

NEWS RELEASE



Date: April 7, 2010

Andrea Cantu-Schomus, 503-947-5027;

Contact: Karen Wheeler, 503-945-6191

Headline: ***Underage drinking a key focus of Governor's Alcohol Awareness Month proclamation***

While Oregon's communities are faced with a number of substance abuse issues, alcohol use continues to be among the most serious public health issues for young people.

A new report based on data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows Oregon in the top 16 states for alcohol use in the past 30 days among people aged 12 to 20. This validates what we have seen from the Oregon Healthy Teen survey data, which shows more than 23 percent of Oregon eighth graders and more than 38 percent of Oregon 11th graders are drinking alcohol on a regular basis. That is why April is designated as Alcohol Awareness Month, an annual public awareness campaign that encourages local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues and tools for prevention.

U.S. youth abuse alcohol more often than any other substance. As noted in Governor Kulongoski's proclamation, alcohol contributes to the three leading causes of death among 12- to 20-year-olds, which include unintentional injury, homicide and suicide. Research also shows teens that begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to have alcohol problems as adults than those who start drinking at 21 or older.

"Teens and their parents need to know how detrimental alcohol is to the developing adolescent brain and body," said Karen Wheeler, Addiction Programs administrator. "Underage drinking is a serious problem that can lead not only to bad grades in school but long-term problems with addiction. This is why prevention is so important. Prevention tools need to be shared at school and at home."

(more)

Governor's Alcohol Awareness Month proclamation, Pg. 2

Delaying the use of alcohol can save the adolescent brain from long-term damage. Research shows short-term or moderate drinking can impair learning, memory, growth and maturation. Frequent drinkers may never be able to catch up in adulthood, since alcohol inhibits systems crucial for storing new information as long-term memories and makes it difficult to immediately remember what was learned.

For more information on underage drinking or how to talk to your teens, log on to www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/underage-drinking/main.shtml.

#