



OJJDP FACT SHEET

Shay Bilchik, Administrator February 1998 #75

Combating Underage Drinking

The problem of underage drinking continues to plague our Nation's young people. The pervasiveness of this problem places not only America's youth, but all of our citizens, at risk on a daily basis. To facilitate comprehensive and coordinated enforcement and alcohol use prevention programs at the State level, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is administering the new Combating Underage Drinking program.

Recent national statistics help to define the problem:

- ◆ The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) reported that approximately 9.5 million drinkers in 1996 were youth ages 12 to 20. Of this number, 4.4 million were binge drinkers, including 1.9 million heavy drinkers.
- ◆ Survey results reported in a recent ONDCP fact sheet showed that almost 45 percent of students in grades 6 to 8 had used alcohol within the previous year. That number rose to 71 percent for grades 9 to 12.
- ◆ According to a new report released in January 1998 by the National Institutes of Health, young people who began drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol addiction than those who began drinking at age 21.
- ◆ Statistics from the Addiction Technology Transfer Center at the University of Missouri at Kansas City indicate that alcohol has been a factor in 50 to 65 percent of all suicides among youth.
- ◆ According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), statistics show that although persons ages 15 to 20 in 1995 comprised 7.1 percent of licensed drivers, they accounted for 14.9 percent of all driver fatalities.
- ◆ Motor vehicle fatalities are the number 1 killer of teenagers and other young adults, as reported in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Vital Statistics Mortality Data, 1994*. According to NHTSA, more than 35 percent of such fatalities involving persons ages 15 to 20 are alcohol related. In 1996, 2,315 youth died in alcohol-related crashes.

OJJDP's Congressional Charge

Congress has called upon OJJDP to address the growing problem of underage drinking. Through the Appropriations Act for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and

related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes (Pub. L. No. 105-119, November 26, 1997), funds were appropriated to OJJDP to support and enhance efforts by States, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages to—or the consumption of alcoholic beverages by—minors. For purposes of this initiative, minors are defined as individuals under 21 years of age.

Funding

Congress appropriated \$25 million to initiate the Combating Underage Drinking program. These funds will be dispersed through assistance awards of \$360,000 to each State and the District of Columbia; discretionary funds in the amount of \$5 million; and training and technical assistance funds of \$1,640,000.

State Grant Funds

Each Governor and the mayor of the District of Columbia is being asked to designate an agency to serve as the point of contact and to apply for, receive, and administer the targeted grant funds. Each State and the District of Columbia will, in its application for the \$360,000, detail a comprehensive approach to addressing the underage drinking problem and describe how the Federal funds will be used to contribute to the implementation of that comprehensive approach. States will be encouraged to link with ongoing public and private efforts (including those of foundations and national organizations). For example, within a given State, support under this program could be provided to a taskforce of State and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies that is already in place and that targets establishments suspected of a pattern of violations of State laws, links with private efforts to inform both establishments and minors of the consequences of illegal alcohol sales and purchases, and seeks the prosecution of those who illegally sell and purchase alcoholic beverages. These funds, however, cannot be used to supplant existing programs and activities.

Discretionary Funds

States, territories, the District of Columbia, and Native American/Alaskan Native communities will be eligible to apply for the \$5 million in discretionary funds through a separate application process. Units of local government, which will be encouraged

to form partnerships with local organizations and agencies, will be eligible to apply for discretionary funds, provided that the State administering agency certifies that the project will contribute to the implementation of the State's comprehensive approach to the enforcement of its laws on underage alcohol purchase, possession, and use.

Funds will be used to support innovative programs and activities that target:

- ◆ The enforcement of State laws that prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages to minors.
- ◆ The prevention of the purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages by minors.

Applicants may be required to include an evaluation component.

Training and Technical Assistance

A total of \$1,640,000 will be made available through a separate application process to support training and technical assistance activities.

Combating Underage Drinking: A Compendium of Resources

OJJDP will continue to share information on funding opportunities and resources available for related activities through a variety of mediums accessible through its Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse (JJC). To assist States in deciding on how they will use the funds available to target underage drinking, OJJDP is compiling and will distribute to States a compendium of resources related to combating underage drinking. The *Compendium* will include:

- ◆ An *overview* section that describes the extent of the problem of underage drinking and that highlights national statistics on its impact, prevalence, trends, relationship to driving, and other information.
- ◆ A *resource* section that includes contact information for Federal, State, and local agencies and national and private organizations and a brief description of the nature and scope of current initiatives, programs, strategies, and related materials that address the problem of underage drinking.

- ◆ A selected *annotated bibliography* highlighting books and journal articles, including complete bibliographic and availability information (e.g., the National Criminal Justice Reference Service Library).

OJJDP-Related Initiatives

OJJDP is also participating in two related initiatives:

- ◆ **Teen Court.** OJJDP, jointly with NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supports teen courts by holding training conferences nationally and provides training and technical assistance funds to selected sites. Many teen court programs handle alcohol-related offenses.
- ◆ **The Juvenile DUI (Driving Under the Influence) Enforcement Program.** OJJDP and NHTSA jointly funded a Police Executive Research Forum program designed to unify the various elements of juvenile DUI enforcement in a single, comprehensive framework. *Strategies for Success: Combating Juvenile DUI*, a four-part guide describing the program, will be published this year.

For Further Information

Please contact JJC via telephone, fax, mail, or computer for up-to-the-minute program information or consult OJJDP's Web site, www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm, and click on the sections on "New Initiatives" and "Grants and Funding" to access the *Compendium* and notices of funding availability. Also, subscribe to JUVJUST, OJJDP's electronic mailing list, for information from the Office of the Administrator. You can subscribe via e-mail to listproc@ncjrs.org. Leave the subject line blank and type *subscribe juvjust* [your e-mail address].

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