

UNDERAGE DRINKING  
PREVENTION  
TOOLKIT  
KNOW THE FACTS



**LIVE UNITED**

# UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION TOOLKIT

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse has developed this Toolkit as part of *“Prevention in a Box”* to bring relevant information about underage drinking prevention to individuals, families, practitioners, and other key community stakeholders. The Commission on Substance Abuse is dedicated to empowering our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free. Recognizing the consequences of substance abuse and mental health conditions among Broward County youth and adults, the Commission seeks to distribute accurate information and resources that promote health and wellness.

The Commission strives to build individual, family, and community competence and capacity for lasting positive social change. **Today, the majority of youth and adults in Broward County do not misuse substances.** The Commission, therefore, encourages all individuals to read, review, and utilize this toolkit in its entirety.

Sincerely,



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President & CEO  
United Way of Broward County



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## Mission

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse’s mission is to  
**empower our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free.**



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# UNDERAGE DRINKING

## Alcohol and Alcoholism

Alcohol is a psychoactive drug that has depressant effects.

Alcohol is addictive.

Alcohol is one of the most commonly used addictive substances in the United States.

Alcohol energy drinks or caffeinated alcoholic beverages are premixed beverages that contain alcohol, caffeine, and other stimulants.

Alcoholism is addiction to alcohol or alcohol dependence.

Alcoholism is a chronic disease associated with craving and loss of control with drinking, often due to a high tolerance or need to drink greater amounts to experience the effects of alcohol.

Millions of Americans engage in risky binge drinking patterns that can lead to alcohol problems.

Millions of Americans suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence.

Millions of Americans have a family history of alcoholism or drinking problems.

Millions of American children grow up in a household where at least one parent is alcohol dependent or has abused alcohol.

## Youth and Alcohol

Underage drinking is defined as anyone who drinks alcohol under the legal age of 21.

The decision to use alcohol is a choice influenced by a young person's environment - peers, family, alcohol availability, etc.

Alcohol is more commonly used by youth than tobacco or illicit drugs.

Using alcohol before the brain fully develops dramatically increases risk for alcohol abuse.

Once a person uses alcohol, the risk of developing alcoholism is largely influenced by genetics.

Persons with a family history of alcoholism are **4 times more likely** to develop a problem.



## **Alcohol Effects**

Early alcohol use can cause youth many problems and further aggravate existing ones.

People's bodies respond to the effects of alcohol differently.

Becoming intoxicated results from drinking more alcohol than the body can break down causing the alcohol to circulate throughout the body.

Alcohol use can affect all aspects of life.

Alcohol use can cause serious health concerns to every organ in the body, including brain damage.

Alcohol use can damage emotional stability, families, relationships, careers, and finances.

Binge drinking by youth and young adults increases risk for fatal and nonfatal injuries.

## **Negative Alcohol Consequences**

Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to experience the following negative consequences:

- Poor school attendance
- Poor academic performance
- Failing grades and classes
- Unprotected and unsafe sexual activity
- Driving under the influence of alcohol
- Accidents and injuries
- Engaging in violence and criminal activity
- Use of other drugs
- Suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Damage to the developing brain

**Effective treatment is available for alcohol abuse and dependency.**

**Recovery is possible!**

# LAWS AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

In Florida, underage drinking is illegal.

In Florida, the following alcoholic related activities are illegal:

- Possessing alcohol beverages if you are under age 21
- Lying or providing false information about your age in order to get alcoholic beverages
- Obtaining or possessing a falsified, altered, or invalid driver's license or personal identification card
- Selling, giving, serving, or permitting to be served alcoholic beverages to a person under age 21
- House parties where alcohol is possessed or consumed by minors
- Having an open container of alcoholic beverages in vehicles
- Driving under the influence of alcohol over the blood or breath level
- Refusing to submit to testing to determine your blood-alcohol level
- Causing property damage, bodily injury, and/or death due to driving under the influence of alcohol
- Being disorderly while intoxicated in any public place

In Florida, mandatory sentencing can range from 60 days to 30 years of incarceration and from \$500 to \$10,000 in fines.

In Florida, conviction can cause a driver's license revocation from 180 days to mandatory permanent revocation depending on the number of driving under the influence convictions.

Alcohol is the drug most often linked to car accidents, including those involving death.

