

## What can the state do?

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services has a comprehensive plan to address the issue of underage drinking.

### Here are some of the things the state is doing:

- Funding community-based coalitions across the state to address underage drinking.
- Providing technical assistance to communities across the Commonwealth to support substance abuse prevention through the Massachusetts Technical Assistance Partnership for Prevention (MassTAPP).
- Supporting liquor enforcement programs and “compliance checks.” Liquor establishments that are inspected regularly are less likely to sell to underage drinkers.
- Continuing to provide comprehensive alcohol and other drug prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery programs for our children and youth.
- Producing a statewide media campaign focusing on parents and their power to reduce youth alcohol and other drug problems.
- Providing a wealth of free educational materials on overdose prevention, underage alcohol use, prevention of drug use and abuse, as well as safe use and disposal of prescription medications.
- Supporting and regulating treatment and support services for young people who develop problems with alcohol or other drugs.



Supporting materials and information on the research, best practices, policy options, and actions that you can take can be found online at [masstapp.edc.org](http://masstapp.edc.org), the website of the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services — funded Massachusetts Technical Assistance Partnership for Prevention (MassTAPP).

This pamphlet and other resource materials with tips on talking with children about alcohol and other drugs can be downloaded or ordered through the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse at [www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse](http://www.mass.gov/maclearinghouse).

The recommendations in this guide are based on research and identified best practices, including the Institute of Medicine report *“Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility.”*

We would like to thank the state of New Hampshire for their generosity and the NEW FUTURES organization for allowing us to utilize the information contained in their brochure entitled *“Road Map to Success: Reducing Underage Alcohol Problems in New Hampshire.”*

## Their future depends on you

Working together to reduce underage drinking

**A strategy to keep Massachusetts kids alcohol-free**



# Where are we?

- Alcohol use can begin at a very young age. Almost one in six Massachusetts high school students had their first drink of alcohol before they turned 13.
- Youth who start drinking before they are 15 years old are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than youth who don't drink until they are 21.
- Two in five Massachusetts high school students report current alcohol use; about one in five report binge drinking in the last month. Binge drinking means having five or more drinks at a time.
- Young people who binge drink are more likely to engage in other risky behaviors, including sexual intercourse, violence, other drug use, and drinking and driving.
- Underage drinking costs our state \$1.4 billion in 2010, as stated by the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE).

## Where are we going and how do we get there?

While underage alcohol problems are significant and serious in Massachusetts, much is being done.

This guide provides effective strategies that you can use, activities communities can accomplish, and policies that leaders can implement.

Working together and building on the good work already being done, we can impact underage drinking — a major public health, economic, and safety issue in our state.

### Support Prevention Efforts.

Focus on positive activities for youth to keep them healthy and safer.

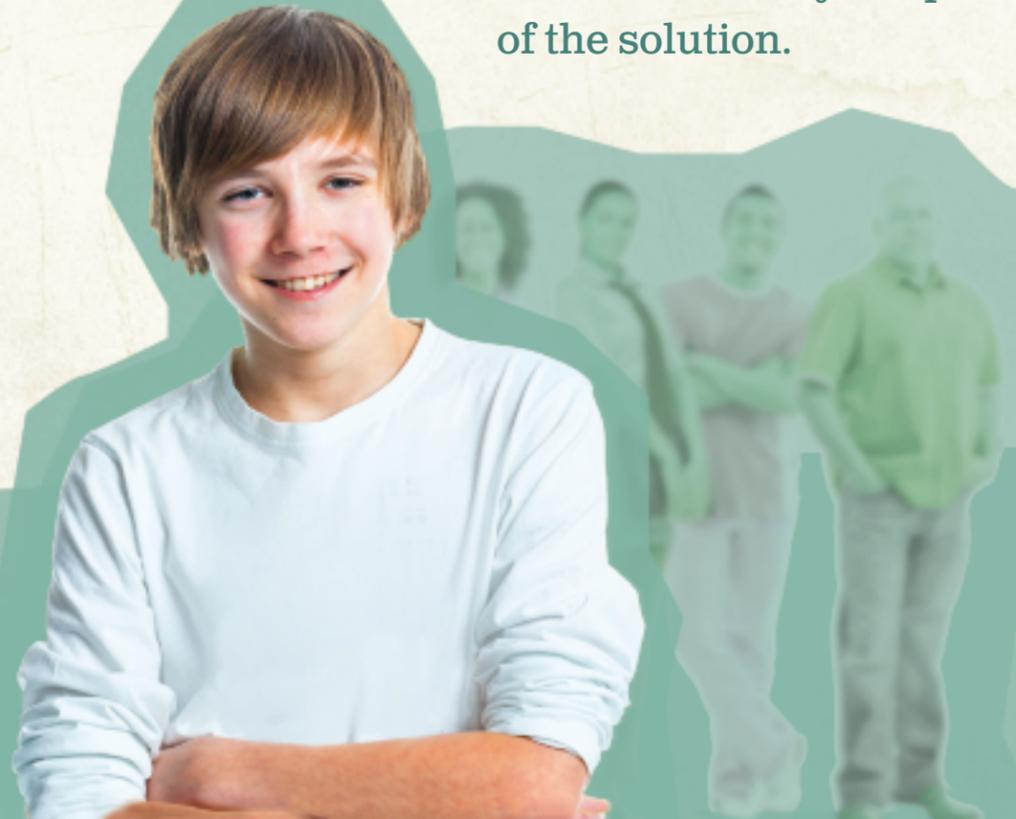
# What can you do?

*As an individual citizen, you can make a difference.*

## Here's how:

- Youth often get alcohol from adults. Serving or making alcohol available to those under 21 is illegal in Massachusetts and there are significant penalties.
- Talk to children about the dangers associated with alcohol and other drugs. Parents and other adults play an important role in their children's behavior and decisions about alcohol.
- Find out about underage drinking prevention in your community. Learn what your community is doing and what actions you can take.
- Educate people in your community, including local, state, and federal leaders. Ask them to support policies that reduce underage alcohol problems.
- Support those in your community who have identified strategies to reduce underage alcohol problems.

Involve Youth! They are part of the solution.



# What can your community do?

*Support strategies to reduce underage alcohol problems in your community.*

## Here's how:

- Talk to community organizations, business and education leaders, and policymakers about underage alcohol problems.
- Encourage enforcement of existing policies — this offers a good opportunity for community groups, law enforcement, and business leaders to work together.
- Work with local media to publicize the work being done in your community, including the results from local “compliance checks.”
- See that local ordinances exist to limit access and availability of alcohol to youth in your community.
- Work with community leaders to restrict or ban alcohol sales, sponsorship, and advertising at youth, family, and school events, including athletic events and other venues.
- Find out if your school participates in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). If they do, use the data collected to understand the scope of underage alcohol problems in your community.
- Support proven prevention programs in your schools and community to reduce underage alcohol and other drug problems.
- Find out if your school has a comprehensive alcohol policy and make sure it is enforced consistently.
- Find out if your school has a student assistance program to support prevention, intervention, and treatment initiatives.