

# The Impact of Underage Drinking

**The Impact of Underage Drinking** is a series of information pages designed to provide general information about some of the consequences of underage drinking.

According to the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey, alcohol continues to be the most widely used drug among Illinois youth. Survey results show that in the past year more students drink alcohol than use cigarettes, inhalants, and marijuana combined.

Underage drinking is the focus of the Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success program. Through this program, communities in Illinois are provided with resources to prevent the onset and reduce the progression of underage drinking and its related problems.



## Mental Health and Suicide

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, half of people who are diagnosed with a mental illness will also experience a substance use disorder in their lives. There is some research to suggest that youth who have substance use disorders also have high rates of co-occurring mental illness. It is important to note that while it is common to occur together, it doesn't mean that one is caused by the other.

Heavy alcohol use may lead to or be used as a coping mechanism for youth with psychiatric disorders. Youth who drink alcohol risk delaying diagnosis of emerging mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder, and therefore may not receive proper treatment.

According to the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, adolescents aged 12 to 17 with a major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year were more likely than those without a MDE to have heavily used alcohol in the past month.

### **ALCOHOL, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY**

According to the American Addiction Centers, Inc., alcohol addiction and mental disorders tend to co-occur at a greater frequency than by chance.

- High anxiety sensitivity is associated with an increased risk of alcohol use disorder.
- Alcohol use and alcoholism can contribute to or exacerbate anxiety and depression.
- Adolescents with moderate to high levels of depression and anxiety symptoms have an increased risk of alcohol abuse or dependence in young adulthood.
- The association between anxiety and depression symptoms and early drinking were reported stronger for girls than boys, according to a study of youth 16-18 years of age.
- The odds of developing a mood disorder is 3.6 times higher for someone dependent on alcohol as compared to someone not dependent on it. Similarly, those with alcohol dependence are at 2.6 times higher risk for developing an anxiety disorder.
- Alcohol use can worsen one's response to stress. It leads to an extended negative subjective experience of stressful events and delays recovery.

## SUICIDE

Most teens underestimate the problems that underage drinking can bring, including how it contributes to depressive symptoms that could result in teen suicide. Annually, about 5,000 people under age 21 die from alcohol-related injuries involving underage drinking. According to the Surgeon General's Call to Action, 300 (6 percent) result from suicide.



## REFERENCE SOURCES

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