

Investing in Alcohol-Free Youth

How Risky is Underage Drinking?

The teen years are a time of adventure, challenge and risk-taking. One risk young people in Eau Claire County often take is to drink alcohol. When you combine alcohol with teenagers' natural risk-taking behavior and their desire to impress their friends, dangerous things can happen. Death and injury rates nearly triple between the early teen years and early adult life. Underage drinking plays a large role.

Alcohol-related deaths and injuries are in the news weekly. Yet, we often do not take the risks of underage drinking seriously.

The economic cost of underage drinking in Eau Claire County is over \$30 million each year. Costs involving youth include violence, traffic crashes, injury, high-risk sex, property crime, and alcohol treatment.

5,000 people under age 21 die each year in the U.S. as a result of underage drinking

Alcohol affects youth differently than adults...

- It takes twice as long for a teen's body to process alcohol (2 hours per drink) than it does for an adult's body (1 hour per drink).
- Teens are less capable than adults of knowing when they've had too much to drink.
- Teens can become alcohol dependent in 6 months to 3 years vs. the 10 to 15 year pattern for an adult.

"We've grown accustomed to the idea that "kids will be kids" when it comes to alcohol. New brain research shows how dangerous that attitude is. Alcohol use interferes with the adolescent brain's ability to recognize risk. Unfortunately, these effects can be permanent."

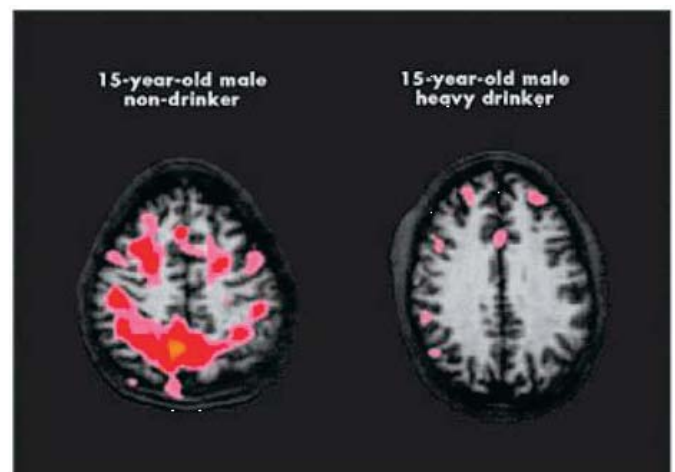
- Rick McClaflin, MD, Eau Claire Physician

Alcohol affects a teen's developing brain

Today we know that the brain continues to develop through the teen years into our mid-20s. When consumed in large quantities, alcohol can cause lasting brain damage. Certain parts of the brain control different functions.

Alcohol can –

- Damage the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory.
- Permanently affect the part of the brain responsible for judgement-making.
- Affect the part of the brain responsible for decision-making.



Colored areas show active brain areas during a memory task

What are Eau Claire County adults most concerned about?

Alcohol-related auto crashes

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 20.
- The rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older.
- 176 Eau Claire County high school youth report driving a car after or while drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

Unplanned pregnancies, sexual assaults and date rape

- Under the influence of alcohol, young people are more likely to have unprotected sex and contract sexually transmitted diseases or become pregnant.
- A young person is more likely to have unplanned sex with multiple partners when drinking.
- Intoxicated youth are at the mercy of others and less able to run or defend themselves.

Poor academic achievement

- Alcohol interferes with the brain, making it harder for kids to learn and remember things in school.
- Poor grades, disciplinary actions, and legal troubles will shrink a teen's career choices in all fields.
- Every school year Eau Claire County youth violate athletic codes, resulting in lost game time, lost college scholarships, and disappointment.

Health Risks

- Teens who drink do reckless things and often hurt themselves or others.
- The effects of alcohol poisoning range from hangovers to death.
- Most Eau Claire County youth who think about suicide also use alcohol.
- It is estimated that 2,200 Eau Claire County 12 to 20 years olds have a serious alcohol problem and 85% do not receive treatment.



“Substance abuse contributes to most of the crime and disorder in our community.

