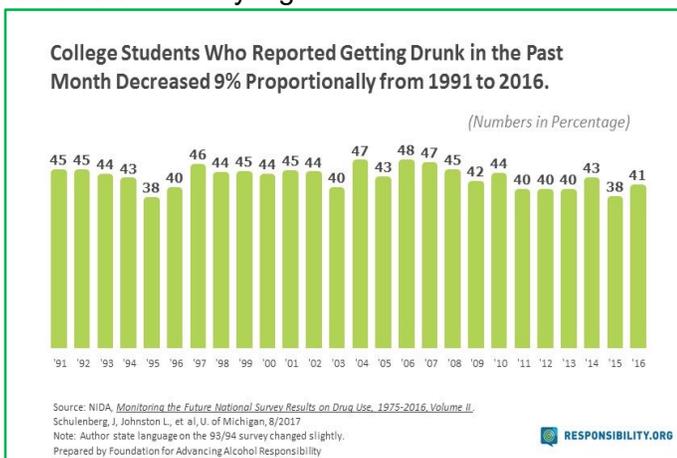




March 2019 Newsletter

Protecting Our Investment in College Students—what steps should we take? By Pamela Erickson

This month we are releasing a short report on college drinking. It addresses the fact that while we have made remarkable progress on underage drinking, in general; excessive drinking in college remains stubbornly high.



Some of the success for reducing drinking for young kids may be attributed to efforts promoted by the 2003 “Call to Action” report by the National Research Council/Institutes of Health, titled *Reducing Underage Drinking, a Collective Responsibility*. It clearly stated that effort would be needed from a wide range of community stakeholders in order to achieve progress. That did seem to work, so maybe we could use the “collective responsibility model” to make progress on college drinking.

As next steps, this report suggests the following: The successful effort to reduce underage drinking for younger teens involved people and organizations in states and communities throughout the country having the courage to take on strategies that made a difference, such as enforcing minor in possession laws, conducting alcohol compliance checks and adopting commercial liability laws for serving/selling to minors. Communities were free to develop their own approach to reducing underage drinking. The federal government provided funding to local coalitions and money to local law enforcement. They also launched a national media

campaign and provided research results, help for parents and suggested community/school programs. The results did not come instantly, but over a period of years. It was slow, but it worked. Key messages conveyed the fact that alcohol use can damage the adolescent brain and that if a child starts drinking before the age of 15, they are much more likely to be alcohol dependent. Finally, the powerful influence of parents, as documented by surveys and research, was recognized.

Some next steps in reducing college drinking might be the following:

1. A Commitment to Effective Action. There is substantial information about what is effective in addressing this issue. The College Alcohol Intervention Matrix (AIM), produced by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), illustrates the effective strategies that could be used for this issue.
2. A Conference Series. The federal government funded an annual conference on underage drinking which gave communities and professionals research information, ideas and inspiration.
3. A National Message Campaign. A set of key messages helped elevate the issue; and, provoked communities and colleges to work harder on the issue.
4. Engage Stakeholders such as Parents and Alumni as a Source of Support. Some think parents can't do much because the youth are technically adults and are often far away. This report cites recent research suggesting that parents remain an effective influence on their children. Others fear the reaction of alumni to any change, but it seems more likely that alumni would champion successes of their college and there are many ways they can help.

Go to www.healthyalcoholmarket.com to download your copy of the report.