

Underage Drinking-Related Hospital Department Visits Nearly Double over the 4th of July Weekend

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Press release
July 1, 2010

Hospital emergency department visits involving underage drinking nearly double during the Fourth of July Holiday weekend according to a new study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The study reveals that daily underage drinking-related visits to hospital emergency departments are 87 percent higher during the Fourth of July weekend than they are on an average day in July. The report estimates that on an average day in July, there are 502 hospital emergency department visits involving underage alcohol use. For the three day Fourth of July weekend however, the number of daily hospital emergency department visits jumps to 938.

"Underage drinking is not a harmless right of passage. It has far-reaching consequences. In addition to emergency department visits, injuries, arrests and embarrassment, 5,000 deaths in people under age 21 are linked to alcohol each year," said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "Parents are a leading influence in their children's decision to avoid alcohol. To help parents make the tough job of raising children a little easier, SAMHSA provides an online action plan to help parents talk with their children about expectations regarding alcohol use."

The study was developed as part of the agency's strategic initiative on data, outcomes, and quality - an effort to inform policy makers and service providers on the nature and scope of behavioral health issues. It is based on SAMHSA's 2008 Drug Alert Warning Network (DAWN) report. DAWN is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department visits reported throughout the nation.

A copy of the study is available at:

<http://oas.samhsa.gov/spotlight/Spotlight003UnderageAlcoholUse.pdf>.

Information and materials on how to help prevent underage drinking are available at:

<http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov/>.