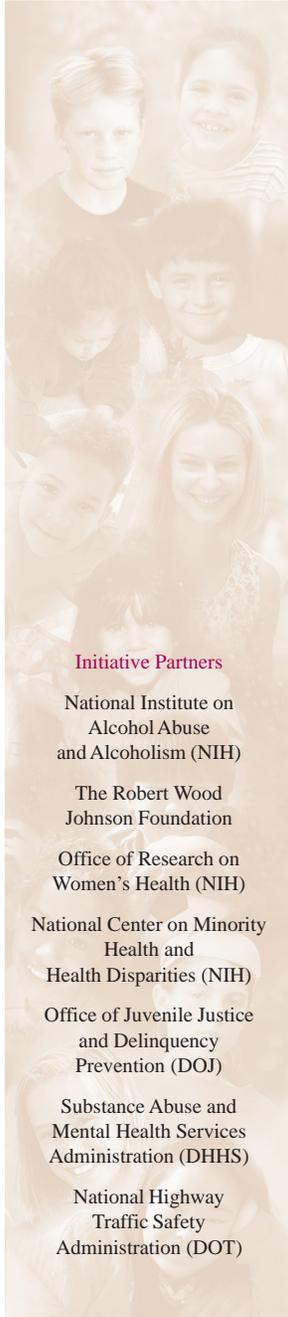




Making the Link

Underage Drinking and Mental Health



Initiative Partners

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIH)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Office of Research on Women's Health (NIH)

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DOJ)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (DHHS)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT)

Alcohol use in adolescence is associated with psychological distress and depression.

- ⇒ Among 12- to 17-year-olds who were current drinkers, 31 percent exhibited extreme levels of psychological distress and 39 percent exhibited serious behavioral problems.¹
- ⇒ Twelve- to sixteen-year-old girls who were current drinkers were four times more likely than their nondrinking peers to suffer depression.²

The severity of behavioral problems in adolescents is significantly associated with increased likelihood of adolescent alcohol use.

- ⇒ Past-month alcohol use was reported by approximately 14 percent of adolescents with low levels of behavioral problems, by 23 percent of those with intermediate problem scores, and by 38 percent of those with significant behavioral problems.³
- ⇒ Adolescents with serious behavioral problems were nearly three times more likely to use alcohol than those with low levels of behavioral problems.⁴

There is a link between suicide and alcohol use in adolescents.

- ⇒ Twenty-eight percent of suicides by children ages 9 to 15 could be attributed to alcohol.⁵
- ⇒ Among eighth grade girls who drink heavily, 37 percent report attempting suicide, whereas 11 percent of girls who do not drink report attempting suicide.⁶
- ⇒ Using a national school sample, a study reported that suicide attempts among heavy-drinking adolescents were three to four times greater than among abstainers.⁷



Source: Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (1994-6).

Adolescents struggling with serious emotional disturbances (SED) face even greater challenges when they use alcohol.

- ⇒ Adolescents with high levels of SED were nearly twice as likely as adolescents with low levels of SED to have used alcohol in the past month.⁸
- ⇒ Adolescents with high levels of SED were five times as likely as those with low levels of SED to report alcohol dependence.⁹

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents. (SMA) 99-3286. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1999.

² Hanna EZ, Hsiao-ye Y, Dufour MC, et al. The relationship of drinking and other substance use alone and in combination to health and behavior problems among youth ages 12-16: Findings from the Third National Health and Nutrition Survey (NHANES III). Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Scientific Meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism, June 24-29, 2000, Denver, CO.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Unpublished data extrapolated by National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism from State Trends in Alcohol Mortality, 1979-1992; US Alcohol Epidemiologic Data Reference Manual, Volume 5. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1996.

⁶ Windle M, Miller-Tutzauer C, Domenico D. Alcohol use, suicidal behavior, and risky activities among adolescents. J Res Adolesc 2(4):317-330, 1992.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Relationship Between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents.

⁹ Ibid.