



# KEEPING ST. MARY'S COUNTY YOUTH SAFE AND ALCOHOL-FREE

## What's the Problem?

ALCOHOL USE BY UNDERAGE SMC YOUTH IS A PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUE. RECENT DATA SHOW THAT COUNTY YOUTH DRINK MORE OFTEN, AND IN GREATER AMOUNTS, THAN THEIR PEERS ACROSS THE STATE.

19%

of SMC youth ages 15 and under, took their **first drink** (other than a few sips) before age 13, compared to 17% of their statewide peers.<sup>(1)</sup>

33%

of SMC high school students reported **alcohol use in the past 30 days**, as compared to 25.5% statewide<sup>(2)</sup> and 81% of SMC 18-20 year olds also engaged in underage drinking in the past 30 days.<sup>(3)</sup>

18%

of SMC high school students engage in **binge drinking**; as compared to 13.0% of their peers statewide.<sup>(4)</sup> And, 51% of SMC 18-20-year-olds also engaged in binge drinking.<sup>(5)</sup>

### ALCOHOL IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE

65%

**take alcohol from home** without permission.<sup>(6)</sup>

Alcohol kills more teenagers than all other drugs combined.

It is a factor in the three leading causes of preventable death among 15-24 year olds; accidents, homicides and suicides.

(Source: CDC; NIAAA)

## What's the Harm?

ADULTS MAY THINK THEY ARE KEEPING YOUTH SAFE BY PROVIDING ALCOHOL OR ALLOWING YOUTH TO DRINK IN THEIR HOMES; HOWEVER, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT PROVIDING ALCOHOL TO CHILDREN IS ASSOCIATED PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL ISSUES.<sup>(10)</sup>

- Alcohol can **seriously damage long- and short-term brain development** during adolescence.<sup>(11)</sup>
- Youth who start to drink before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop **alcohol dependence or abuse** later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.<sup>(12)</sup>

## Law Enforcement Survey Results

A SURVEY OF 97 ST. MARY'S COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICERS AND 22 STATE POLICE OFFICERS REVEALED THE FOLLOWING:

42%

of sheriff's officers and 32% of state police officers believe that **underage drinking is very or extremely prevalent in the county**.

54%

of sheriff's officers and 60% of state police officers made service calls to parties where **underage or excessive young adult drinking occurred** in the last year. Officers indicated what they see happening at these parties: **Loud music, fights, a lot of people drunk, damage or vandalism and unwanted sexual advances/assaults**.

88%

of sheriff's officers and 91% of state police officers confirmed that **drinking is happening at friends' homes**.

49%

of sheriff's officers and 36% of state police officers believe that **having the ability to write a civil citation** would most help them enforce the laws pertaining to underage and excessive youth drinking in social settings.

# The Solution

A Social Host Ordinance that imposes financial and other civil penalties on individuals who provide alcohol to youth, would be an effective tool for law enforcement and benefit the community. Civil fines levied under this ordinance, could assist our local government in recovering costs related to repeat offenders, with fines impactful enough to dissuade individuals from hosting underage drinking parties altogether. Limiting the availability of alcohol and decreasing youth engaging in drinking activities, can help reduce underage consumption and its associated problems.

## Goals of the Initiative

**Eliminate injuries and deaths caused by alcohol in our community.** Educating servers and bartenders on the signs and symptoms of intoxicated individuals, will equip them with the skills to respond so that our community is protected and alcohol license holders are in compliance with the law.

**Free up Law Enforcement and EMS resources.** First responders will be able to spend their valuable time and resources on other urgent calls, improving emergency response to the entire community. In 2018 alone, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office responded to 572 and EMS to 258 alcohol-related calls.

**Reduce excessive drinking and related problems.** Alcohol is easily accessible to youth that 50% of them say they binge drank regularly. Reducing youth access to alcohol can discourage this behavior and prevent long term substance use issues.

**Ensure the health and safety of everyone in our community.** A Social Host policy that is enforceable, non-criminal and subject to fines that are impactful enough to deter individuals from providing alcohol to youth, will ensure the health and safety of our community.

## Are You With Us?

We're raising the voice for community health in St. Mary's County. Let's make St. Mary's the healthiest, safest place in the state. We can start by reducing underage drinking.

## HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO!

### SPREAD THE WORD

Ask the Community Alcohol Coalition to attend your community meeting to speak about underage drinking and our approach to solve it.

### ATTEND A HEARING

If we're going to address alcohol-related injuries and violence in our community, the Liquor Board needs to know we care and we're watching.

### SIGN OUR RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT

Your signature will demonstrate that there is strong support to make a change.

### HELP EDUCATE LOCAL POLICY MAKERS

Changing alcohol laws in St. Mary's County will involve working through our County Commissioners and the Maryland General Assembly. Help educate lawmakers so they make informed decisions for the health and safety of our community.

#### REFERENCES:

- 1, 2, 4, 13: YRBS 2016
- 3, 5: MYSA 2018
- 6, 7: SMC youth survey 2015
- 8, 9: SCMSO and State Police survey 2018
- 10: RP Mattick, PJ Clare, A Aiken, M Wadolowski, D Hutchins. Association of parental supply of alcohol with adolescent drinking, alcohol-related harms, and alcohol use disorder symptoms: a prospective cohort study
- 11: AMA: <http://alcoholpolicy.mdc.com/pdf/brain3.pdf>.
- 12: CDC: <http://cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>
- 13: SEOW Infographic of YRBS 2016 data

## About the Community Alcohol Coalition

Funded by BHA and SAMHSA

Established in 2012, the Community Alcohol Coalition takes the lead in guiding programs that implement change in our community to address the negative impacts of alcohol misuse. The Coalition is comprised of private citizens and community organizations who plan, develop and implement local strategies to reduce underage drinking and binge drinking in St. Mary's County.

For more information contact [cacstmarys@gmail.com](mailto:cacstmarys@gmail.com)



community alcohol coalition  
Decisions Today. Impact Tomorrow.