



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

SHORT REPORT
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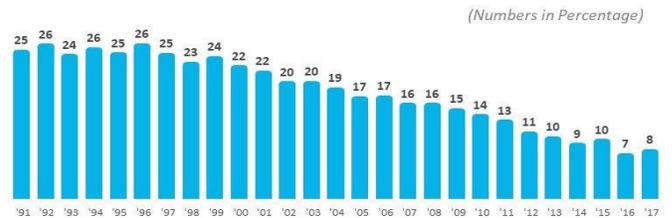
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Young people are our future. We have made very large investments in college education. Yet, our future is threatened by underage drinking, excessive alcohol use, drug use and the problems that accompany these behaviors. We have had great success with reducing underage drinking for middle and high school students, but we have not had the same experience with college students. (See illustrations.)

We know a lot about drinking in college. We know that 1,825 college students die from alcohol-related injuries every year. Another 696,000 students are assaulted by another student who has been drinking. And 97,000 students report sexual assault or date rape. We know that alcohol is detrimental to academic performance including poor grades, falling behind in class, and missing classes. About 20% percent of college students meet the diagnostic criteria for an Alcohol Use Disorder. (See NIH fact sheet on College Drinking.) We also know a lot about how to prevent these harms. Excellent research has shown the way and resources are available to help institutions chart their course. NIAAA has a website called the Alcohol Intervention Matrix (AIM) that displays both individual- and environmental-level strategies in terms of cost and effectiveness.

Despite this knowledge and despite the success some institutions have had, excessive drinking among college students remains stubbornly high. While underage youth drinking rates are at historic lows, college students who reported getting drunk has lagged, decreasing from 45% in 1991 to 41% in 2016.

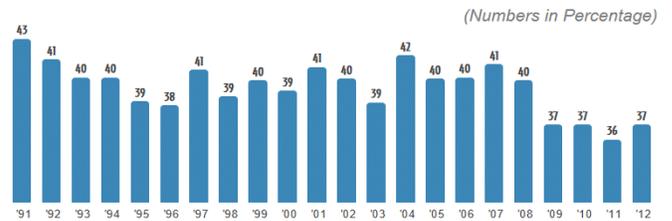
Eighth Grade Students Who Reported Drinking in the Past Month Declined 68% Proportionally from 1991 to 2017.



Source: NIDA, *National Survey Results on Drug Use from the Monitoring The Future Study*, Vol. II Miech, R., et al, U. of Michigan, 12/17
Note: Author state language on the 93/94 survey changed slightly.

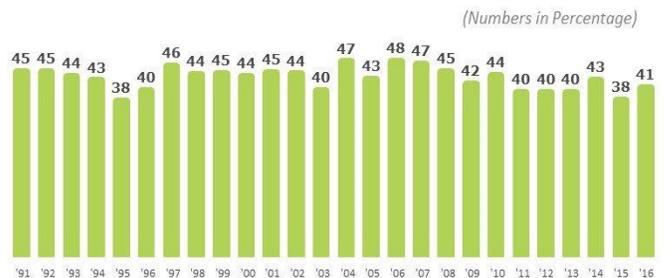


College Students Who Reported Binge Drinking* Decreased 13% Proportionally from 1991 to 2012.



Source: NIDA, *National Survey Results on Drug Use from the Monitoring The Future Study*, Vol. II Johnston L., et al, U. of Michigan, 2013
Note: Author state language on the 93/94 survey changed slightly.
*Five or more drinks in a row in previous two weeks.

College Students Who Reported Getting Drunk in the Past Month Decreased 9% Proportionally from 1991 to 2016.



Source: NIDA, *Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975-2016, Volume II*, Schultenber, J, Johnston L., et al, U. of Michigan, 8/2017
Note: Author state language on the 93/94 survey changed slightly.
Prepared by Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility



But there are positive signs. The newest generation of youth (known as Generation Z) report drinking a lot less than other cohorts at the same age. And, this appears to be something of a global trend. Youth in the UK, Australia, and other countries report drinking much less. Another positive sign is the dramatic reduction in drinking among middle and high school students. Drinking rates for these youth are at historic lows. Some of the success can 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*.

