



# BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

better health. stronger communities.

## News Release

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For Immediate Release

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### Health Department Brings Awareness to Alcohol Addiction during April

**(Benton Harbor, MI)** - The Berrien County Health Department Substance Abuse Prevention Services announces that April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Founded in 1987 and sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) along with Facing Addiction, this year's theme is: "Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow".

The 2019 theme is designed to draw attention to the pervasive impact that alcohol, alcoholism and alcohol-related problems have on young people, their friends, families and communities—and to highlight the reality that help is available and recovery is possible.

In the United States, excessive drinking is responsible for more than 4,300 deaths among underage youth each year. More than 1.5 million young people reported driving under the influence of alcohol in the past year. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Despite the legal drinking age of 21, people aged 12-20 years drink 13% of all alcohol consumed. Kids who drink are more likely to be victims of violent crime, to be involved in alcohol-related traffic crashes, and to have serious school-related problems.

"These statistics are staggering," says Lisa Peoples-Hurst, Certified Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist at the Berrien County Health Department, "but there are some things that families can do. It is important to help your child make smart decisions about refraining from alcohol. Kids who have a supportive family environment show lowered rates of alcohol use for adolescents. Kids who have conversations with their parents and learn about the dangers of alcohol and drug use are 50% less likely to use than those who do not have such conversations."

Alcohol Awareness Month provides a focused opportunity across America to increase awareness and understanding of alcoholism, its causes, effective treatment and recovery. It is an opportunity to increase early education about alcoholism, to decrease stigma and misunderstandings in order to dismantle the barriers to treatment and recovery, and thus, make seeking help more readily available to those who suffer from this disease.

Local activities include:

1. Highlighting local resources that provide treatment and recovery options.

2. Working with area alcohol retailers to post signs proclaiming the “Parents Who Host, Lose the Most” message near their alcohol inventory to remind parents not to social host drinking parties.
3. Information for parents via emails, school newsletters, TalkSooner.org and VoiceChangeHope.org.
4. Information for students via school events (i.e. prom, graduation) to promote them as alcohol-free activities.
5. Information for college students about binge drinking via campus housing programs.
6. Continue to offer responsible alcohol vendor/server training.

For more information about the Alcohol Awareness Month activities in Berrien County, contact Lisa Peeples-Hurst at 269-927-5690 or [lpeepleshurst@bchdmi.org](mailto:lpeepleshurst@bchdmi.org).

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