

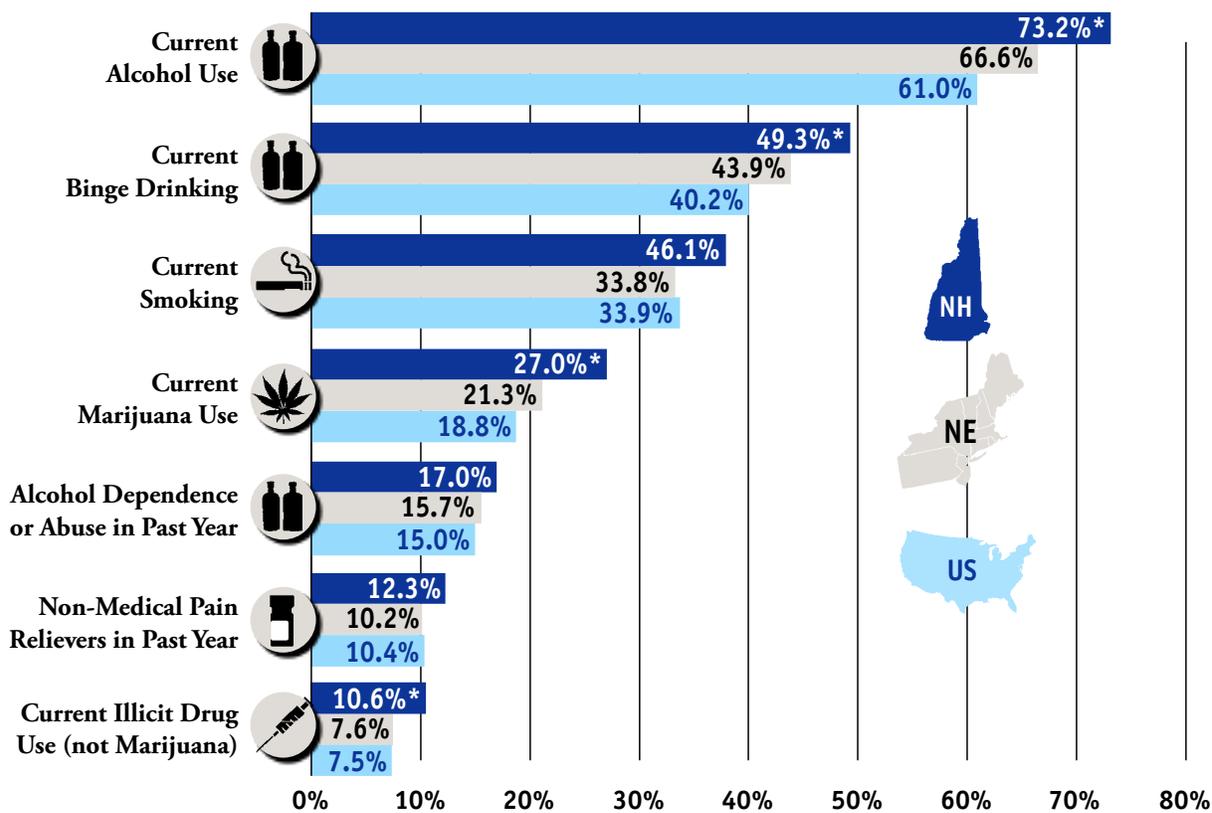
Collective Action Issue Brief #1: Young Adult Substance Abuse in New Hampshire



WHAT WE KNOW

Young adults in New Hampshire between the ages of 18 and 25 have some of the highest rates of alcohol and drug misuse when compared to young adults nationally. Below is how young adult substance use rates in New Hampshire compare to national averages.

YOUNG ADULT SUBSTANCE USE: NH – NORTHEAST* – US



*indicates a statistically significant difference between NH and US at $p \leq .05$

For NSDUH, the Northeast includes: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Other New England states also rank in the top five of states nationally for young adult substance use indicators, which may mean that there are similar factors in neighboring states that contribute to higher rates of use and abuse. In general, young adults use and abuse alcohol and other drugs at rates higher than other age groups because of a range of factors: they are often living independently for the first time, with less parent or other adult guidance or mentoring; they are or are approaching the legal age to drink, increasing access to alcohol and possibly other drugs; they are at a stage when risk-taking is part of asserting independence and self-identity; and they may have more free time and more risk-taking peers and environments¹.

