

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Surgeon General Issues Call to Action on Underage Drinking

"Adolescent alcohol use is not an acceptable rite of passage but a serious threat to adolescent development and health . . ."

--Acting Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H.

Underage consumption of alcohol is a widespread and persistent public health and safety problem, according to the recently released Surgeon General's report on underage drinking. This science-based document summarizes the latest research on underage drinking, making particular note of the emerging body of research on the negative effects of underage alcohol use on adolescent brain development. The authors conclude that "the latest research demonstrates a compelling need to address alcohol use early, continuously, and in the context of human development using a systematic approach that spans childhood through adolescence into adulthood" (p. vii). Thus, six national goals are presented, designed to reduce the number of current underage drinkers and prevent children from beginning to drink (see below). A copy of the report, which includes the rationale, challenges associated with achieving, and specific strategies for realizing each goal, is available online (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking/calltoaction.pdf>).

Six Goals of the Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking

- GOAL 1** Foster changes in American society that facilitate healthy adolescent development and that help prevent and reduce underage drinking.
- GOAL 2** Engage parents and other caregivers, schools, communities, all levels of government, all social systems that interface with youth, and youth themselves in a coordinated national effort to prevent and reduce underage drinking and its consequences.
- GOAL 3** Promote an understanding of underage alcohol consumption in the context of human development and maturation that takes into account individual adolescent characteristics as well as environmental, ethnic, cultural, and gender differences.
- GOAL 4** Conduct additional research on adolescent alcohol use and its relationship to development.
- GOAL 5** Work to improve public health surveillance on underage drinking and on population-based risk factors for this behavior.
- GOAL 6** Work to ensure that policies at all levels are consistent with the national goal of preventing and reducing underage alcohol consumption.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*, 2007.

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The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention funded this project under grant BJAG 2005-1206. All points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of any State agency.