



RESEARCH SOLUTIONS

April 2025 Newsletters

Written and prepared by Sossity Lewis, & Roy Carroll, Regional Prevention Professionals

National Drug Take Back is April 26

Let's all work together to make your home and community safer! One of the easiest to access places for youth to get drugs is in the medicine cabinet! If you have prescriptions that you no longer use or need in your home, please return them to your local police department or to another local drug drop box in your community. These boxes are always available to you, not just on Take Back days. Find your local return center at <https://ardrugtakeback.org/take-back/collection-sites/>.

Underage Drinking Prevention, Prom and Graduation Safety: Encouraging Responsible Choices

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about the dangers of alcohol misuse, especially among youth. Prom and graduation season are approaching, it's essential to talk about the risks of underage drinking and how to stay safe during

celebrations.



As you prepare to walk across the stage and celebrate the end of an era, emotions are running high—excitement, nerves, and the thrill of new beginnings. Prom is just around the corner, a night meant for fun, laughter, and unforgettable moments. There are many decisions to be made on prom night. Are you going alone? With a friend? With a girl/boyfriend? How will you arrive? Do you have your vehicle? What are you going to wear? These are some challenging decisions, and the anxiety and excitement levels are at their highest in just thinking about one of the two most memorable nights in High School. However, one decision—like saying *yes* or *no* to alcohol—could change everything.

The Hard Truth About Underage Drinking

Recent data from the 2024 Arkansas Prevention Needs Assessment Survey (Region 4) reveals alarming trends:

1 in 5 high school students reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.

12% of teens admitted to binge drinking (consuming multiple drinks in a brief period).

Underage drinking is a leading factor in car crashes, injuries, and risky behaviors during prom and graduation season.

Myths vs. Facts

The Facts About Alcohol Misuse and Underage Drinking

- Alcohol is the most used and abused substance among youth in the U.S.

- Early alcohol use is linked to higher risks of developing alcohol use disorders later in life.
- The teen brain is still developing, and alcohol can cause long-term cognitive and behavioral issues.
- Underage drinking increases the risk of accidents, injuries, violence, and poor academic performance.

The truth is that an individual may feel and say to themselves, “Hey, I’m alright to drive home”. However, drinking will impair your ability to drive. What happens if you get into an accident?

- 1 in 3 alcohol-related teen fatalities happen during prom/graduation season.

One-third of alcohol-related teen fatalities occur during prom or graduation season. A teen is seventeen percent more likely to die from an alcohol related accident. All that hard work you did to finish school, all the people that supported you along your path are gone with just one decision. No future and no story to tell, you have just become a statistic.

Myths About Alcohol Use

✗ "Everyone drinks at prom and graduation parties."

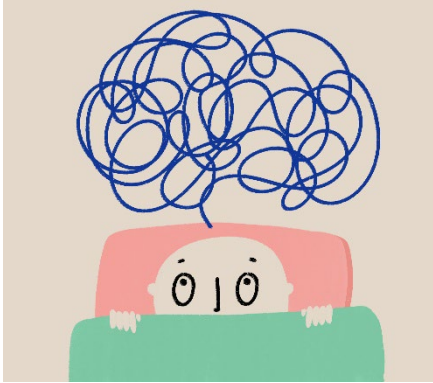
✓ **FACT:** Most teens **don't** drink—you're not alone in choosing sobriety, and alcohol-free celebrations are increasingly common.

✗ "One drink won't hurt." "It's not a big deal if I just try it once."

✓ **FACT:** Even small amounts of alcohol impair judgment and reaction time. Even one instance of underage drinking can have serious physical, legal, and social consequences.

✗ "Drinking helps me relax and fit in with others."

✓ **FACT:** Alcohol may provide temporary relaxation but often leads to regretful decisions and risky behavior.