Source: 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

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WHY IT MATTERS

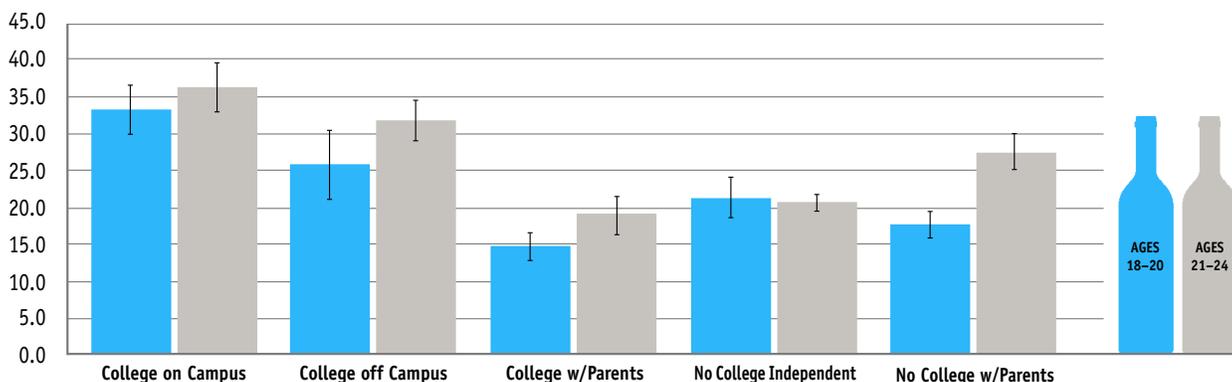
SO WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL? *“This is what young adults do. This is what they’ve always done.”*

Unfortunately, the stakes may be higher than they used to be, with morbidity and mortality rates associated with alcohol and drug misuse that are cause for significant concern. Although policies have made strides in reducing traffic fatalities with seatbelt and drunk driving education, young adults are in a much different environment than they were 10 or 20 years ago. With immediate communication and the world wide web in their smart phones every minute, the ability to advertise party locations, to text for an illegal drug or underage alcohol buy, or to post images or comments that glorify or trivialize the harmful outcomes of alcohol and drug misuse may exacerbate risks. Also, research shows that the earlier drinking and drug use begins and the longer it lasts, the more likely people are to experience problems, including injuries, fatality, alcohol dependence or drug addiction².

ANOTHER BIG DEAL? *Young adults are our most important work force.* They are the new talent, the emerging leaders, the innovators of our growth and economic diversity. We need them, and reducing the misuse of alcohol and other drugs with this age group is a win-win for their well being and long-term health outcomes and for the business, industries, art & music, technology, culture, environment, and other growth areas of our state that they contribute to.

WHAT CAN WE DO? *Consider the living environment.* We do know that living situations and college enrollment can make a difference. The figure below shows that alcohol abuse is higher among young adults living on campus than among young adults living at home or living independently.

PREVALENCE OF BINGE DRINKING, BY AGE, COLLEGE STATUS AND RESIDENCE: U.S. ADULTS 18–24



Source: National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions, 2004–2005

Strategies that can begin to change norms in college living environments could help address the issue. More guidance and education can be one step. For example, the Prevention Research Institute has helpful information that could educate young adults on just how the quantity and frequency of drinking moves an individual through different stages of addiction, from what they term “social dependence” to “psychological dependence” to “physical dependence³”. Understanding more about the social, psychological and biological factors of substance abuse and dependence may help young adults make more low-risk choices.

WHAT MORE CAN WE DO? *Adopt a best practice.* The New Hampshire Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services and the Governor’s Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse encourage core community sectors to learn more about alcohol and drug misuse and take action to bring our rates of substance abuse down. Business, Safety, Education, Health, Government and Community and Family Support organizations each have a role to play. In the next section are some of the best practices recommended for each sector and how they may positively influence young adult behavior.



PREVENTING ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG MISUSE BY YOUNG ADULTS

WHAT WE CAN DO



BUSINESS

- Workplace policies can send clear messages about risks of alcohol and drug misuse both at and outside of the workplace.
- Signs, posters, paycheck inserts and other messages can help frame the risks of alcohol and drug misuse and provide information on ways to get help in a caring manner.
- Managers and employers can encourage early and confidential conversations about problems an employee may be experiencing as a result of alcohol or drug misuse. Sometimes just initiating a conversation can help a young adult see better how substance use might be affecting his/her work and well being.



SAFETY & LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Effective enforcement of alcohol and drug laws can serve as a deterrent.
- Alternatives to sentencing can provide education and incentives to help address underlying alcohol and drug problems in lieu of or in addition to fines. These alternatives help young adults explore their own patterns of use or misuse and provide motivation to change patterns and lower risk.



