



BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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For Immediate Release

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Berrien County Health Department Brings Awareness to Dangers of Underage Drinking

Benton Harbor, Michigan, April 19, 2022 – This spring, the Berrien County Health Department Substance Use Disorder Prevention Team is bringing awareness to the dangers of underage drinking.

This initiative kicks off during April, which is Alcohol Awareness Month, and is designed to discourage those who are under 21 from consuming alcohol and give parents tools to talk to their children about alcohol use.

Alcohol is the most widely used substance by youth in the United States. Though underage alcohol use has been trending down in recent years, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, more than 29 percent of high school students said they currently use alcohol.

Underage drinking creates multiple risks for children, whose brains are still developing. These include:

- Motor vehicle accidents
- Injuries such as burns, falls and drowning
- Overdoses
- Altered brain development
- Risky sexual activity
- Suicide and homicide

Underage drinking contributes to poor school performance, challenges with mental health and other health issues later in life.

Motor vehicle accidents are the greatest mortality risk for underage people who drink. In 2018, 24 percent of drivers aged 15 to 20 who died in a car accident had a blood alcohol level of .01 or higher.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, parents talking with their children about alcohol use can reduce risk. SAMHSA has a [variety of resources available](#) to help parents and other caregivers initiate conversations with underage people in their life about alcohol and other substances.

“Spring months often have celebrations like school dances and graduation parties where alcohol may be more easily available to those who are underage,” said Lisa Peeples-Hurst, public health promotion and prevention supervisor at the Berrien County Health Department. “Talking with your child can help prepare them to make safe decisions in situations they are or will soon be experiencing.”

For more information about preventing underage drinking, contact Lisa Peeples-Hurst at 269.927.5690 or visit samhsa.gov/talk-they-hear-you.

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