



# UNDERAGE DRINKING – ZERO TOLERANCE

→ THE SAFETY OF OUR YOUTH IS OUR CONCERN

## General information on alcohol consumption by youth

### ZERO TOLERANCE

In an effort to save the lives and preserve the health of our children, former Henrico Chief of Police Douglas A. Middleton and [Henrico County Commonwealth's Attorney Shannon Taylor](#) agreed to follow a zero tolerance policy for underage drinking. As a result, the Henrico County Police Division will take a zero tolerance approach to its under age drinking enforcement efforts.

Persons under the age of 21 using alcohol poses serious public health and safety risks. Youths in the United States more commonly use and abuse alcohol than tobacco and illicit drugs. Alcohol abuse is responsible for more than 4,700 deaths annually among underage youths. Eleven percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States is consumed by persons between the ages of 12 to 20. More than 90 percent of this alcohol is consumed during binge drinking.

The [2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) revealed that among high school students, during the past 30 days:

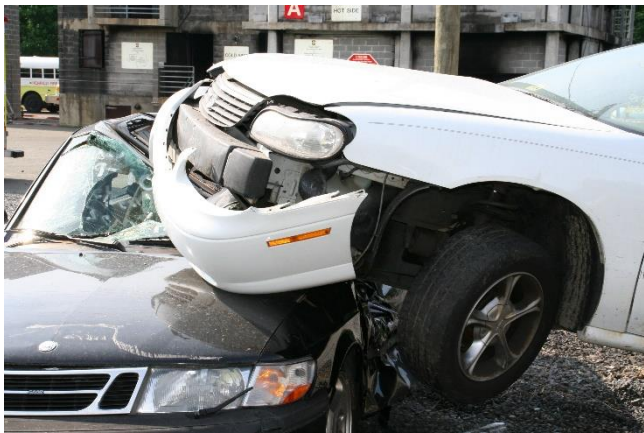
- 39% drank some amount of alcohol
- 22% binge drank
- 8% drove after drinking alcohol
- 24% rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.



## DRINKING AND DRIVING

The amount of alcohol in a person's body is measured by the weight of the alcohol in a certain volume of blood. This is called the blood alcohol concentration or BAC. Alcohol is quickly absorbed and can be measured within 30 to 70 minutes of alcohol consumption.

In 2010, one in five drivers ages 16–19 years involved in fatal crashes had a positive BAC. Also in 2010, during prom/graduation season (April–June) 706 youths died in motor vehicle crashes, of which 66 percent were alcohol related.



### For Parents

- **Communicate** with teens your 'no drinking' rules and the consequences for breaking them. Empower teens to make their own decisions based on what they know is right, not on what their peers might think or do.
- **Tell them to call you** immediately if they get into a situation they know isn't safe – no matter what time it is and no matter where they are. Assure them they will not be in trouble for making that call.
- **Talk to them. It makes a difference**
- **Be a good role model.** The example you set as a responsible adult is one of the most important ways you can

demonstrate to your children your values and ideas about drinking. Believe it or not, teens actually identify their parents as the number one influence on whether they drink alcohol or not.

- **Monitor social media.** Know what social media tools your children are using. Young people often discuss their activities, to include drinking, on these sites.
- **Providing alcohol to minors is illegal and irresponsible.** According to research, two-thirds of teenagers who drink report getting alcohol from their parents or other adults. A parent hosting a party with alcohol for teens – even once – sends a message to teens that it's okay to break the law.

### For Teens

If you are caught drinking underage or under the influence of alcohol while underage, you will be charged.

#### Stop and think before you drink!

Youths who drink alcohol are more likely to experience:

- School problems, such as more absences and poor or failing grades.
- Social problems, such as fighting and lack of participation in activities.
- Legal problems, such as being arrested.
- Unprotected, unplanned, and unwanted sexual activity.
- Disruption of normal growth and sexual development.
- Alcohol-related car crashes and other unintentional physical injuries.
- Changes in brain development that may have life-long effects, to include memory problems.

- Higher risk for suicide and homicide.
- Abuse of other drugs.
- Death from alcohol poisoning.
- Young people who start drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse later in life than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.

## Code of Virginia

**[Virginia code §4.1-305](#)** states if you're under 21:

- You can't drink, purchase, or possess alcohol.
- You can't use a fake ID or someone else's ID.
- If convicted, you could get a \$500 fine and/or be forced to perform community service. You could even lose your driver's license.

**[Virginia code §4.3-306](#)** states:

- It is a Class 1 Misdemeanor to buy or give alcohol to anyone under the age of 21.
- If found guilty, you could lose your driver's license, serve jail time up to a year and pay a fine up to \$2,500.

**[Virginia code §18.2-266.1](#)** states:

- If you are under 21 and caught driving with a blood alcohol level of .02 or more, you can be charged with DUI. If you are over 21, the legal limit is .08.
- If found guilty, you could lose your driver's license for a year, be ordered to pay a \$500 fine and/or be required to perform community service.

**[Virginia code §4.1-309](#)** states:

- No one is allowed to possess or drink alcohol on school property.

**[Virginia code §22.1- 279.3:1](#)** states:

- If you are caught with alcohol in your possession or in your system at school, the law says the school staff must report it to local law enforcement. You will be charged with possession of alcohol.

*(Information updated March 2026)*