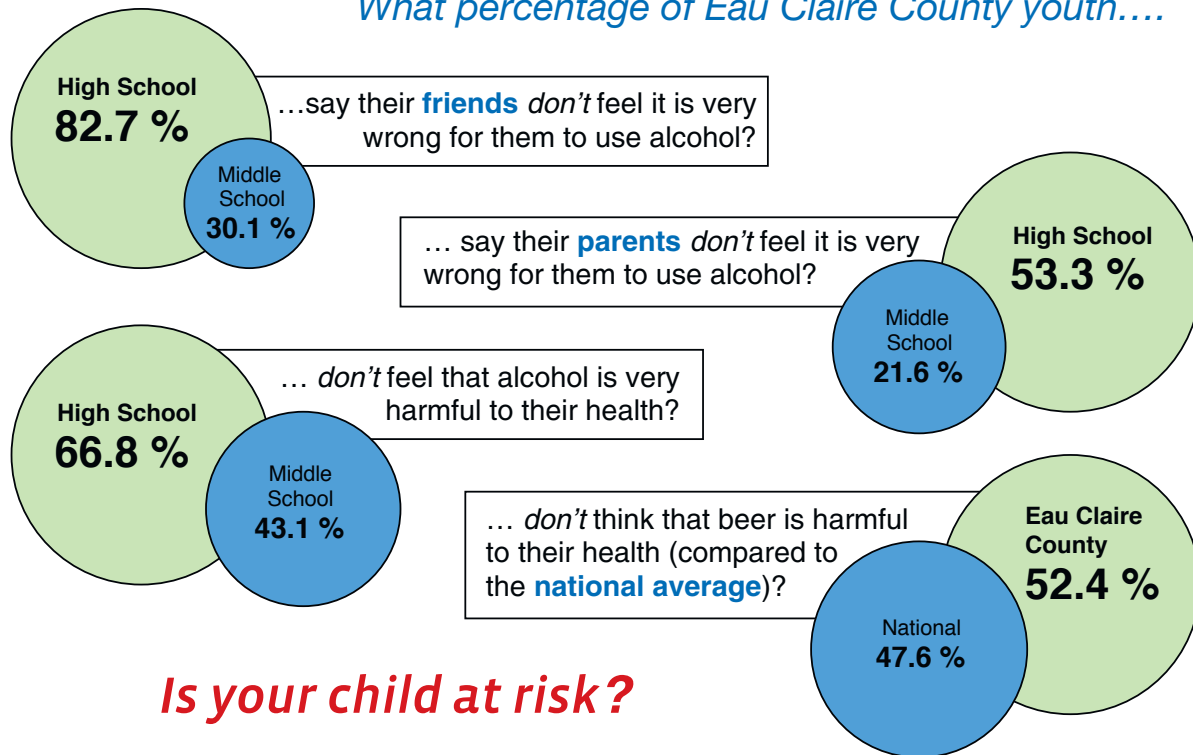
Of all the substances being abused, alcohol is clearly the drug of choice. Police officers routinely witness the abrupt and tragic loss of life associated with young people drinking alcohol.”

*- Jerry Matysik,
Eau Claire Police Chief*

There is no safe level of alcohol use for teenagers

Test your knowledge...

What percentage of Eau Claire County youth....



Is your child at risk?

Working Together for Alcohol-Free Youth

Underage drinking is a problem that results in serious personal, social, and financial costs for youth, their families and the community. Alcohol affects how well a young person is able to judge risk and make sound decisions. The risk of dangerous things happening is much less when kids are alcohol free. Reducing underage drinking can help save lives. The schools in Eau Claire County are working together with other community partners to reduce youth alcohol use and the hardship it causes.

Watch for our new media campaigns:

“Underage Drinking: Is It Worth the Risk?,” developed by Eau Claire County youth. The campaign is designed to **raise awareness of youth** about the real-life risks of underage drinking.

“Parents Who Host Lose the Most - Don't be a party to teenage drinking” is a community campaign to **raise awareness of adults** about the legal, safety, and health costs of underage drinking.



The Reality Check 21 Partnership includes youth and adults from Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire and Fall Creek. If you're interested in getting involved and helping to reduce underage drinking, please contact us!

Reality Check 21 Partnership
Julie Marlette 839-2874



Eau Claire Area Schools - Jean Christenson	852-3104
Altoona Schools - Heather Burich Holle	838-4379
Augusta Schools - Sarah Brenner	286-3347
Fall Creek Schools - Teresa Reetz	877-2138
Regis Catholic Schools - Dan Fink	830-2271

Sources

Eau Claire County Community Perceptions Survey 2004.

PRIDE (Parent's Resource Institute for Drug Education) Questionnaire Report for Eau Claire County Schools 2007.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide to Action for Families, 2007.

Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), November 2009. www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinking_Costs.asp

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Partnering with –

School District of Altoona
School District of Augusta
Fall Creek School District
Regis Catholic Schools



Underage Drinking: Is It Worth The Risk?



Costs of Underage Drinking In Eau Claire County