide figures are underreported.

Source: KLRN The Youth Mental Council of the Health Collaborative & Bexar County Suicide Prevention Coalition 2005

Teenage Pregnancies

- **The National Center for Health Statistics released preliminary 2006 birth data, and highlighted the fact that for the first time in 14 years, the teen birth rate has increased.**
- **In conjunction with pregnancy, alcohol consumption may result in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, including fetal alcohol syndrome, which remains a leading cause of mental retardation.**

Source: The U.S. Surgeon General's Call For Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking and Driving 2007

Other Health Effects

- Binge-drinking produces long-term health problems, such as alcohol dependency, chronic liver disease, and obesity (alcopops average 230 calories each, more than one Krispy Kreme donut or Twinkie).
- Depression and anxiety are also risk factors for alcohol use. Drinking is often wrongly used as a coping strategy for dealing with internal distress.

Source: The U.S. Surgeon General's Call For Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking and Driving 2007

Motor Vehicle Crashes in U.S.

- In 2006, 42,642 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes.
 - Alcohol-related = 17,602 deaths
- Children killed in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes:
 - 15 years and under = 1,270 deaths
 - 16 – 20 years old = 3,406 deaths

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Motor Vehicle Crashes in Bexar County

- In 2006, 142 local people were killed in motor vehicle crashes.
 - Alcohol-related = 71 deaths
- 50% of all motor vehicle fatalities are alcohol related, 9% higher than national rate and 2% higher than the state.
- Every 5 days, someone in our community dies due to drinking and driving.

Source: SAPD and Bexar County Sheriff's Office

Motor Vehicle Crashes Impact on Teens

- **Motor vehicle crashes account as the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, comprising 36 percent of all deaths in this age group (CDC 2006).**
- **According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey, underage drinking and alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes among youth remain a significant health concern.**

Underage Drinking and Driving SAPD Statistics - 2007

Citations Issued

- Possession of Alcohol by a Minor = 1336
- Consumption of Alcohol by a Minor = 473

Arrests

- Driving While Intoxicated
(15 - 20 years old) = 320
- Driving Under the Influence
(Below .08, legal limit) = 67

Volatile Youth Behavior

- **Youth violence remains the second leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 10 and 24.**
- **In a 2005 nationwide survey, 36% of high school students reported being in a physical fight during the past 12 months.**
- **Nearly 7% of high school students in 2005 reported taking a gun, knife, or club to school in the prior 30 days.**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Contributors to Youth Violence

A number of factors can increase the risk of youth engaging in violence:

- Prior history of violence
- Drug, alcohol, or tobacco use
- Association with delinquent peers
- Poor family functioning
- Poor grades in school
- Poverty in the community

Source: Centers For Disease Control and Prevention

SAPD Needs Your Support

Legislative changes are needed:

- Authority to set up Sobriety Checkpoints
- Enhance penalties for higher levels of blood alcohol content
- Ignition Interlocks for first-time offenders
- Restrictions on sale of single alcoholic beverages

Summary Points

- **Underage drinking remains a major public health and safety problem in the U.S. and our local community.**
- **Schools are institutions of investment for the future of the community. Students represent that investment.**
- **Therefore, a long-term and collaborative initiative is needed to curb underage drinking and its adverse effect on youth in Bexar County.**

Questions for Administrators

- **Has your school or community assessed student drinking to determine the extent of the problem?**
- **Realizing that most youth receive the alcohol they consume from adults (parents, older siblings, others) are you working to educate parents about alcohol use among children?**
- **What steps if any are being taken within your schools to help students resist the pressure to drink?**
- **Do your schools have active partnerships with the families of your students?**