Alcohol affects skills required for safe driving – alertness, concentration, coordination, judgement, and reaction time.

## STORY OF HOPE AND RECOVERY

### Susan's Story

I started drinking when I was a freshman in high school. I brought Gatorade bottles of alcohol to school functions. My friends and I made fake IDs and went to bars. Alcohol was the only thing that I thought made me happy. I felt like I was having fun. I was 17 the first time I went through treatment. I had no idea what was going on and wasn't ready to listen. I knew it all, and no one could tell me different. At the time I didn't connect my drinking with the negative episodes in my life. I thought that everyone drank the way I did. I was angry that my life wasn't going as I wanted it to and that so many bad things were "happening to me." I felt completely out of control and weak because I could not stop drinking, and my self-esteem began to plummet. When I was 18, I came back to treatment beat up and ready to listen. I wasn't having fun anymore. I was young and not sure if I was going to be able to stop drinking. I struggled, trying to decide if recovery is really what I wanted or if I wanted to continue to use. But, it was through treatment that I began to witness the miracle within myself. I became grateful that I stayed sober and had a new life. It's not always easy, but it is much better than when getting drunk was the only thing that was on my mind.

# EDUCATING INDIVIDUALS

## Alcohol Consumption

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the standard alcohol drink contains 14 grams of alcohol which is found:

- 12 ounces of beer
- 8 ounces of malt liquor
- 5 ounces of wine
- 1.5 ounces of distilled liquor (vodka, gin, rum, whiskey)

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines for Americans, recommended alcohol consumption by gender is as follows:

- 1 standard alcohol drink per day for women
- 2 standard alcohol drinks per day for men

Dietary Guidelines for Americans indicate the following people should not drink alcohol:

- Children and adolescents under the age of 21
- Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant
- Individuals who plan to drive a car, operate machinery, or take part in other activities that require attention, skill, or coordination
- Individuals taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol
- Persons recovering from alcoholism
- Individuals of any age who cannot limit their drinking
- Individuals with certain medical conditions

## Underage Drinking

Young people drink alcohol for many of the following different reasons:

- Cope with pressures of teen life and social situations
- Change image and/or fit in
- Have not received clear messages about not drinking and/or consequences of drinking
- Escape from problems at home, with family, and/or in school
- Deal with emotional distress - feelings of low self-esteem, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and/or other mental health issues
- Gain confidence and/or lose inhibition

Peer pressure is the social influence to adopt a particular behavior to be accepted as a part of a group of one's equals.

Just as peer pressure can persuade a young person to drink alcohol, it can inspire youth to avoid underage drinking.

## Protective Measures

Employing protective factors with alcohol use is vital.

These protective factors include:

- Obtain factual education about alcohol
- Manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Avoid places where there will be drinking
- Seek treatment for alcohol addiction
- Be a positive role model
- Associate with individuals who do not use or abuse alcohol
- Participate in social and community activities of interest without drinking
- Remember the majority of youth do not engage in underage drinking
- Build and maintain motivation for a healthy lifestyle
- Cope with urges and/or peer pressure
- Do not be afraid to say "No"
- Create a balanced lifestyle

# INFORMING FAMILIES

The positive influence of family and the home environment promotes an individual's wellbeing.

Families play an extremely critical role in preventing underage drinking.

It is important for families to understand the implications of underage alcohol use and abuse.

Attitudes and behaviors within the family often shape the attitudes and behaviors of all family members.

Families should discuss alcohol use, abuse, and underage drinking

## FAMILY GUIDANCE

Guidelines to help families include:

- Educate yourself and your family members on alcohol and underage drinking
- Communicate the importance of healthy attitudes and behaviors
- Encourage positive conversation and active listening
- Set clear expectations and consequences about using alcohol
- Discuss ways to refuse alcohol and other drug offers
- Be observant of family member's condition, mood, and behaviors
- Maintain open and regular communication
- Create positive home environment (i.e. family dinners, family meetings, etc.)
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of alcohol abuse or dependence
- Remember it's never too early to start preventing alcohol and underage drinking
- Take advantage of teachable moments







## TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS

Youth and young adults spend a considerable amount of time in school.

Educators and school administration should be aware of underage drinking.

Alcohol use, abuse, and overdose is present in schools and on college campuses.

Educators and school administrators can play a pivotal role in decreasing and preventing alcohol use and abuse in young persons.