Perhaps we could use the “collective responsibility model” to reduce college drinking. This paper will consider the possibility and focus on six issues:

1. Understanding and assessing alcohol-related problems.
2. Relying on what we know is effective and obtaining the community support needed for implementation.
3. Encouraging firm, fair enforcement of rules and laws.
4. Seeking greater involvement of parents and reinforcing messages from parents.
5. Involving students and inviting them to use their creativity to find solutions.
6. Understanding the value of social relationships in college.

1. Assess Alcohol-Related Problems

We cannot rely on college administrations alone to solve this problem. Colleges are skilled at educating, but they are not necessarily experts in deploying best practice prevention, health and public safety strategies. They need the help and support from all of us. While many colleges have an educational program designed to prevent problem behavior, this is not enough. Addressing the culture of college drinking takes more than educating, it requires a comprehensive approach from individuals, schools, and the larger community including state and local

policymakers. Many schools conduct surveys that assess their college drinking patterns; however, few look at the drivers that lead to these patterns of heavy alcohol use, and the nexus between these patterns of use and their consequences. These surveys must identify hot spots for heavy alcohol use and then look to NIAAA’s Alcohol Intervention Matrix (NIAAA AIM) to identify a reasonable and evidence-based approach to move the needle. Whether it be bar specials that cater to college students or loud and unruly house parties disturbing local neighbors, these settings in which high-risk drinking occur must be addressed.

2. Use What We Know is Effective

We have great resources to help design an effective and comprehensive approach to prevent and reduce excessive alcohol use among college students. The NIAAA AIM is a comprehensive planning tool to help college communities find the right mix of policies and programs. The Matrix has separate displays for Individual and Environmental strategies and includes information on cost and barriers to adoption.

These strategies involve the campus, community at large and the local alcohol industry. Therefore, stakeholders from all these entities need to be engaged at some point in the implementation phase. It may be necessary to change ordinances, practices or policies. It may be necessary to convince officials of the need for greater enforcement. It may also be necessary to confront myths about college drinking (such as “It’s a rite of passage” or “college kids will always drink”, etc.) and hidden agendas such as the desire to support local businesses increase profits and local revenue by serving more alcohol. Because change may be required, advocates will need to spend some time engaging various stakeholders to join them in the effort.

It may be worth the effort to try and gain the support of local liquor licensees. This may not be difficult because many licensees resent the competitor that sells to minors and intoxicated students and offers extreme bargains on some drinks. They may feel pressured to engage in similar practices, but don’t want to risk

their license or injury to their customers. Ordinances and laws that limit drink specials and prohibit late closing hours may help mitigate these pressures on licensees. Regardless of the mix of interventions the challenge is often amassing the public support necessary to make the change. This will require some initial effort at building a coalition of stakeholders. There are many examples of successful coalition building that can provide helpful advice.

3. Enforce current laws with swift and certain action

It seems like every college town has at least one “problem bar.” Too often the problems persist for years. Some can hire lawyers that delay the process, file counter suits, or engage politicians with complaints about enforcement. Some laws are weak with fines so low that they could be considered a cost of doing business. Laws prohibiting sales to minors and intoxicated patrons as well as laws prohibiting aggressive promotion of high-volume consumption can be quite effective if enforced regularly with swift and certain accountability and when the penalty is appropriate for the crime.

It may be necessary to develop new, more effective sanctions for licensees. A brief suspension of a liquor license establishment would likely be effective, but the industry and local officials may be resistant. When a business is closed—even for a short period of time—it impacts more than just the business owner. Employees and ancillary businesses (musicians, food and beverage purveyors, etc.) are also impacted. Possibly, earlier closing hours, limits on drink specials, increased staff, and other measures could be considered. Most importantly, engage local law enforcement early in the development phase. Securing their support will ensure they are willing to enforce the new laws, which is key to any effective strategy implementation.

It may be necessary to engage local industry leaders provided the new rule or enhanced enforcement is evenly and fairly applied to all license establishments. The State of Massachusetts banned happy hour specials and the retail community welcomed this policy approach because retailers recognized they lost

money on these promotions yet felt like they had to partake to stay competitive with area businesses. With a ban on the promotional practice, the community wins and the license establishments do too.



