

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Alcohol is the most frequently used substance in Indiana and the United States. Excessive alcohol consumption contributes to a number of health and economic consequences. Prolonged and compulsive use of alcohol can also lead to alcohol use disorder.

The Indiana Epidemiological Profile for 2019 was recently released. Notable statistics are as follows:

- Over half of the population ages 12 and older consumed alcohol within the past month.
- The rate of underage drinking in Indiana among 12- to 17-year-olds was 9.3%.
- In 2018, nearly one-fourth of Indiana residents ages 12 or older reported binge drinking. The highest rate was among 18- to 25-year-olds. Health officials define binge drinking as having enough alcohol to bring your blood-alcohol content up to the legal limit for driving, about five drinks for men or four drinks for women in less than 2 hours.
- The Indiana Youth Survey indicates that in 2018, 29.5% of Indiana 12th grade students reported using alcohol at least once during the past 30 days. Overall, alcohol consumption patterns seemed to progress with age; i.e., 8th grade students showed lower prevalence rates than 10th and 12th grade students. However, Northeast Indiana had the highest rate of binge drinking among 8th graders, at 15.7%.
- From 2000 through 2018, a total of 8,760 Hoosiers died from alcohol-induced causes, and mortality rates attributable to alcohol have climbed gradually in both Indiana and the United States.
- There was a decrease in alcohol-related collisions from 13,911 in 2003 to 7,213 in 2018, a 48% drop. The number of fatal crashes with alcohol involvement also decreased, from 242 to 128, representing a 47% drop.
- During State Fiscal Year 2019, there were a total of 8,738 removals of children from their homes. In 831 cases (9.5%), parental alcohol use was indicated as a reason for removal.
- In Indiana, students can be suspended or expelled from school for using alcohol, tobacco, and/or drugs on school property. Data from the Indiana Department of Education indicate that during the academic year 2018, a total of 1,006 suspensions/expulsions were recorded in Indiana schools related to alcohol.
- There are many conditions that are directly attributable to alcohol. Those conditions that may not be as obvious include: homicide 47%; fire injuries 42%; hypothermia 42%; portal hypertension 40%; drowning 34%; fall injuries 32%; poisoning (not alcohol) 29%; acute pancreatitis 24%; and suicide 23%.

These numbers suggest that problematic alcohol use continues to plague various age groups in our society. Unfortunately, denial is a common trait among those struggling with alcohol use disorders. They often underestimate the amount they drink, the duration of their drinking problem, and the impact it

has on their life, or overestimate their ability to control their drinking or to quit. Denial is also common among friends and family members who are uncomfortable acknowledging the reality of the situation. Awareness about addiction and its harmful effects on our lives is necessary in order to protect our loved ones and ourselves.

For more information, please visit our website at www.drugfreeadamscounty.org.