Alcohol use affects academic performance and grades.

Alcohol use affects school and class attendance as well as drop-out rates.

Alcohol use affects healthy brain development and functioning.

Engaging students in critical thinking helps youth filter misleading messages.

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educational institutions can employ the following strategies related to underage drinking:

- Institute policies about alcohol possession and consumption
- Provide training to faculty and staff on underage drinking
- Consider alcohol use when students display symptomology
- Implement evidence-based substance abuse education and prevention programming
- Utilize substance abuse screening and early detection approaches
- Establish standard protocols for detected substance abuse among students
- Promote suspension alternatives
- Partner with treatment and medical practitioners
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of alcohol abuse or dependence

# TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers may notice an emotional state or behavior in a young employee that may be a sign of alcohol use and/or abuse.

Alcohol use and abuse may negatively impact an individual's workplace attendance and performance.

Alcohol use and abuse in the work environment can present a safety risk and liability.

**Alcohol Use and Abuse** by a young employee can be associated with:

- Decreased alertness
- Mental confusion
- Concentration difficulties
- Impaired thinking
- Memory problems
- Changes in sensory perception and/or mood
- Loss of balance and coordination
- Inability to perform and/or complete tasks
- Decreased productivity
- Workplace accidents

## TOOLS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers can utilize the following strategies related to underage drinking:

- Institute a drug-free workplace
- Implement drug-free policies and activities
- Provide workplace substance abuse prevention education
- Offer specialized supervisory training
- Ensure access to employee assistance counseling and treatment
- Select a health insurance plan with addiction treatment coverage
- If your business serves alcohol, promote prevention

# INFORMING PRACTITIONERS

A number of health and human service practitioners play a vital role in the prevention and treatment of underage drinking.

These practitioners include:

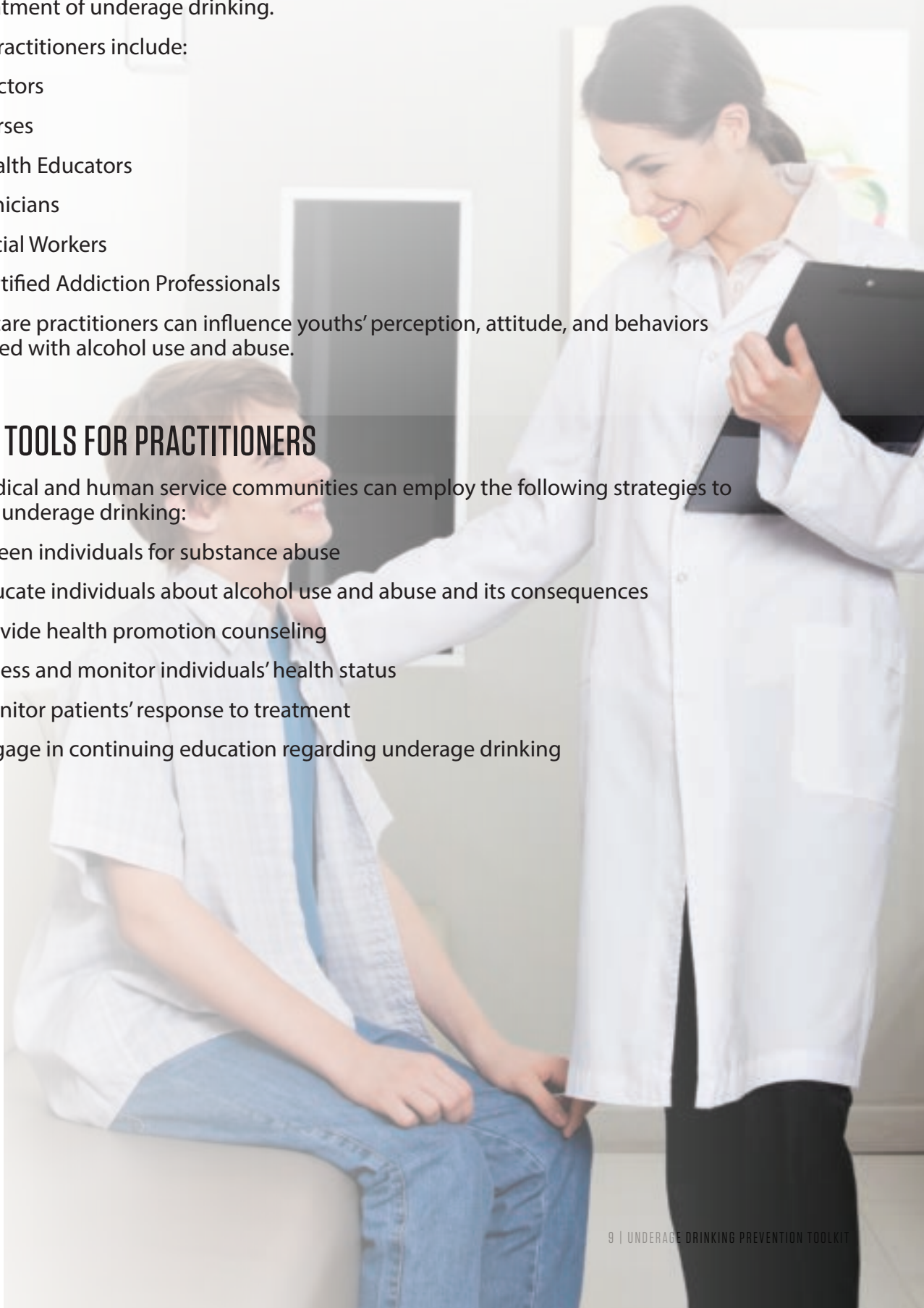
- Doctors
- Nurses
- Health Educators
- Clinicians
- Social Workers
- Certified Addiction Professionals