4. Greater Parent Involvement Can be Helpful

Parents may be out of sight and a long way away, but they are not necessarily out of mind. "A lot of folks think that once you get old enough to go to college, parents don't make much difference," says Karen Fromme, a professor of clinical psychology at UT–Austin. "But our research shows that parental awareness and caring was still exerting an influence on alcohol use, sexual behavior, and drug use." Research by Peter Turrisi and colleagues at Penn State also found that parents of college students are influential and used the research to develop a parents' hand book.

Colleges can do a lot to encourage continued involvement of parental influence by acknowledging and encouraging it. They can provide information about parental notification and how to keep track of a child's welfare. Some thought should be given to how colleges can continue and reinforce messages given to youth that helped reduce underage drinking in younger age groups. The messages included alcohol's impact on the developing brain and how excessive drinking adversely impacts academic success. In a survey of Generation Z youth, 84% of 14- to 17-year-olds said, "I know why I shouldn't do something, because my parents explain the consequences to me" ("Consumer Insights," Viacom, October 2013). Such messages could be repeated by parents and by college officials with some degree of regularity.

To this end, The Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems has a number of resources for parents on the www.collegeparentsmatter.org website where they partnered with college parents to create scripts to guide parents on how to talk to their college-aged child during peak drinking times throughout the academic year, including Spring Break, Halloween, St. Patty's Day, and 21st Birthdays. These scripts help parents re-engage with their college-aged child in a way that doesn't lecture but provides a guide on how to share their expectations and cautions to ensure the message is heard.

5. Seek to Apply Students' Creative Energy to the Issue

Surveys of the latest generation to reach adulthood—Generation Z—serve as notes of optimism for this issue. In an article that analyzes surveys of Generation Z and Millennials, Marcie Merriman describes Generation Z, "They are intuitively innovative, uber-productive, goal-oriented and realistic." And, 89% "say they spend part of their free time in activities that are productive and creative instead of just 'hanging out'." These results point to getting college students to help identify high quality programs as well as develop and promote environmental/community service projects. While engaging students in the development phase, it is important to acquaint those involved with the science such as the NIAAA AIM. In that way, time and effort will not be spent on strategies that have proven ineffective.

Further, students are particularly close to their parents. In a Viacom article, 2/3 of youth surveyed said that "My parents are like a best friend to me: ("Consumer Insights", Viacom, October 2013.) The parents of Generation Z have evolved a parenting style that is more open and consultative. As a result, youth have had a greater influence on family spending decisions and are accustomed to being consulted.

All these characteristics bode well for efforts to engage college students to help with this issue. For example, when a campus revises its school's code of conduct to institute more effective penalties, it is advantageous to engage students in the development phase to mitigate

student pushback during the implementation phase. Getting their buy-in early can be a winning approach to take on more challenging strategies that make a tangible difference in changing the college's drinking culture.

6. Socializing in College—Lifelong Lessons

Discussions about socializing in college usually focus on problems involving excessive drinking, drugging, and the attendant problems of injury, death, and sexual assault. They rarely include why it's important to have a quality social life in college. Since human beings are creatures that do their best work in groups, the ability to form good social relationships is critical. Too often, socializing is viewed as parties or "game day" activities that evolve into heavy—sometimes blackout—drinking. Such extreme drinking is unlikely to foster social relationships especially if one cannot remember much about the event.

Socializing needs a broader definition and colleges should examine the question of what type of socializing they should foster. There are many activities that can work toward building relationships: community service, environmental projects, events focused on interests such as arts and crafts, student/local government participation, and small group discussion of issues. Here is an area where local communities can play a role by providing and encouraging community service projects. The country of Iceland was able to dramatically reduce youth drinking, drug use and problems by investing in a wide variety of after-school programs designed to capture youth interest and passion. Youth not only had a lot more options for learning and expression, but they got the strong message that their society thought they were very important and worth a large investment.

Good social relationships also help the transition to adulthood. Youth do not become instant adults at age 18. The freshman year can be lonely, scary, challenging, and difficult to cope with. When youth come from far away, a social support network is helpful in ensuring success.