One Choice, Two Paths

Imagine this: The day of prom has arrived. The clock is ticking slower. You feel like you are getting a hundred texts a minute from your classmates and friends. You can just feel the anxiety building in your body. Your heart is beating like a drum, you don't know whether to run and scream with excitement or fear. You just feel it is going to be an amazing night, and you are looking forward to it.

The evening has approached. You have got yourself ready, and your family wants to take photos before you leave the house. You are just ready to leave the house. You finally escape and hop in the vehicle and drive yourself or ride with someone. You hit the parking lot of the school. You are here, finally here.

You take a deep breath and there is a knock on the window of your vehicle, and it is one of your friends telling you to let them in the vehicle.

The friend pulls out a bottle of alcohol and encourages you to take a drink before you all walk into the prom. What happens next?

You Say No:

- You stay in control, avoid legal trouble, and keep your future bright.
- You remember every moment of your special night—no regrets.

You Say Yes:

- Legal Consequences: Fines (\$100-\$500), probation (1-3 years), or even jail time.
- Academic Risks: Scholarships and college admissions could be jeopardized.
- Life-Altering Outcomes: Alcohol impairs judgment; what if you drive and crash?

Let's take a minute to discuss more about the possible outcomes if you choose to take a couple of drinks of alcohol.

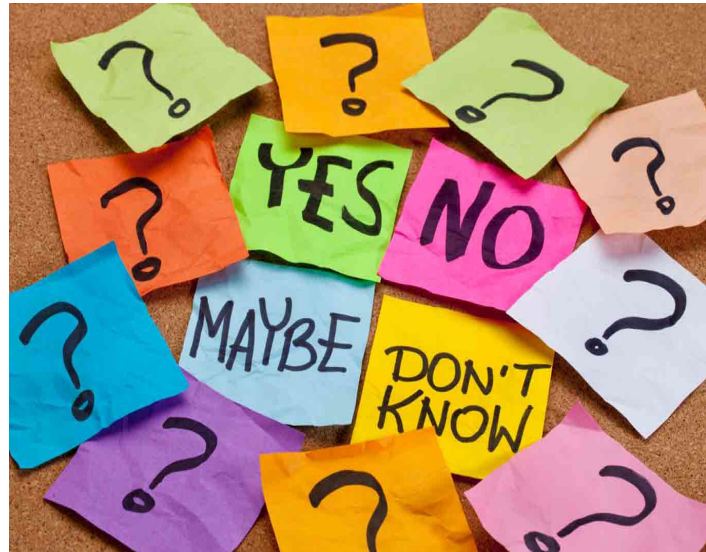
You are under the age of twenty-one, and if someone sees you taking a drink, you could be reported to local law enforcement. The police show up at the school, and you are questioned. If alcohol is found, you will be arrested.

What if you keep drinking during the night of the prom? You are doing your best to keep it a secret from everyone. It seems like alcohol does help reduce the anxiety you have been

feeling about graduation and life after, but alcohol is also affecting different areas of your entire body. The most prominent thing that it affects is your judgment skills.

You decide to leave prom, and while you are driving to your destination, you make a small swerve and get pulled over by the police on the way home.

Underage drinking is preventable, and with community support, strong communication, and proactive strategies, we can keep our teens safe during prom, graduation, and beyond. Together, we can create a culture of safety, respect, and celebration.



Prom and graduation should be memorable for the right reasons. Here are some safety tips for teens and families: How to Stay Safe & Celebrate Smart

- Avoid Risky Situations: If you see someone drinking, walk away
- Safe Rides: Use a designated driver or ride-sharing app. Never get in a car with someone who's been drinking.
- Speak Up: If a friend is pressuring you, say no confidently. Real friends respect your choices.
- Host Safe Celebrations: Consider alcohol-free parties with adult supervision.
- Stay Connected: Encourage teens to call or text if they need help or feel unsafe.



You have a Senior, or you may be graduating from high school this year; some are excited and nervous about the new experiences in life that lay ahead. Your family, friends, and teachers are so proud of all your accomplishments. The right people have invested time, money, and energy to make sure you make it to graduation day. There is a lot of anxiety leading up to a big day in a young person's life!