Health care practitioners can influence youths' perception, attitude, and behaviors associated with alcohol use and abuse.

## TIPS & TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The medical and human service communities can employ the following strategies to address underage drinking:

- Screen individuals for substance abuse
- Educate individuals about alcohol use and abuse and its consequences
- Provide health promotion counseling
- Assess and monitor individuals' health status
- Monitor patients' response to treatment
- Engage in continuing education regarding underage drinking



# ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Preventing underage drinking requires a community-wide response and sense of responsibility. Equally important is decreasing any stigma associated with individuals using alcohol as well as those persons requiring alcohol abuse or dependence treatment.

Education, advocacy, and community action are essential for health promotion associated with underage drinking.

## SOCIAL ACTION

The following strategies can be employed to address underage drinking by advocating for:

- General factual community education, information dissemination, and prevention regarding underage drinking
- Health care practitioner education regarding underage drinking
- Insurance coverage and treatment access for individuals with alcohol abuse and dependence
- De-stigmatization of individuals requiring substance abuse treatment
- Community policies regarding alcohol access to youth
- Community dialogues about underage drinking
- Alternative alcohol-free community activities and events for youth
- Legislation that promotes substance use prevention and expands treatment access
- Write legislators supporting these bills
- Write legislators about your family's experience with underage drinking and addiction

# HEALTH PROMOTION PLAN

By completing this page, individuals can examine health status and health promotion behaviors.

## General Health Rating

Excellent       Good       Fair       Poor

## Do you

Drink alcohol?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Drink regularly, frequently and/or heavily especially to relax?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Drink alcohol alone and/or to cope?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Experience negative consequences from drinking alcohol?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Plan your life and/or your friends around drinking alcohol?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Unsuccessful attempts to reduce or stop alcohol use?	_____ YES	_____ NO

## YES answers to any of these questions may indicate potential risk.

Health Risks (Factors that Negatively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Promotion (Factors that Positively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Strategies to Accomplish Health Goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Success Influencers (Factors that Positively Impact Goal Attainment): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where to go for help: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Important Factors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# RESOURCES

**United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse**

[www.drugfreebroward.org](http://www.drugfreebroward.org)

**Al-Anon / Alateen**

[www.alanon.org](http://www.alanon.org)

**Alcoholics Anonymous**

[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)

**National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.**

[www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**National Treatment Referral Helpline**

1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD for hearing impaired)

**Smart Recovery®**

[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

**The Partnership at Drug-Free.org (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids)**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

**2-1-1 Broward 24 Hour Information and Referral Helpline**

[www.211-broward.org](http://www.211-broward.org)

Dial 2-1-1 or 954-537-0211

# SOURCES

**National Institute on Drug Abuse**

**National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependents, Inc.**

**Florida Statute**



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1300 South Andrews Avenue  
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