

# Dept. of Health Services: Office of Children's Mental Health focuses on the impacts of underage drinking in Wisconsin

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## ***Prevention takes community involvement***

Office of Children's Mental Health Director Linda Hall today calls for all of us to work together to prevent underage drinking. Over the years, Wisconsin youth under age 21 have been drinking less, but are still drinking more than youth in other states. Underage drinking leads to increased likelihood of risky sexual behaviors, acts of violence, trouble in school and with the law. It can also lead to increased likelihood of making current or emerging symptoms of depression and anxiety even worse.

[Newly released mortality data](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show a 25% increase in deaths of Wisconsinites directly linked to excessive alcohol use. Although the CDC data are not limited to children, it is important to remember that children are affected by these deaths, and that youth in Wisconsin are more likely to drink excessively than youth in other states and the consequences can be serious.

## **By The Numbers**

- Youth in Wisconsin normalize drinking more than youth in all 49 other states. In fact, a 2018 study showed only 36% of kids age 12-17 thought it was risky to have 5 or more drinks once or twice a week.
- 90% of youth alcohol intake is done in the form of binge drinking.

## What We Can Do

- Broad-based community involvement is necessary to prevent underage drinking. Prevention strategies include making alcohol less available, attractive, affordable, and acceptable.
- Parents can make a difference by having small, casual conversations with children starting at about age 8 in order to help them make healthier decisions about alcohol.

Read the [2021 Annual Report](#).

See the [Fact Sheet about Preventing Underage Drinking](#).

Get tips to start the conversation with your kids and have [Small Talks](#).