

Underage Drinking in Colorado

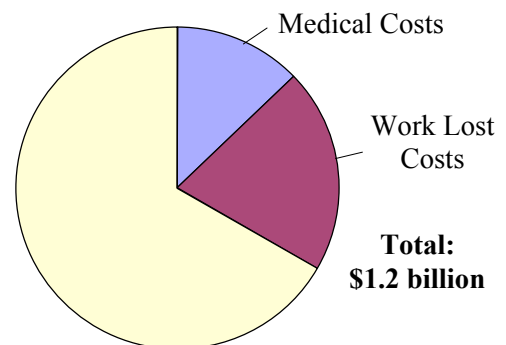
The Facts

Tragic health, social, and economic problems result from the use of alcohol by youth. Underage drinking is a causal factor in a host of serious problems, including homicide, suicide, traumatic injury, drowning, burns, violent and property crime, high risk sex, fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol poisoning, and need for treatment for alcohol abuse and dependence.

Problems and Costs Associated with Underage Drinking in Colorado

Underage drinking cost the citizens of Colorado \$1.2 billion in 2005. These costs include medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth.¹ This translates to a cost of \$2,767 per year for each youth in the State. Colorado ranks 6th highest among the 50 states for the cost per youth of underage drinking. Excluding pain and suffering from these costs, the direct costs of underage drinking incurred through medical care and loss of work cost Colorado \$468 million each year.

**Costs of Underage Drinking
Colorado 2005**



Costs of Underage Drinking by Problem, Colorado 2005

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$552.9
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$317.9
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$131.5
Youth Property Crime	\$56.1
Youth Injury	\$31.4
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$10.4
FAS Among Mothers Age 15-20	\$21.8
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$108.1
Total	\$1,230.0

Youth violence and traffic crashes attributable to alcohol use by underage youth in Colorado represent the largest costs for the State. However, a host of other problems contribute substantially to the overall cost. Among teen mothers, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) alone costs Colorado \$21.8 million.

Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and a half times more

likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21.² In 2004, 3,048 youth 12- 20 years old were admitted for alcohol treatment in Colorado, accounting for 6% of all treatment admissions for alcohol abuse in the State.³

Alcohol Consumption by Youth in Colorado

Underage drinking is widespread in Colorado. Approximately 222,000 underage youth in Colorado drink each year. In 2005, according to self-reports by Colorado students in grades 9-12:⁴

- 76% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life.
- 27% had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13.
- 47% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past 30 days.
- 31% had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (i.e. binge drinking) in the past 30 days.
- 6% had at least one drink of alcohol on school property on one or more of the past 30 days.

In 2005, underage drinkers consumed 16.8% of all alcohol sold in Colorado, totaling \$385 million in sales. These sales provided profits of \$187 million to the alcohol industry.¹

Federal Resources Available for Combating Underage Drinking in Colorado

Colorado received \$360,000 in 2005 to address underage drinking for the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Program administered by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Additional funds available for substance abuse prevention and treatment in 2005 in Colorado include:

- \$23.7 million through Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA).
- \$12.7 million through Substance Abuse Prevention Discretionary Funding administered by SAMHSA.
- \$3.4 million through Substance Abuse Treatment Discretionary Funding administered by SAMHSA.⁵
- \$4.8 million through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities State Grants Program of the U.S. Department of Education.⁶

Total funds available in Colorado for combating underage drinking	\$45 million
Total underage drinking sales	\$385 million
Total alcohol industry profits on underage drinking	\$187 million
Total underage drinking costs	\$1.2 billion

Produced by: The International Institute for Alcohol Awareness (IIAA), a Project of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE). www.beawarenow.org.

¹ Miller, TR, Levy, DT, Spicer, RS, & Taylor, DM. (2006) Societal costs of underage drinking *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 67(4) 519-528.

² Grant, B.F., & Dawson, D.A. (1997). Age at onset of alcohol use and its association with DSM-IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the Nation Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. *Journal of Substance Abuse* 9: 103-110.

³ Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). (2004). *Substance Abuse Treatment by Primary Substance of Abuse, According to Sex, Age, Race, and Ethnicity*.

⁴ Center for Disease Control (CDC). (2005). Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS).

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *SAMHSA Grant Awards – State Summaries FY 2005/2006*. Available: <http://www.samhsa.gov/statesummaries/index.aspx>.

⁶ U.S. Department of Education. Fiscal Year 2001-2007 State Tables for the U.S. Department of Education. Available: <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/index.html>.