

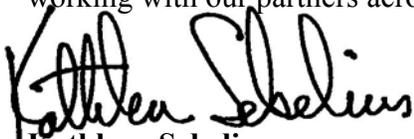
Message from the Secretary

In 2010, alcohol was once again the substance of choice among American youth. In fact, a greater proportion of American young people use alcohol than use other drugs or tobacco, and this use of alcohol by youth under the legal drinking age of 21 has profound negative consequences not just for underage drinkers, but also for their families, their communities, and society as a whole. Despite the modest progress made in recent years, underage drinking remains a serious public health and public safety problem. As Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), I have a strong commitment to improving the health of all Americans, which includes addressing underage alcohol use and the risky behaviors associated with that use. By enacting the Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act in 2006, Congress also demonstrated a similar commitment to addressing this problem.

This Report to Congress, like the Reports before it, summarizes the status of the latest scientific research regarding adolescent alcohol use, describes the characteristics and consequences of underage drinking, and outlines the comprehensive efforts of the Federal Government to address the problem. It also updates and expands the individual state reports, which were first introduced in last year's Report. This year, a survey of all 50 States and the District of Columbia was conducted to collect valuable information about State-supported underage prevention and enforcement activities, programs, and policies. These individual State reports, which were mandated by the STOP Act, provide a valuable resource for Federal, State, and local policy makers, community coalitions, and others interested in addressing underage alcohol use. While the Federal Government has an important role to play in addressing underage drinking, it is clear that we as a country will not succeed without a concerted and informed effort by all of our citizens and at all levels of government. The information provided in this Report can serve as an important tool in that effort.

By addressing underage drinking in all of the environments in which youth live—family, school, communities, healthcare systems, and religious institutions—we can change the way that young people and their parents view underage drinking and create an environment in which underage alcohol use is understood as a serious public health and public safety problem, not a culturally ingrained rite of passage. This Report emphasizes that such change requires a national effort involving parents and other caregivers, educational systems, the public and private sector, concerned individuals and organizations throughout the country, and all levels of government.

Though we still have much more work ahead of us, experience has shown that reductions in underage drinking and its negative consequences are not only possible but likely if we continue to implement policies, programs, and practices that support healthy choices among our youth and remain vigilant in our national commitment to addressing the issue. We at HHS look forward to working with our partners across the Nation to achieve that goal.



Kathleen Sebelius

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Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services

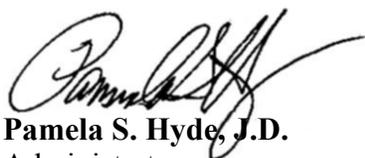
Foreword

As the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Chair of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD), I am pleased to present the most recent *Report to Congress on the Prevention and Reduction of Underage Drinking*. In 2006, the Congress passed, and the President signed, the Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act, Public Law 109-422. Among other provisions, the STOP Act formally establishes the ICCPUD and calls for an annual Report to Congress to be submitted by the Secretary of HHS. This is the fourth such Report to Congress; it includes an expanded section that focuses on underage prevention and enforcement activities, programs, and policies in each of the 50 States and the District of Columbia. This most recent Report also includes a new section on the prevention of binge drinking on college and university campuses. We are confident that these additions to the Report will provide keen insights to inform future Federal and State planning efforts.

While there are no easy solutions to the complex and persistent problem of underage alcohol use, this Report indicates that progress is being made. Between 2005 and 2010, past-month alcohol use among youth ages 12 to 17 dropped by almost 23 percent and binge drinking declined by nearly 30 percent. Over this time period, there has been increased attention to underage drinking by the media and all levels of government, raising the issue to a prominent place on the national public health agenda. This concern about alcohol use among youth has created a policy climate in which significant legislation has been passed by States and localities and enforcement of existing laws has been strengthened. Additionally, these changes have reinforced coordinated citizen action on the community level, providing the momentum for a sustained national commitment to preventing and reducing underage drinking.

Despite our progress, however, underage drinking remains unacceptably high. In 2010, 26.3 percent of American youth reported drinking in the last 30 days. Alcohol remains the most widely used substance of abuse among our Nation's young people, and when youth do drink, they tend to drink in extreme ways. Over a third (36.8 percent) of underage drinkers reported consuming more than five drinks on their last occasion of alcohol use in the past month.

Underage alcohol use is a threat to the immediate and long-term well-being of our young people as well as those around them. Our success in preventing and reducing underage drinking—and in maintaining the health and safety of our youth—depends on strong and enduring partnerships between government, communities, families, and young people to change the culture that supports underage alcohol use in our country. As part of the Federal contribution to this partnership, the ICCPUD is working in collaboration with the Surgeon General to update and re-issue the 2007 *Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*, including its vision and goals for the Nation, and will continue to inform the Congress and the Nation about our progress.



Pamela S. Hyde, J.D.

Administrator

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration