

# Investing in Alcohol-Free Youth

## What Is Underage Drinking?

When anyone under age 21 drinks alcohol, we call it underage drinking. It can harm the mind and body of a growing teen. Underage drinking is unhealthy, unsafe, and illegal.

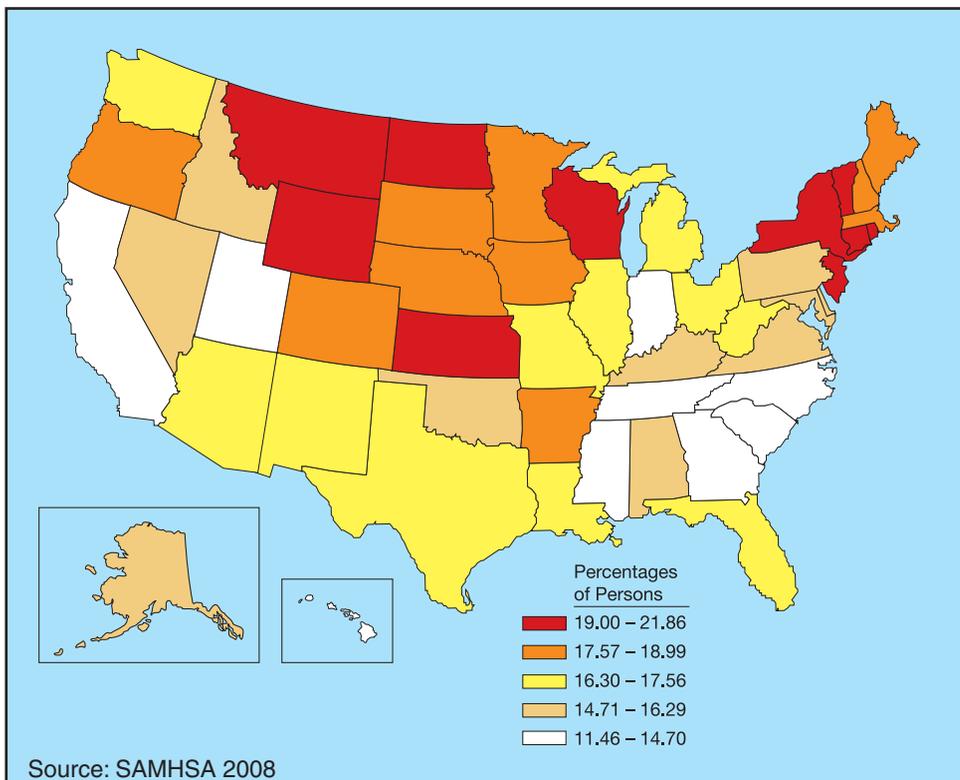
As youth grow older, the chance that they will use alcohol grows. Approximately 10% of 12-year olds say they have used alcohol at least once. By age 13, that number doubles. And by age 15, approximately 50% have had at least one drink.

## Did you know:

- m **Wisconsin youth & adults have the highest rates of alcohol use in the U.S.**
- m Many more youth use alcohol than tobacco or illegal drugs.
- m When youth drink, the risk of using other drugs is greater.
- m Alcohol use is a major cause of death from injuries among youth.
- m Underage drinking costs \$26.4 million per year in Eau Claire County.
- m There are things we can all do to reduce underage drinking.

Most 6-year olds know that alcohol is only for adults. However, between the ages of 9 and 13, youth begin to think more positively about alcohol use. That's why it's never too early to start talking about the dangers of underage drinking.

## Alcohol Use in the Past Month among Youth *Ages 12 – 17*



## Eau Claire County youth who used alcohol in the past year

- 6th grade – 11%
- 8th grade – 27%
- 10th grade – 56%
- 12th grade – 68%

**Unhealthy  
Unsafe  
Illegal**

# Test Your Knowledge About Underage Drinking – True or False?

## Alcohol and the teen brain

### Underage drinking can permanently affect brain development – TRUE

- m The brain does not stop growing until about age 21 – 22.
- m Exposing the brain to alcohol during adolescence may interrupt key processes of brain development, making it harder to learn and affecting school and job success.
- m Teens who use alcohol can damage their brain growth by at least 10%.

## Alcohol and the teen body

### On average, teens have about 5 drinks at one event (binge drinking) – TRUE

- m About 90% of the alcohol that underage persons drink is in the form of binge drinking.
- m 37% of Eau Claire County high school youth report having 5 or more drinks within a few hours.
- m More of our high school youth report binge drinking than the national average.

## Alcohol and the athlete

### Athletes who use alcohol are twice as likely to be injured – TRUE

- m Reaction time can be affected even 12 hours after drinking alcohol.
- m Drinking after competing slows down recovery.
- m Drinking alcohol after training decreases the benefits of training.

## Alcohol and the law

### It is against the law to give alcohol to someone else's child, even with parent permission – TRUE

- m In Eau Claire County, the fine for giving alcohol to someone else's child is \$452.50 per minor.
- m In Wisconsin, only a parent can give alcohol to their child.
- m In most states parents are not allowed to provide alcohol for their children under the age of 21.



### **Early drinking can cause later alcohol problems.**

Youth who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and a half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin at age 21.

**The average age Eau Claire County youth report first using alcohol is 13.**

## What are youth in Eau Claire County telling us?

- m Most of our high school youth do not think beer is harmful to their health. Most youth in the nation think that it is.
- m Most of our high school youth report that alcohol is easy to get.
- m Middle school youth say they get alcohol from their parents or a friend. High school youth say they get alcohol from a friend or an adult 21 or older.
- m Middle school youth say they drink at home. High school youth say they drink at a friend's house or at home. Most youth drink on weekends.

## What are adults in Eau Claire County telling us?

- m 85% of adults agree that underage drinking is a serious problem.
- m Adults believe youth get alcohol from parents or a friend's home.
- m 81% of adults think the #1 contributing factor to underage drinking is that alcohol is easy to get.



**Youth and Adults Agree**  
**Alcohol is easy to get –**  
**Youth get alcohol from adults**

## Working Together for Alcohol-Free Youth

Healthy growth and development of our youth is a goal shared by all of us. This goal is threatened when our youth drink alcohol.

Youth use alcohol more than any other drug. Over 60% of Eau Claire County high school youth used alcohol in the past year.

The schools in Eau Claire County are working together with other community partners to reduce youth alcohol use and the hardship it causes. We want to share what we know about the problem and invite you to be part of the solution.

**Watch for future guides.** This is the first of three prevention guides for parents and other adults on underage drinking. It covers what underage drinking is and why it's a problem in Eau Claire County. The second will cover the social and financial costs of underage drinking. The third will cover what we can all do to reduce the problem.



**It's time to**  
**change how**  
**we think, talk**  
**and act when**  
**it comes to**  
**underage**  
**drinking.**

For more information contact one of the following partners:

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

General information about underage drinking, its effects on adolescents, families, and communities, and what you can do to help stop underage drinking is available through the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), on the Internet at <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/> or by calling (800) 729-6686.

Citations:

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.

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

Eau Claire Area School District  
500 Main Street  
Eau Claire, WI 54701

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*Partnering with –*

School District of Altoona  
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Fall Creek School District  
Regis Catholic Schools



Is it time to change how we think, talk, and act when it comes to underage drinking?

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