

The Minimum Legal Drinking Age of 21 Saves Lives and prevents other adverse consequences among Arkansas youth

A Fact Sheet on the Minimum Legal Drinking Age of 21

The Minimum Legal Drinking Age (MLDA) saves lives:

- The Uniform Minimum Drinking Age Act (1984) mandated a MLDA of 21.
- When the Act took effect, alcohol-related car crashes declined immediately among the 18 to 20-year-old age group.¹
- More than 17,000 people are alive today because of the Act. That's about as many fans as there are at a sold-out professional basketball game or as many students as there are in a medium-sized U.S. college.²

Consequences of Underage Drinking

- Injuries and deaths due to car crashes, homicides, suicides
- Altered judgment leading to other risky behaviors
- Damage to the developing brain
- Long-term problems with alcohol

Teens drink LESS when the MLDA is 21

- Before the mandatory MLDA of 21, in states where the drinking age was 18, those under 21 drank more than youth in states where the minimum drinking age was 21.²
- **Arkansas** students' past 30-day use of alcohol has decreased nearly 10 percent since the mid-1990's.³

MYTHS	THE TRUTH
<i>If teens can't drink, they will use hard drugs instead.</i>	Alcohol is often among the first drugs used by teens, and often leads to other drug use. When the MLDA was raised to 21, teen drinking declined, and other drug use did not go up. ¹
<i>Many people think the MLDA should be 18.</i>	77% of Americans are <u>opposed</u> to a drinking age less than 21. ¹
<i>If a person is old enough to vote and serve in the military, they should be able to drink.</i>	Research shows that the brain isn't fully developed until a person's early or mid-twenties. Alcohol can prevent the brain from developing properly. The specific areas of the brain affected are those responsible for judgment and reasoning. ⁴

¹www.madd.org; ²www.why21.org; ³www.arkansasch.org; ⁴www.surgeongeneral.gov

To learn more, contact:

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