

# THE DAILY ARDMOREITE

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## Prevention of Underage Drinking

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice, although the legal drinking age in the U.S. is 21, young people aged 12 to 20 drink about 11 percent of all alcohol purchased in the United States.

The chart on the right shows the results from Carter County students who participated in the Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment Surveys from previous years. This shows that Carter County needs to work together as a community to help underage students to make the right choice by abstaining from underage drinking.

The good news is that underage drinking can be prevented.

### What communities can do

*Parents and Families*—Many young people identify parents as the leading influence in their decision to drink or not to drink, making it important for parents and caregivers to take an active role in preventing underage alcohol use. Monitor your children or other young family members for signs that may indicate involvement in underage drinking.

Some signs that may point to involvement in underage drinking are:

- School problems;
- Rebelling against family rules;
- Switching friends, along with reluctance to let you get to know the new friend;
- A lack of involvement in former interests;
- Mood changes, defensiveness, or a “nothing matters” attitude;
- Memory lapses;
- Blood-shot eyes;
- Lack of coordination; and
- Slurred speech.

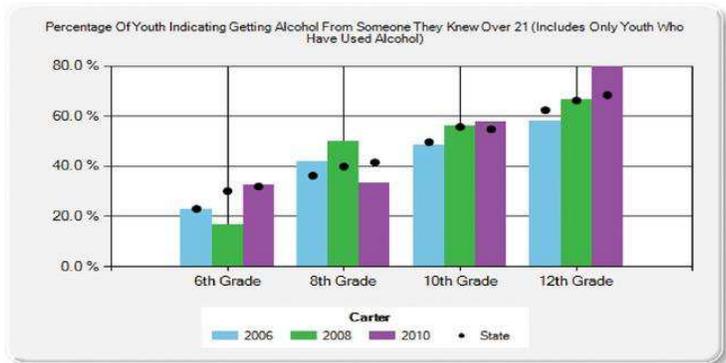
### Community Organizations

When discussing or proposing a prevention effort, remember that effective community prevention interventions require a mix of program components and policy strategies. These might include:

- Media campaigns, speeding and drunk driving awareness days, and promotion of telephone help lines;
- Peer-led education activities in high schools, programs for college students, and the establishment of Students against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapters;
- Information for retail alcohol outlets about underage drinking, health risks, and legal consequences;
- Responsible beverage service training programs and the restricted sale of alcohol at public events;
- Support for social host liability laws, sobriety and traffic safety checkpoints, and graduated drive licensing laws; and
- Enforcement of underage drinking laws.

### Everyone

- Find out about underage drinking issues in your community, what your community is already doing to address the



problem, and what actions are still needed; and

- Educate neighbors and community, local, state and federal leaders about underage drinking issues in your community. Urge them to support policies that combat underage alcohol use.

This information is being brought to you by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Carter County Turning Point Substance Abuse Committee as part of National Prevention Week 2012. Please visit their facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CarterCountySubstanceAbusePrevention](http://www.facebook.com/CarterCountySubstanceAbusePrevention) or contact Gwynn Busby, [gbusby@wmpn.org](mailto:gbusby@wmpn.org).