



Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention of Catawba County

DID YOU KNOW...

43.5% of Catawba County middle- and high-school students reported using alcohol in the past year.

20.4% reported monthly use of alcohol.

23% said they got drunk at least once in the past two weeks.

13.3 years is the average age of onset for alcohol use among Catawba County youth.

20% of students rode one or more times in the past 30 days with a driver who had been drinking.

14% of 12th graders **drove** one or more times in the past 30 days after drinking.

1,879 Catawba County youth under age 21 were charged with Driving After Consuming from 1999-2007.

5% of substance-related ER visits in 2004 involved minors.

\$1.2 billion represents the cost of underage drinking to North Carolina in 2005.

Underage Drinking: A Community Problem

Underage drinking is not a problem that affects just teens; it's a public health issue that takes its toll on whole communities. Teen alcohol use is associated with risky sexual behaviors, sexual assault, school delinquency, illicit drug use, fighting, property damage, homicide, and suicide. Each year 5,000 young people die from alcohol-related injuries due to violence, falls, drowning, and burns; 2,000 of those deaths are motor-vehicle fatalities—the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 20.

Research shows that children who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to abuse alcohol and become alcoholics than their peers who abstain until the legal age of 21. Furthermore, recent studies show that alcohol use may permanently impair adolescent brain development.

While the health, safety and social costs of underage drinking are significant, so too are the economic costs: According to the most current information available, in 2005 underage drinking cost the citizens of North Carolina \$1.2 billion, giving NC the dubious distinction of being the 47th highest ranking state in the nation for cost per youth for underage drinking.

Because alcohol use by minors is a community problem, it is a community responsibility to address the issue. Science tells us that preventing and reducing underage drinking is best achieved when citizens come together to change the conditions that allow, encourage, and enable youth drinking.

Root Causes of the Problem in Catawba County

Easy Accessibility

In a 2008 student survey, **43%** of Catawba County youth reported that alcohol was readily available, with participants identifying parties and older friends and siblings as their primary sources for liquor.

In addition, data gathered from routine compliance checks carried out by Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE) shows that **20%** of merchants sell alcohol to minors.

Together, the information suggests that the availability issue is two-pronged: youth seeking alcohol (demand), and some merchants making it easy for them to buy it (supply).

Permissive Community Norms

While limiting access to alcohol is key to reducing underage drinking, creating an environment that does not tolerate the use of alcohol by minors is equally as important.

In Catawba County, **27%** of adults think it's acceptable for minors to drink "sometimes." In fact, students do most of their drinking at their own home or the homes of their friends, suggesting that some parents condone the practice by looking the other way or openly permitting it. Moreover, students themselves find peer disapproval of drinking diminishes with age, creating a social environment that encourages it.

**CATAWBA COUNTY
TEEN ALCOHOL USE IS
ASSOCIATED WITH:**

Risky sexual behavior

41% of CC teens had sexual intercourse in the past year.

Motor Vehicle Incidents

From 2005-07 alcohol was assessed in 3% of crashes among teens 15-20.

From 1999-07, 1,859 drivers under 21 were arrested and charged with Driving After Consuming.

Illicit drug use

20% used marijuana and other illicit drugs.

Delinquency

25% skipped school in the last month.

Property damage

21% committed vandalism in the past year.

Suicide

From 2000-06, four teens committed suicide.

Homicide

From 2000-05, 5 teen assaults resulted in death.

Alcohol dependence

Teens who drink are 4 times as likely to develop alcohol dependence.

Brain damage

Teen drinking may lead to permanent damage to the developing adolescent brain.

Contact us

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Addressing the Problem: The “Not Here” Initiative

To reduce underage drinking in Catawba County, ASAP is collaborating with community partners to implement a comprehensive plan aimed at impacting the causes of the problem: easy availability of alcohol to minors and permissive community attitudes toward youth alcohol use.

The ***Not Here Initiative*** is comprised of several components, each involving a sector of the community that plays a key role in changing the environment that enables and encourages underage drinking.

Not In This Store encourages merchants that sell alcoholic beverages to increase their compliance efforts regarding sales to minors.

Not In This Community calls upon alcohol retailers, law enforcement, and youth to discourage friends, siblings and other of-age, third-party buyers from supplying alcohol to minors.

Not In This Neighborhood unleashes the power of neighborhood associations to monitor local environments and help prevent underage drinking at parties.

Not In This Home asks parents to set boundaries and send a zero-tolerance message to their children and their children’s friends.

Not In This School is a youth-generated initiative designed to change attitudes about and perceptions of drinking among middle- and high-school students.

Not In This County aims to enhance the community’s perception of the local criminal-justice system and police departments as fair and consistent enforcers of underage drinking laws.

Preventing and reducing underage drinking in Catawba County will not be achieved by focusing on youth alone. It is a collective responsibility that requires all segments of the community to become engaged in changing the attitudes, policies and practices that contribute to the problem.

Join ASAP in meeting the challenge. Help us say, ***“Not here. Not in Catawba County.”***

Who We Are

Membership

ASAP is comprised of Catawba County residents who have an interest in preventing and reducing substance abuse in our community. We are a culturally diverse group with more than 40 members and partners representing various sectors of the County, including:

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|---------------|-------------------------|
| Education | Treatment Providers |
| Medicine | Law Enforcement |
| Business | Criminal-Justice System |
| Youth | Faith Community |
| Parents | Social Services |
| Public Health | Mental Health |

Vision & Mission

We are united by our commitment to enhance the quality of life for Catawba County citizens by reducing substance abuse and its associated harms through community involvement. Our current mission is to reduce and prevent underage drinking, which is an important first step toward realizing that vision.