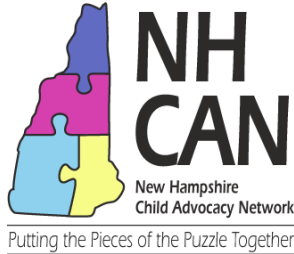


Our children. Our state. Our future.
2006 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children



Reduce Underage Alcohol Problems: A Comprehensive State Strategy

Highlights

- ✓ Underage alcohol use is our number one youth drug problem in New Hampshire and is six times more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined.
- ✓ Almost one half of New Hampshire high school students report current, regular alcohol use.
- ✓ Alcohol is a key factor in the three leading causes of death among young people – traffic crashes, homicides, and suicides.
- ✓ A comprehensive plan blends legislation, public education and law enforcement strategies to help keep alcohol out of kids' hands and to educate the community about its dangers.

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Issue overview

We all want our children to grow up safe and healthy. It's our collective responsibility to create community environments that support youth making healthy choices to reach their full potential. To do this we must take a fresh approach in our effort to reduce youth alcohol use.

Underage alcohol use is our number one youth drug problem in New Hampshire and is six times more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined.¹ Almost one half of New Hampshire high school students report current, regular alcohol use.² Not only does underage alcohol use impact a great number of youth in our state, we know more now than we ever did before about the seriousness of underage alcohol use – how it impacts health, brain development, and the wellbeing of youth.

Kids are experiencing a different drinking environment today, drinking a lot and drinking young. One third of New Hampshire high school students report binge drinking – consuming 5 or more drinks on at least one occasion in the last 30 days.³ In our state, more than 1 in 4 high school students had their first drink of alcohol *before* the age of 13.⁴ Ask yourself, “What grade are you in when you are 13?” Early alcohol use impacts our children's health and wellbeing. We now know that the brain is still developing during adolescence, and drinking alcohol during this critical developmental period can cause significant harm.⁵

Alcohol is the key factor in the three leading causes of death among young people – traffic crashes, homicides, and suicides.⁶ One in four New Hampshire high school students reported riding with a driver in the past 30 days who had been drinking alcohol.⁷ Did you know that youth see more advertising for beer than for juice, gum, sneakers or jeans?⁸

Action plan

While the problem of underage drinking is significant and serious in our state, the good news is that something can be done. Creative and effective solutions to reduce underage alcohol problems are driving the momentum. There are things that each of us can do to help create a culture in our communities and state that help keep our youth safe, healthy and thriving. For example:

- We can back legislation further limiting the availability of alcohol to underage youth and decreasing the opportunities for them to drink – such as creating new drivers licenses that clearly identify youth under 21. A bill aimed at having driver licenses that are easy to differentiate for those under 21 has been introduced for action in this session.
- We can encourage better enforcement of existing alcohol laws to keep communities safe and healthy. Being advocates within our communities for getting local ordinances enforced can mean restricting the number of alcohol outlets in a neighborhood and restricting or banning alcohol sales and advertising at youth, family, school and athletic events.
- We can help the public, parents and community leaders understand the real impact of underage alcohol use on the health and safety of our youth. We must educate the public about the scope and seriousness of the problem, the liability and legal responsibility associated with providing alcohol to those under 21, and the things that can be done to create community environments that support youth making healthy choices to reach their full potential.

What can I do?

Alcohol use affects our children's health and well-being. It will take all of us working together to prevent problems, change policies and build strong systems of support to reduce underage alcohol problems in New Hampshire.

- ✓ **Work towards systemic and community solutions that are part of a comprehensive state strategy to reduce underage alcohol problems.**⁹ The State Strategy to Reduce Underage Alcohol Problems consists of close to 50 recommendations, and lays out a road map for action to reduce: the availability of alcohol to underage youth; the opportunities for underage youth to consume alcohol; and the demand for alcohol among underage youth. To learn more about underage alcohol problems and what action you can take, please visit www.new-futures.org.
- ✓ **Read the Child Advocacy Updates and Alerts and track the efforts.** (To sign up to receive these e-mails, send an e-mail to childrensalliancenews@childrennh.org and ask to be added to the e-mail list.)
- ✓ **Contact your legislators and let them know you support the recommendations of State Strategy to Reduce Underage Alcohol Problems.** (Hint: Use the Children's Alliance legislative action center to contact your representatives: <http://www.childrennh.org/capwiz.php>.)

To learn more

To learn more about underage alcohol problems in NH, visit: www.new-futures.org.

References

¹ MMWR, Report 51, 2002.

² Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2003.

³ YRBS, 2003.

⁴ YRBS, 2003.

⁵ NIAAA, 2000.

⁶ CDC, 1995.

⁷ YRBS, 2003.

⁸ Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY), 2003.

⁹ Recommendations for Success: New Hampshire's Strategy to Reduce Underage Alcohol Problems, 2005.