



*A collaboration to encourage adoption of drug-free workplace programs*

## ***A Toolkit for Action***

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### **Introduction**

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Underage drinking is a serious concern across the nation, and efforts to prevent it are critical to keeping communities safe, healthy and conducive to success for youth as they transition to adulthood. As such, spreading the message about the dangers of underage drinking requires the involvement of all sectors of society – including the workplace. The purpose of this *Toolkit* is to assist in engaging employers in keeping America’s children alcohol free.

The key to getting employers involved is leveraging alcohol- and drug-free workplace programs, commonly called drug-free workplace programs. These programs generally include, among other components, education for employees about the dangers of workplace alcohol and drug use. But, with appropriate tools and resources, most can easily be expanded to incorporate education for parents, guardians and other caregivers – the vast majority of whom work – about steps they can take to prevent underage drinking. In other words, drug-free workplace programs offer an already existing avenue to a captive, targeted audience.

Expanding the scope of drug-free workplace programs to include underage drinking prevention should be an easy “sell” – because it actually makes good business sense. When employees are distracted by a child’s problematic behavior, it impacts their ability to work safely and productively. Furthermore, by doing their part today, employers have the power to positively shape the workforce of tomorrow by ensuring youth grow up with the expectation that in order to work, they must be alcohol and drug free.

This *Toolkit* was developed to assist members of the *Leadership Foundation to Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation* and other stakeholders, including community coalitions and neighborhood organizations, to take action at the state and local levels to encourage the adoption of drug-free workplace programs and to incorporate underage drinking prevention education for parents. It was developed in response to the *Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*, published in 2007, and represents a collaborative effort between the *Leadership Foundation* and several non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies, and private organizations committed to improving the health of America’s youth and families.

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## ***Toolkit Contents***

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Specific items in the *Toolkit* include:

1. List of *Toolkit* developers and project contributors
2. Drug-free Workplace Program Basics
  1. Pocket Card: *Steps to a Drug-Free Workplace*
3. Why Employers Should Invest in Preventing Underage Drinking
4. State Law Reference Materials
  - Discussion Guide
  - Chart and Explanation Key
5. Education Modules for Working Parents
6. List of additional resources

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## **The State Level Approach**

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Some employers, such as those covered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's alcohol- and drug-testing rules for workers in safety sensitive positions and those receiving Federal grants and contracts, are required by law to implement drug-free workplace programs that meet certain criteria. However, most employers are *not* covered by any such Federal regulations and must look to their state to learn if there are any governing requirements if they choose to operate a drug-free workplace program or do alcohol and drug testing of employees.

Safety is the perspective that generally drives employers to address alcohol and drugs in the workplace – research has shown a correlation between drug-free workplace programs and decreases in severity and frequency of occupational accidents and injuries. As such, in certain industries, particularly those with high accident and injury rates, drug-free workplace programs have become more commonplace with and without regulatory requirements. However, their adoption is far from universal, and the integration of education for parents about underage drinking prevention into such programs is rare.

Thus, enlisting the workplace as a channel for underage drinking prevention requires a two-pronged approach: 1) the promotion of the adoption of more drug-free workplace programs overall, and 2) the incorporation of underage drinking prevention education for parents into existing and newly developed drug-free workplace programs.

*The power to carry out this dual aim lies at the state level.* While the Federal government has long promoted drug-free workplace programs, only a small number of employers are required by Federal law to have one. For the most part, states have been left on their own to stipulate what is and is not acceptable, including drug-testing requirements and programs' impact on workers' compensation and other insurance.

While some states have passed laws that restrict actions employers can take, others have established criteria that provide legal protections. Still others have established program guidelines that provide financial incentives for having drug-free programs. Today, 12 states have provisions that offer workers' compensation insurance premium discounts to organizations that have programs that meet certain criteria. And in some of these states, employee education is one of the requirements.

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## Getting Started

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How best to approach this issue, and with whom, will largely depend on what your individual state already has in place. The contents of this *Toolkit* can assist in gaining an understanding and putting together a successful, targeted approach. To get started:

1. ***Educate yourself about drug-free workplace programs.*** Review the background materials about drug-free workplace programs and their benefits to employers and employees (i.e., *Drug-Free Workplace Basics* and *Why Employers Should Invest*). Consider in particular the educational aspect and the delivery of underage drinking prevention messages in a workplace context.
2. ***Learn what's going on in your state.*** Review the *State Law Chart* and *Explanation Key* and the key questions on the *State Law Discussion Guide* to identify what is going on in your state as well as strategies being used by other states. This information can help you identify the most appropriate “target” official to contact to discuss our cause as well as to determine what approach to take in your state.
3. ***Prepare to meet with your state's identified official.*** Review the key questions (refer to *State Law Discussion Guide*) to learn whether your state does have governing requirements already established for employment testing or for when employers are required to do employee education on substance use and abuse. Also read *Why Employers Should Invest* and prepare to articulate the rationale for encouraging underage drinking prevention education in the workplace setting – including the “business case” for doing so.
4. ***Meet with your state's identified official.***
  - Express your commitment to keeping youth alcohol free and your belief that the workplace is an important channel for advancing this cause.
  - Share ways you think your state can help engage employers in keeping its youth and future workforce alcohol and drug free.
  - Explain that the *Leadership Foundation* has developed resources to assist employers to conduct underage drinking prevention education, including ready-to-use training modules that provide parents with specific steps they can take to prevent underage drinking and how to help children who may need help because of alcohol or drug use.

We hope this *Toolkit* will play a part in increasing your state's efforts to prevent underage drinking and improve the safety of its schools, families and communities.

For more information contact:

Leadership To Keep Children Alcohol Free Foundation  
2933 Lower Bellbrook Rd.  
Spring Valley, OH 45370-9001  
937-848-2993  
[leadership@alcoholfreechildren.org](mailto:leadership@alcoholfreechildren.org)