HIGHER EDUCATION

- Educational programs in four year institutions, community colleges and adult education programs can help young adults learn about the social, psychological and biological implications of alcohol and drug misuse. Informational programs can help young adults make responsible choices.
- Student assistance and early intervention programs on campuses can provide additional education, confidential screening and assessment, brief motivational interventions, treatment referrals, and recovery support.
- Campus administrators, staff, and campus police can send clear and consistent messages to students and parents about the risks of young adult alcohol and drug misuse relative to accidents, injuries and deaths, alcohol/chemical abuse and dependency, unwanted and/or unplanned sexual activity, academic achievement, campus violence, court involvement, financial costs, institutional codes of conduct, on campus housing requirements, scholarship expectations, and related health and safety concerns.
- Institutions of higher education (four year institutions and community colleges) can participate in the NH Higher Education Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Committee to help facilitate a collective voice on AOD advocacy issues at a state level, promote knowledge and advancements in the alcohol and drug research through education, bi-annual data collection and joint initiatives and receive assistance/support in efforts through resources sharing and collaboration.



HEALTH & MEDICAL

- Health and medical clinics working with young adults can offer education and early intervention programs, including confidential screening and assessments, brief interventions and referral to treatment and recovery support services.
- Culturally sensitive services and health promotion messages can be designed to appeal to young adults.



GOVERNMENT

- Local and county government can support laws and policies that deter the misuse of alcohol and other drugs.
- Government agencies can provide resources and other support to community programming for young adults.



COMMUNITY & FAMILY SUPPORTS

- Community and family support organizations can develop special events and communications to appeal to young adults.
- Organizations can provide confidential services and referrals geared toward young adults.



WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO? *Get informed and stay informed.* Below are just a few of the many resources available to communities and individuals who want to join in Collective Action for Collective Impact on young adult alcohol and drug misuse to protect our citizens and our future.

The Truth: A Young Adult Perspective on Alcohol & Drug Abuse (Vermont video projec) <http://vimeo.com/35291252>

Facts on Alcohol and Drug Use www.drugfree.org

Information on Alcohol and Drug Use in New Hampshire www.drugfreenh.org

Resources and Information on Reducing Drinking on College Campuses <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/>

Alcohol Research: A Lifespan Perspective. NIAAA Alcohol Alert #74 <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AA74/AA74.htm>

Overview of Alcohol and Drug Use. The Partnership at Drugfree.org <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/DrugAlcohol-Overview-PDF.pdf>

What Parents Need to Know About College Drinking <http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/NIAAACollegeMaterials/parentBrochure.aspx>

Tips for Cutting Down on Drinking <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Tips/tips.htm>

Young Adult Drinking. NIAAA Alcohol Alert #68 <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa68/aa68.htm>

Drugs, Brains and Behavior: the Biology of Addiction <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/science-addiction>

Drug Facts: Prescription and Over-The-Counter Medications <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/prescription-over-counter-medications>

Drug Facts: Salvia <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/salvia>

Drug Facts: Spice (Synthetic marijuana) <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/spice-synthetic-marijuana>

Drug Facts: Marijuana <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana>

Technical Assistance for organizations, schools and businesses interested in prevention and early intervention best practices: <http://www.nhcenterforexcellence.org>

NH substance abuse information and educational materials: <http://www.drugfreenh.org>

NH Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services: <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs/bdas/>

For more information about efforts to address alcohol and drug misuse in New Hampshire, please contact the New Hampshire Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services at (603) 271-6738 or the New Hampshire Center for Excellence at nhcenterforexcellence@jsi.com or (603) 573-3346.

¹Raskin White, H., & Jackson, K. (2004). Social and psychological influence on emerging adult drinking behavior. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 28(4), 182-190.

²Grant, J., Scherrer, J., Lynskey, M., Lyons, M., Eisen, S., Tsuang, M., True, W., & Bucholz, K. (2005). Adolescent alcohol use is a risk factor for adult alcohol and drug dependence: Evidence from a twin design. *Psychological Medicine*, 36, 109-118.

³Daugherty, R. (2008). Rediscovering alcoholism, addiction and dependence. PRIME for Life/PRIME Solutions, 1-17.

*This issue is one of a series of issue briefs produced and disseminated by the New Hampshire Center for Excellence, a public-private initiative of the New Hampshire Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. The Center provides a wide range of technical assistance to stakeholders, agencies, and organizations working to prevent the misuse of alcohol and other drugs and to promote recovery. Issue briefs are one way in which the Center supports the work of the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment in sharing information about its five-year strategic plan to address substance misuse and abuse in the state. The state plan, *Collective Action - Collective Impact: NH's Strategy for Reducing the Misuse of Alcohol and Other Drugs and Promoting Recovery*, is available at <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcbcs/bdas/documents/collectiveaction.PDF>. Each state plan topic brief is related to a priority problem area, a target population at increased risk, or a core community sector that can play a vital role in local and state efforts to prevent harm and to promote treatment and recovery services and supports.*