Let's work together to educate and empower our youth, parents, and community leaders to make informed, healthy, and safe choices. Here are a few great tips....

Parents & Community: How You Can Help with Youth Prevention Strategies

Lead by Example: Adults should model healthy behaviors and avoid enabling unsafe choices.

Plan: with families, friends, and school faculty: Know where your teens are going, who they're with, and what their plans are.

Open Dialogue: Encourage ongoing conversations about peer pressure and decision-making.

Positive Peer Influence: Support teen leadership in promoting safe and healthy behaviors.

Engaging Activities: Provide fun alternatives to parties where alcohol might be present. Host Alcohol-Free After-Parties with fun activities.

Set Clear Expectations: Communicate family rules and the reasons behind them. Teens are less likely to drink when they know the rules.

Community Awareness and Involvement: Call to Action

To continue in our region's prevention efforts to bring prevention awareness to our communities, we are Calling All School Counselors & Student Leaders!

Join us for an exciting 🌟 DRUG-FREE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 🌟 this August — an exciting opportunity for students to LEAD, LEARN, and INSPIRE others around critical topics, including:

- Behavioral and Mental Health
- Substance Use Prevention
- Positive Youth Leadership

💡 What's in it for Students?

- ✓ Share creative prevention strategies with peers
- ✓ Build confidence through peer-led presentations
- ✓ Network with youth leaders from other schools
- ✓ Make a real impact on campus culture!

🎤 Student Presentations:

We encourage Drug-Free Youth groups or students interested in starting a drug-free youth group to present short, creative sessions at the conference. What information do you want to share? Why this Conference Matters:

This conference is more than just a day of learning — it's a platform to empower youth voices and spark peer-driven change in schools and communities. Together, we can build a movement of student leaders promoting positive mental and Behavioral health and drug-free futures.

⚠️ We will provide mini-grants of \$250 to the first 10 youth organizations or groups to sign up to present at the conference. Funds will be awarded at the conference.

📌 How Counselors Can Help: 🖐️ Complete the survey here:
<https://questionpro.com/t/AXvaQZ5rCh>

- ✅ Identify students or groups to attend & present



- ✓ Support students in preparing their presentations
- ✓ Complete a quick interest survey to help us finalize the date, time, and location

Other ways to get involved are by hosting or organizing:

School Campaigns: Encourage schools to hold awareness assemblies and share prevention materials.

Parent Workshops: Sessions for parents to learn how to support and guide their children.

Social Media Outreach: Share positive messages about sober celebrations.

Safe Driving Initiatives: Promote designated driver programs and sober ride services.



Think Before You Do and Choose Celebration Without Regret

Local law enforcement is aware of the dangers of teens drinking and driving during prom and graduation season and will have extra patrols on the road. If you or our teens get caught driving while intoxicated, the individual is looking at a fine from \$150 to \$1000. The driver's license you worked hard to get will be suspended for a minimum of six months. Probation for one to three years and possible jail time for twenty-four hours to one year. Is it worth it?

Take a breath; the hard facts about teen drinking and driving are true. Don't be a statistic; don't allow our youth to become a negative statistic. Be encouraged and know that alcohol

is not required to have a good time. You have a great future ahead of you; don't ruin it in one night. Your Future Is Worth Protecting

You've worked too hard to let one night change everything. Say no to alcohol, yes to memories and your future.

“Let's make memories that last—for all the right reasons.”

Resources and Help Lines

- SAMHSA Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving): www.madd.org
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD): www.sadd.org
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): www.aa.org

💙 Let's celebrate safely this prom and graduation season! 💙

Check out all of our newsletters, feel free to share with others, and stay updated on future events and prevention resources at www.researchsolutionsinc.org and follow us on Social Media at <https://www.facebook.com/Region4PreventionRepresentative/>

#AlcoholAwarenessMonth #PromSafety #GraduateResponsibly