



Put In Your 2¢ Worth...
About 2¢ a drink yields \$44 million annually to reduce the impact of alcohol problems in Missouri.

Question:

What can the faith community do to help reduce alcohol-related problems in general, and underage drinking specifically, during Alcohol Awareness Month?

Answer:

A great deal, and the unique characteristics of faith community organizations and groups give them special opportunities for prevention and intervention. Research has shown that family involvement in faith-based institutions, religious commitments, and spirituality all have been shown to reduce the risk for adolescent substance use.

MISSOURI ALCOHOL IMPACT FACT #52

- The same patterns of denial that afflict addicted people have kept many faith community institutions and groups from taking action. People of faith are increasingly becoming aware that alcohol use, misuse and addiction occur within their own circles – including those that have traditionally urged total abstinence for all of their members and adherents.
- The National Alcohol Awareness Month campaign suggests several activities for faith-based institutions, organizations and groups:
 - Devote an issue of a bulletin or newsletter to underage drinking and opportunities for treatment and recovery.
 - Participate in community planning, or initiate it if necessary.
 - Give a sermon on the harm of underage alcohol use, the power of parental influence, the impact of untreated family alcoholism on children, and spiritual alternatives to sensation seeking for young people.
 - Incorporate information, messages and themes into youth and adult group discussions.
 - Hold prayer vigils for youth and their families in the community who have been harmed by underage drinking. (1)
- Claims of superior results of faith-based programs should be evaluated carefully. It is possible that selection bias, rather than program effects, accounts for positive outcomes. We should “apply the same standards for determining the effectiveness of faith-based interventions as have been established for school- and community-based interventions.” (2)

(1) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, and Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol-Free, *Alcohol Awareness Month: A Guide to Community Action* (2005). See <http://media.shs.net/prevline/pdfs/promos/alcoholawarenessmonth.pdf>.

(2) National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2004). *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*. Washington DC: National Academies Press.

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