



Texas Advocates Point to Importance of Preventing Underage Drinking – and its Consequences – Among Recent Graduates

Underage drinking is the cause of 3,900 youth deaths each year, with Texas regularly ranked as state with highest number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities

(Austin, TX | June 15 2022) – With the school year at a close and summer underway, Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth, the state’s leading advocacy organization working to end underage drinking, urged increased awareness on specific risks faced by recent graduates.

The CDC recognizes underage drinking as a significant public health problem, responsible for more than 3,900 deaths and 225,000 years of potential life lost among people under age 21 each year. Because the brain continues developing until the mid-20s, alcohol has drastically more serious impact on younger users. Studies show drinking at a young age can lead to lifelong damage in brain function, memory, and coordination, and makes it more likely youth will develop addiction or substance abuse problems later in life. When surveyed, fear of youth addiction and underage alcohol-related car crashes were among Texan’s highest concerns.

Recent high school graduates are among the highest at-risk: By far, the greatest percentage of high school drinking occurs in the 12th grade. According to state data, nearly half (47%) of Texas high schoolers who reported drinking within 30 days of being surveyed were seniors.

One of the greatest challenges to solving this issue is how incredibly prevalent alcohol is – 65 percent of high school seniors say it’s easy to access and they also report that they mostly get it socially. With underage youth out of school and attending summer celebrations, alcohol access, likely use and associated risks and consequences all significantly increase. It is imperative adults take action to protect youth. Under no circumstances – adults present or not – is underage drinking safe.

“There is an important difference between a celebratory milestone and a developmental one,” said Nicole Holt, CEO of Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth. “The fact of the matter is, a graduation does not transform our kids into adults overnight. We must be sure that as adults, we are doing everything possible to catapult them forward to their amazing futures – and nothing at all to hold them back.”

As families and communities reflect on all that lies ahead for graduates, every single adult must be united in reducing underage drinking. Lifelong health problems, reduced brain development, poor cognitive functions, drunk driving injury or death – are all preventable.

###