

# DHSS Launches Statewide Campaign for Prevention of Underage and Binge Drinking

**NEW CASTLE (April 23, 2015)** – As part of its coordinated strategy to reduce the impact of addiction, the Department of Health and Social Services on Thursday kicked off a statewide campaign for prevention of underage and binge drinking with events at high schools in each of Delaware's three counties.

The new campaign is an extension of DHSS' existing "Underage? Understand. Don't Drink!" campaign. It features separate messaging for underage drinking prevention aimed at young people age 12 to 20, the adults who influence them, and binge drinking prevention for young people up to age 25.

"One of the most important messages we can share with young people is about the dangers associated with underage and binge drinking," Gov. Jack Markell said. "We must convince young people that underage and binge drinking can do serious physical or emotional harm to them or to others."

The campaign, in English and Spanish, will include billboard, bus, print, TV, radio, online, movie theater and social media marketing, plus messages in schools and stores. The campaign is divided into three distinct messages:

- The theme of the underage drinking prevention campaign is "Drinking Hurts Thinking," with a unique website address – [DrinkingHurtsThinking.com](http://DrinkingHurtsThinking.com) – that links to [HelpIsHereDE.com](http://HelpIsHereDE.com), DHSS' site for information and resources on addiction prevention, treatment and recovery. On [DrinkingHurtsThinking.com](http://DrinkingHurtsThinking.com), young people will find information about the physical, emotional and legal problems they could face if they drink alcohol before age 21.

- In the campaign aimed at adults who influence young people, parents and other adults are encouraged to talk with their kids about underage drinking, to “Open up – before they do.” The website for that part of the campaign is [www.HelpIsHereDE.com/underage](http://www.HelpIsHereDE.com/underage) and includes warning signs and resources for parents who are concerned that their underage children might be drinking.
- In the campaign to prevent binge drinking, young people will learn what constitutes binge drinking, be warned about its dangers, and be able to assess their risks in an online quiz at a unique website address – [AmIABingeDrinker.com](http://AmIABingeDrinker.com). That address also links to the HelpIsHereDE website. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks in two hours (for men) and four or more in two hours (for women) in one sitting.

“This aggressive campaign is critical to our overall strategy of reducing the toll that the addiction epidemic is taking in our state,” DHSS Secretary Rita Landgraf said. “Our young people need to know that using and abusing alcohol can be harmful to their immediate health and can be the first step down a path that eventually leads to addiction. Education and prevention are important to helping them understand those risks.”

The Center for Drug & Alcohol Studies at the University of Delaware found that 31 percent of 11th-graders in Delaware reported using alcohol at least once in the past month in 2014, with 57 percent saying they had used it in the past year and 65 percent saying they had used it in their lifetimes. Among eighth-graders, 13 percent reported at least monthly use of alcohol, with 26 percent saying they had used it within the past year and 34 percent in their lifetimes.

In a 2014 study of binge drinking by the UD Center for Drug & Alcohol Studies, 61 percent of UD students surveyed said they had drunk five or more drinks in a single sitting in the past

month. Males (65 percent) were more likely to engage in binge drinking than were females (58 percent).

For 2007-2011, 18 percent of all unintentional deaths in Delaware among young people age 15-24 were alcohol-related.

DHSS launched the prevention campaign with events at three schools: Concord High School near Wilmington; Smyrna High School; and Sussex Central High School near Georgetown. Speakers included Gov. Markell, First Lady Carla Markell, DHSS Secretary Landgraf, Public Health Director Dr. Karyl Rattay, Robert Kracyla, deputy director of the Delaware Division of Alcohol & Tobacco Enforcement, and Clint Ferrazo, a young person in recovery from Caravel Academy. At the events, students were quizzed about underage drinking, tried on Fatal Vision goggles that simulate the vision of someone who is impaired from drinking, and were able to ask questions of the speakers. At Smyrna High School, students walked through an inflatable brain to see the parts of the brain damaged by drinking.

The campaign is funded by money left from a previous Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The funds must be used to target underage and binge drinking in young people age 12-25.

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