

# Underage Drinking in Montana

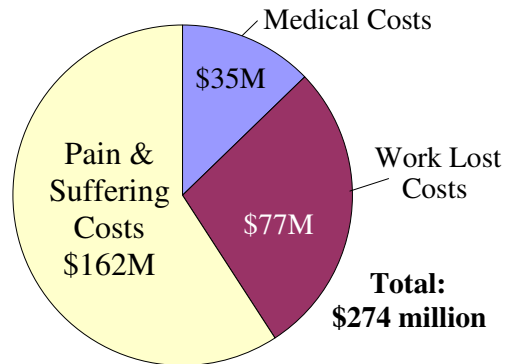
## *The Facts*

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 Montana*

Underage drinking cost the citizens of Montana \$274 million 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.<sup>1</sup> This translates to a cost of \$2,771 per year for each youth in the State. Montana ranks 5<sup>th</sup> 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 Montana \$112 million each year.

**Costs of Underage Drinking  
Montana 2005**



**Costs of Underage Drinking by Problem, Montana 2005**

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$70.9
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$130.9
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$23.1
Youth Property Crime	\$7.7
Youth Injury	\$18.3
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$2.3
FAS Among Mothers Age 15-20	\$4.0
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$17.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$274.2</b>

Youth violence and traffic crashes attributable to alcohol use by underage youth in Montana 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 Montana \$4.0 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.<sup>2</sup> In 2004, 564 youth 12- 20 years old were admitted for alcohol treatment in Montana, accounting for 13% of all treatment admissions for alcohol abuse in the State.<sup>3</sup>

## *Alcohol Consumption by Youth in Montana*

Underage drinking is widespread in Montana. Approximately 51,000 underage youth in Montana drink each year. In 2005, according to self-reports by Montana students in grades 9-12:<sup>4</sup>

- 78% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life.
- 28% had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13.
- 49% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past 30 days.
- 34% 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 22.3% of all alcohol sold in Montana, totaling \$104 million in sales. These sales provided profits of \$51 million to the alcohol industry.<sup>1</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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*.

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