



## Consequences of Underage Drinking

The consequences of youth alcohol use are associated with financial, social, interpersonal and legal difficulties. Alcohol and other drugs are second only to depression and other mood disorders as the most frequent risk factors for suicidal behavior (CDC, n.d.). In Iowa, 35 teens died by suicide in 2015, the highest number in over a decade (IDPH, 2015). Young drivers ages 16-20 are 17 times more likely to die in a crash when they have a blood alcohol concentration of .08 percent than when they have not been drinking (CDC, 2012). Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to use other drugs, miss more days of school, and experience poor or failing grades (CDC, 2016). According to the U.S. Surgeon General, people who use alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop an alcohol use disorder later in life compared to those who have their first drink at age 20 or older (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). The rate of suspensions and expulsions in Iowa schools related to alcohol has been relatively stable at about 2.5 percent of students over the last three years (Iowa Department of Education, 2014).



*Youth who drink alcohol are more likely to miss more school and have poor grades.*

## Alcohol: Underage Drinking Under 21 and Under the Influence

Alcohol use among people under the age of 21 is a serious public health problem in Iowa. The 2013-2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) estimated that in Iowa, 10.8 percent of 12 to 17-year-old and 68.3 percent of 18 to 25-year-old had used alcohol in the past month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2012), alcohol is the most commonly used substance among youth in the United States, more than tobacco and illicit drugs and is responsible for more than 4,300 annual deaths among underage youth. Current studies show that children start to drink alcohol as early as nine years old (SAMHSA, 2013). Factors such as community and peer norms concerning the use of alcohol and access to alcohol contribute to this public health problem.

### IN BRIEF

- About 23 percent of Iowa 8th graders reported drinking alcohol before turning 13 (Iowa Youth Survey, 2014).
- More than one in five Iowa 11th graders drank alcohol in the past month (Iowa Youth Survey, 2014).
- Alcohol is the most commonly used substance among youth in the United States (CDC, 2012).
- A drink often refers to one-half ounce of pure alcohol, one 12-oz beer, one 5-oz glass of wine, or one 1-oz glass of 80-proof distilled spirits (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015).

## Alcohol Use

### Iowa Youth Continue to Use Alcohol

Although youth alcohol use has decreased over the past 15 years, the health and social consequences of alcohol use continue to be a serious public health problem in Iowa. The 2014 IYS indicated that 23 percent of 8th graders surveyed in 2014 reported using alcohol before turning 13. Twenty-three percent of 11th graders, 6 percent of 8th graders, and 3 percent of 6th graders reported alcohol use in the past 30 days (Figure 1). Research shows that as perception of risk decreases, alcohol use increases. The percentage of youth who perceived alcohol use as a moderate or great risk has decreased for 6th graders, while remaining relatively stable for 8th and 11th graders over the past fifteen years (Figure 2). The data show that more 11th graders in Iowa see alcohol use as a risk than 6th graders.



## Conclusions About Underage Drinking in Iowa

Although progress has been made across Iowa in reducing the underage drinking rate, it remains a serious public health problem. Children as young as nine begin using alcohol, and sixth graders report that alcohol use is less risky now than in the past. Alcohol use has been associated with financial, social, interpersonal and legal problems. Alcohol use is a risk factor for suicidal behaviors. Although Iowa data show alcohol use among 6th, 8th, and 11th graders has been decreasing, more than 1 in 5 11th graders reported alcohol use in the past 30 days. To continue to reduce the use of alcohol among Iowa youth, prevention efforts need to focus on informing youth about the risks of alcohol use through evidence-based programs such as Life Skills Training, Guiding Good Choices, Project ALERT to name a few; and supporting community policies through social host liability laws, Use/Lose laws or raising the minimum legal drinking age.

### For More Information

For more information or to learn more about prevention and treatment resources, call **1-866-242-4111** or visit [www.drugfreeinfo.org](http://www.drugfreeinfo.org). This information was provided by the **Iowa State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup**.



**People who use alcohol before the age of 15 are 4x more likely to develop an alcohol disorder.**

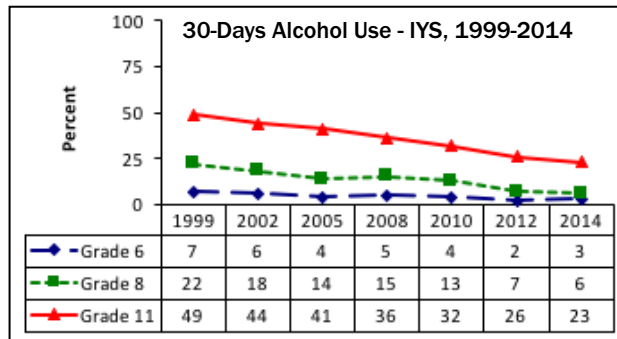
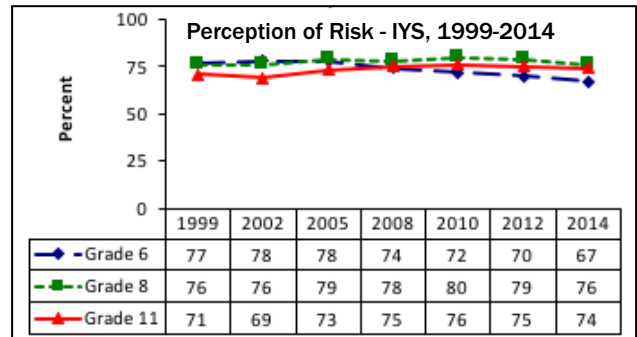


Figure 1: Percent youth reporting alcohol use in the past 30 days, IYS

Figure 2: Percent of 6th, 8th, and 11th-graders reporting perceiving alcohol use as a moderate or great risk, IYS



**Alcohol use is a risk factor for suicidal behavior.**

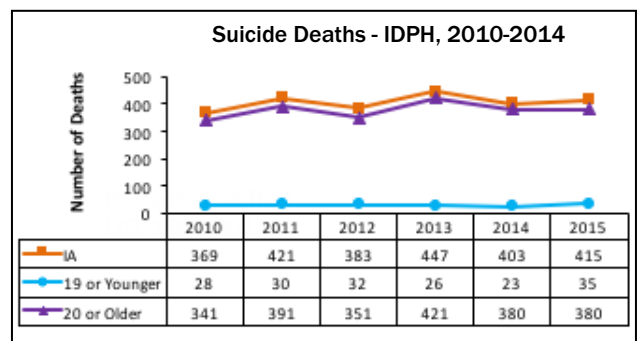


Figure 3: Age-specific suicide rates, IDPH Vital Records

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