



# The Artful Dodger

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## Early Drinking Linked to Alcohol Dependence

### Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan

This publication, with a nod to Charles Dickens's "Oliver Twist" is designed to provide information on the problem of Underage Drinking.

The nickname, "Artful Dodger", is still commonly used to refer to someone who is good at avoiding responsibility or the consequences of his/her actions.

### Did You Know?

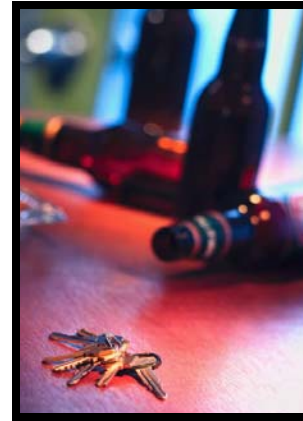
More than 6,000 people died in 2002 from underage-drinking-related causes (alcohol-related traffic fatalities, homicides, suicides, and other unintentional injuries). Over 2,200 of these were alcohol-related traffic fatalities. The total cost attributable to the consequences of underage drinking was \$61.9 billion per year.

Youths who begin drinking alcohol early in life are significantly more likely to become dependent on alcohol later—many before they even reach the legal drinking age—according to a study of 43,000 U.S. adults. For example, 47 percent of those who began drinking before age 14 later become alcohol-dependent, compared to 9 percent of those who started drinking at age 21 or older.

The survey found that people who began drinking in their early teens were more likely to become dependent on alcohol at some point in their lives; in fact, about half met the criteria for alcohol dependence by the time they hit age 21. Young drinkers were found to be at elevated risk of dependence within 10 years of having their first drink, before age 25, and at any point in their lives. They also were more likely to experience multiple episodes of alcohol dependency.

"Converging research suggests that youthful drinking is associated with an increased risk of long-term, not just acute, health consequences," said Elias Zerhouni, M.D., director of the U.S. National Institutes on Health.

The study, led by Ralph Hingson, was conducted by researchers at the Boston



reduce alcohol dependence among adolescents and adults," said Hingson.

"This work underscores the need for research to clarify how early drinking

relates to the risk of lifetime alcohol problems," added Ting-Kai Li, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. "In particular, it is important to learn whether early alcohol use may affect the developing brain in ways that increase vulnerability to dependence."

The study was published in the July 2006 issue of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

*Editor's Note: From Join Together, July 6, 2006. <http://www.jointogether.org/>*

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University School of Public Health and its Youth Alcohol Prevention Center. "This analysis suggests that interventions that delay drinking onset may not only reduce the acute consequences of drinking among youth, but may help

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## Drinking Games Pulled from Stores

Bowing to a grassroots advocacy campaign, retailers **Linens 'n Things** and **Target** joined **Kohl's** in halting sales of controversial drinking games that critics say promote binge drinking.

A letter-writing campaign by drug-prevention advocates resulted in **Linens 'n Things** and **Target** announcing that they are no longer selling games like **Drinko** in its stores or on their websites. **Kohl's** made a similar decision prior to Christmas.

"Teen drinking is a huge problem in our country today," said Judy Mezey of Student Assistance Services, a Tarrytown, N.Y., group that participated in the letter-writing campaigns. "Here we are trying to create an environment that supports young people and helps them make the right decisions. Products like these undermine the efforts of parents and communities."

## STOP Act Key Provisions

The STOP Act calls for:

- A \$1-million annual national media campaign on underage drinking
- \$5 million in grants to help community coalitions address underage drinking.
- Another \$5 million in grant funding to prevent alcohol abuse at institutions of higher education;
- An annual report on state underage-drinking prevention and enforcement activities.
- Establishing a federal interagency coordinating committee on underage drinking; and
- Authorizing \$6 million for research on underage drinking, including gathering data on the involvement of alcohol in unnatural deaths among 12- to 20-year-olds.

## Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking (STOP) Act Becomes Law

The Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act, which was initially approved on a 373-23 vote in the House of Representatives on Nov. 14, passed the Senate by unanimous consent on Dec. 6 and won final approval in a slightly amended form in the House on Dec. 7. It was signed by the President on December 20, 2006, becoming Public Law No: 109-422

As reported in a press release, the Act establishes a guide to Federal underage drinking policy and program development; requires annual reports from States regarding programs, efforts, and laws preventing underage drinking; develops outcome measures including reports on minimum-age compliance checks and law enforcement; funds and oversees underage drinking public service announcements; awards grants to reduce underage and binge drinking on college campuses; and supports studies on the impact of alcohol on the adolescent brain. The bill was

introduced in 2005 and had 85 co-sponsors from across the political spectrum.

Statements on the floor mentioned and commended Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY), and the American Medical Association (AMA), among other groups that worked on the bill.

Representative Tom Osborne, who introduced the bill to the House, stated in the press release: "Children are our most precious resource as a country and providing for their protection has been a driving force of my service in the House of Representatives. The STOP Underage Drinking Act will help to protect our young people from the dangers of underage drinking by educating them about its effect and by working to prevent underage drinking."