Colleges could have a broad array of activities designed to foster social relations in a way that is safe, enjoyable, and meaningful and

many do, but they shouldn't have to do it alone. Monitoring, managing, and sponsoring social events is something that adults are not always good at executing. Many cities and towns hold large social events where alcohol service gets out of control. There are professional businesses skilled at putting on safe and enjoyable events. They are trained in crowd control techniques. When local communities use these services, they often experience fewer problems. Colleges may be advised to seek professional help when putting on campus events or trying to control parties, particularly with the highest-risk student groups, including Greeks and athletes. These groups also set the culture on college campuses; therefore, getting their involvement and buy-in for more responsible



party planning practices has the potential for rippling effects throughout the entire campus and the larger student body as a whole. Efforts of researchers from the

University of Minnesota who created resources for college communities through a program called, TOGA: Training on Greeks and Alcohol, which builds on best practices for alcohol service and focuses on reducing the problems that result from excessive drinking using realistic and feasible practices for planning and managing social events. The program provides tools and leadership opportunities for Greek students to develop, implement, and enforce policies and practices to create safer environments for students at social events where alcohol is served.

NEXT STEPS

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

In 2002, NIAAA published "A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges." This was just one year before the National Research Council/Institutes of Medicine's issued their "call to action" on underage drinking. Clearly, the two reports had dramatically different results. The first report saw little change; the second major change. This suggests a new commitment is needed—one that focuses on effective action and tracks results.

This does not mean that everyone must wait for a new national statement of commitment. The NRC/IOM report came out in 2003 while many communities had been working on the problem for over a decade. But, a national elevation of this issue is helpful for those working at the local and state level.

2. A Conference Series

The federal EUDL (Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws) program paid for an annual conference where professionals and

community members could exchange ideas and hear about the latest research. It was very helpful in spreading the implementation of effective measures and for charting progress. A similar approach for college drinking should be deployed. The conference series could also be a springboard for funding coalitions, law enforcement, and training to address this issue. This may involve redirecting current funds or a new source of funding.

3. A National Message Campaign

A set of key messages helps elevate the issue, provoke communities and colleges to work harder on the issue and clarify all of our responsibilities. Such messaging can impact students by indicating that their success and well-being is of vital importance to our nation, our communities, and our families.

4. Engage Stakeholders such as Parents and Alumni as a Source of Support

Too often there is fear that alumni won't like increased efforts to reduce college drinking. There is a perception that alumni don't want change. This is most likely not the case. Alumni usually take great pride in their college's success. Why would they not want to see more students succeed and fewer fail due to excessive alcohol use? Certainly, they don't want to read about deaths, injuries, and assaults at their colleges' parties. There are many ways that alumni can contribute positively to this effort...from helping to plan activities to volunteering and donating. This report has described research documenting the effective role of parents. Parents have also been impactful in gaining action on the issue of college fraternity hazing rituals. Greater use of these important constituencies is warranted.

Helpful Sources:

College Drinking Fact Sheet:

<https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/CollegeFactSheet/CollegeFactSheet.pdf>

College AIM w/ matrix on strategies:

https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/CollegeAIM/Resources/NIAAA_College_Matrix_Booklet.pdf

<https://www.studentaffairs.com/Webinars/toga-training-on-greeks-and-alcohol/>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/monitoring-future-survey-high-school-youth-trends>

www.collegeparentsmatter.org

<https://www.responsibility.org/>

"What if the next big disruptor isn't a what but a who? Gen Z is connected, informed and ready for business." Marcie Merriman, marcie.merriman@ey.com +1 614 325 9192 Ernst & Young

[https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/\\$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers/$FILE/EY-rise-of-gen-z-new-challenge-for-retailers.pdf)

"Parents can influence kids" drinking in college, research finds," American Psychological Association, October 2013, Vol 44, No. 9

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/10/influence.aspx>

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2003/Reducing-Underage-Drinking-A-Collective-Responsibility.aspx>

<https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/media/tas-kforcereport.pdf>

Resources about successful coalition building:

Yang, E, et al. Testing a Comprehensive Community Problem-Solving Framework for Community Coalitions. *J Community Psychol.* 2012;40(6):681-698.

Wolfson M, Champion H, McCoy TP, Rhodes SD, Ip EH, Bloker JN, Martin BA, Wagoner KG, O'Brien MC, Mitra A, Durant RH. Impact of a randomized campus/community trial to prevent high-risk drinking among college students. *Alcohol Clin Exp Res.* 2012;36(10):1767-1778.

Wagenaar AC. Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: Outcomes from a Randomized Community Trial. *J Stud Alcohol.* 2000;61(1):85-94.