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Stop Underage Drinking

Alcohol is the most widely misused drug among America's teens and young adults. Consumption of alcohol by anyone under the age of 21 is known as underage drinking. Underage drinking continues to be a serious concern in our community due to damage that alcohol can cause to a teen's health and development.

According to SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, underage drinking accounts for 11% of all of the alcohol consumed in the United States. Why is this concerning? Youth who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to become dependent or addicted to alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21 or later.

Underage drinking is associated with numerous negative consequences. In order to stop underage drinking it is important to understand the risks. Teens who consume alcohol are more likely to:

1. Experiment with other drugs.
2. Fall behind in school and get bad grades.
3. Suffer alcohol-related crashes, accidents, and injury.
4. Engage in risky sexual activity.
5. Have health problems including mental health.
6. Make poor decisions or do something they regret.
7. Damage relationships with friends and family members; harm not only themselves but those around them.

In honor of National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week, January 23-29, 2017, District Health Department #10 takes the opportunity to remind adults to do their part to stop underage drinking. If you are an adult with teens or young adults in your life, be a positive role model- do not provide alcohol to minors and show them what it means to have good judgement when it comes to alcohol. Be an involved parent- watch for risk factors or signs that a teen may be experimenting. Start the conversation about alcohol early- visit www.talksooner.org for conversation tips.

Parents, neighbors, schools, community leaders, and business must work together to protect teens and young adults from the negative effects of underage drinking.