



The Illinois Department of Human Services Recognizes Alcohol Awareness Month

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CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is partnering with Prevention First and providers across the state to raise awareness for alcohol use disorder during the month of April. Each year, Alcohol Awareness Month seeks to raise awareness about the potential damaging effects of alcohol and renews support for individuals fighting to overcome alcohol use disorder.

“Individuals in Illinois continue to be severely impacted by the negative effects of alcohol,” said IDHS Secretary Designate Grace B Hou. “Alcohol Awareness Month allows us to highlight the services that are available through IDHS’ Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR) and our community providers. We encourage families and individuals to reach out to the department and become more familiar with the programs that are available to them.”

This year’s national theme is “Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow” and urges all Americans to promote treatment and recovery options and to support anyone who has been affected. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), one in every 12 adults, or 17.6 million people, suffer from alcohol use disorder or alcohol dependence.

“It’s imperative that we address the needs of individuals with alcohol use disorder throughout the state,” said SUPR Director Dani Kirby. “SUPR works closely with our community providers to get individuals the help they need and on the path to recovery.”

Over the past two decades, scientific research has revolutionized the understanding of how alcohol and drugs affect the body and the brain. Prolonged and repeated alcohol and drug use can result in fundamental, long-lasting changes in the body including brain structure and functioning. Research also indicates that alcohol use during the teenage

years could interfere with normal adolescent brain development and increase the risk of developing alcohol use disorder. Underage drinking contributes to a range of acute consequences, such as injuries, sexual assaults, and even deaths – including those from car crashes. According to the 2018 Illinois Youth Survey, which is sponsored by IDHS, one out of five high school students report having ridden in a car driven by someone that was using alcohol or drugs.

“Underage drinking is very risky for young people and parents can certainly make a difference,” said Karel Homrig, Executive Director of Prevention First. “The longer youth delay drinking, the less likely they are to develop problems associated with it. This makes it even more important for parents to talk to their children about how they can make smart decisions about alcohol.”

For more information about Alcohol Awareness Month, visit Facing Addiction with NCADD at www.facingaddiction.org. Also, visit [Prevention First](#) for underage drinking prevention resources and the [Alcohol Policy Resource Center](#) for education, resources, and tools on evidence-based alcohol policy strategies. Prevention First is funded in whole or in part by the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery through a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

If you or someone you know is experiencing alcohol use disorder or other substance use disorders, call the Illinois Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances at 1-833-2FINDHELP or visit HelplineIL.org.