



# The Sobering Truth

An Underage Drinking Fact Sheet from One Voice for Volusia

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## Did you know . . .

- The average age of an adolescent's first drink is 12 and nearly 20% of 12-20 year-olds are considered binge drinkers. (Binge drinking is considered having four to five drinks in a row.)
- Seventy-nine (79)% of all high school students have tried alcohol at least once.
- 12% of middle school students and 22% of high school students in Volusia County reported being drunk or high in school.
- Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.
- 22% of middle school students and 47% of high school students in Volusia County reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days.
- One third of sixth and ninth graders obtain alcohol from their own home.
- Parents' drinking behaviors and favorable attitudes about drinking have been associated with adolescents' initiating and continuing alcohol use.
- Almost 12% of adolescent drinkers (about 1.2 million 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders), engage in alcohol related physical fighting.
- 11% of middle school students and 28% of high school students in Volusia County reported binge drinking in the last 30 days.

## Kids' Brain on Booze

- Alcohol alters the developmental process of the brain until the age of 20 years old.
- Adolescent drinking could cause severe changes in the prefrontal area of the brain (behind the forehead) and others, which play an important role in forming adult personality and behavior and is often called the CEO of the brain.
- Alcohol affects all parts of the brain, which also affects the heart rate, coordination, speech and destruction of brain cells.
- Alcohol use during the adolescent years is associated with damage to memory and learning capabilities as well as to the decision-making and reasoning areas of the brain.
- Adolescent drinkers score worse than non-users on vocabulary, visual and memory tests. They are more likely to perform poorly in school, fall behind and experience social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence.
- Alcohol may encourage aggression by disrupting normal brain mechanisms that normally restrain impulsive behavior.
- Among 12 to 17 year-olds who are current drinkers, 31% have exhibited extreme levels of psychological distress and 39% have exhibited serious behavioral problems.

# You Drink + You Drive = You Lose

- Almost one-third of all pedestrians 16 years of age or older killed in traffic crashes in 2000 were intoxicated.
- Research continues to show that young drivers are more often involved in alcohol related crashes than any other comparable age group.
- Thirty (30)% of 15-20 year old drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes during 2000 had been drinking. Twenty-one (21)% were legally intoxicated.
- For ages 13–19, 53% of the alcohol related deaths were drivers, 47% were passengers. At ages 13 -15, more young people were killed as passengers than as drivers.
- The intoxication rate for 16 to 20 year old drivers involved in fatal crashes in 2000 was 15%.

## Alcohol and Risky Behaviors

- More than a third of sexually active young people report that alcohol or drugs influenced their decision about sex.
- Among male high school students, 39% say it's acceptable for a boy to force sex on a girl who is drunk or high.
- Nine out of ten 15-24-year-olds say that people their age drink or use drugs before having sex.
- Seven out of ten young people 15 to 24 indicated that condoms often don't get used when people are drinking or using drugs.
- Alcohol use is implicated in one to two-thirds of sexual assaults and "date rape" cases among teens and college students.
- 26% of 15 to 17-year-olds worry about STD's or pregnancy because of something they did sexually while drinking or using drugs.

## Zero Tolerance Laws

- The minimum purchase age of alcohol in all 50 States and the District of Columbia is 21.
- Young drivers under the age of 21 may have their driver's license revoked if found possessing or attempting to purchase alcohol.
- Young drivers who are found to have a blood alcohol content higher than 0.02% or higher can have their license immediately seized and revoked and also be subject to significant fines.
- Many States have instituted laws prohibiting any person from furnishing alcohol to minors and imposing fines on home owners who host teen drinking parties.
- Adults who provide alcohol to youth may face up to a year in jail and a \$4,000 fine.
- Vehicular homicide as a result of drunk driving is now a felony in most states.

## Sources:

- 2002 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey
- MADD
- East Central Florida Regional Prevention Center
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
- The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- American Medical Association (AMA)
- Alliance on Underage Drinking (AOUD)

### For more information about One Voice for Volusia:

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