[IMAGE]

Too Many Children Still Drinking (and Driving)

The U.S. Surgeon General's Office reports that in the last 75 years, life expectancy has increased for every age group but one: young adults (ages 15-24). Even more troubling is the observation that nearly half of the deaths in this age group can be attributed to alcohol an drug-impaired driving.

To better understand the problem of teenage drinking and driving, an article in the *American Journal of Public Health* presented data from 10 years of national surveys of American high-school seniors. Three main points emerged from the data, along with a conclusion:

- Rates of adolescent drinking and driving and driving (and riding with a driver who had been drinking) actually declined from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s.
- However, these trends did not continue after 1995, and the rates may have increased again from 1995-1997.
- A substantial percentage of students have exposed themselves to alcohol-impaired driving, even at the lowest points.

The authors suggest that teenage drinking and driving behaviors can be changed over time, as evidenced by the decline between 1984-1992, but are quick to suggest that improved prevention efforts may also be necessary. Tell your children about the profound dangers of drinking and driving. The lives they save may be their own.

Reference:

O'Malley PM, Johnston LD. Drinking and driving among U.S. high school seniors, 1984-1997. *American Journal of Public Health* , May 1999: Vol. 89, No. 5, pp678-684.

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