



APRIL IS ALCOHOLISM AWARENESS MONTH

April 2016 marks the [30th National Alcohol Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence \(NCADD\)](#). While it seems that the focus has been almost exclusively on the heroin and opioid epidemic in the recent past, it's critical to remember that excessive alcohol use causes 88,000 deaths in this country each year, while all other drugs cause 44,000. Data from the National Survey on Drug Use & Health (NSDUH) show that in 2014, slightly more than half of all Americans over the age of 12 (52.7% or 176.6 million) reported being current drinkers of alcohol. Although most people drink in moderation, an estimated 17 million people have an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). And, while the minimum drinking age in this country is 21, the NSDUH study also revealed that 24% of eighth graders and 64% of twelfth graders used alcohol in the past year.

The theme of this year's National Alcoholism Awareness Month is **"Talk Early. Talk Often. Parents Can Make a Difference in Teen Alcohol Use,"** so it seems like a good time to remind parents and guardians about how critical it is to speak with children about the risks and dangers inherent with alcohol. Because alcohol is both legal and socially acceptable, many parents believe drinking is simply a right of passage, as it was for them years ago. Many also believe it's acceptable to allow their underage children and their children's peers to drink in their home under adult supervision. Neither belief is true. While young people's deaths from drug overdoses are dotting the headlines statewide, we must remember that alcohol is also killing thousands of our children each year. Persons reporting first use of alcohol before age 15 are more than 5 times as likely to report past-year alcohol dependence or abuse, than persons who first used alcohol at age 21 or older. And, because alcohol leads to impaired judgement and risky behaviors many young people fall victim to sexual or other assaults.

According to the CDC:

- Underage drinkers consume 11% of the alcohol consumed in this country each year.
- Excessive alcohol consumption resulted in 4,400 underage deaths per year.
- Approximately 189,000 emergency room visits per year by persons under 21 for injuries and other conditions related to alcohol.

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According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), each year:

- More than 1,825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die each year from alcohol-related unintentional injuries.
- More than 690,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking.
- More than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.
- 599,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 receive unintentional injuries while under the influence of alcohol.
- More than 150,000 students develop an alcohol-related health problem and between 1.2 and 1.5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use.

The numbers don't lie. Clearly, this year's Alcoholism Awareness Month theme carries a critically important call to action. Talk Early! Talk Often! For tips on how to get that conversation started, click [here](#).

With prom and graduation season and summer vacations right around the corner, start talking now!

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