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The Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance Community Tool Kit has been designed as a "how-to" guide for communities and/or groups who want to address issues of underage drinking but aren't quite sure how to begin. It has been our experience that forming a coalition to tackle a social cause can be a daunting undertaking; our intent is to break the process down into manageable pieces.

We also believe MYAA's Tool Kit can be used by existing community activists or groups that may need some rejuvenation or fresh ideas. Perhaps your coalition has been struggling with attracting new members or maybe you're looking for new ways to get your message out to targeted audiences. Sections that address each of these areas are included in this tool kit.

It is our fervent hope that the MYAA Tool Kit will not collect dust on a bookshelf or in a basement, but will be used continually by communities as passionate as we are about reducing underage drinking. These "tools" are meant to assist you in building a strong foundation for your community's unique and creative ideas and programs. These suggestions have been implemented by hundreds of similar groups that have watched their foundations grow into sustained structures of underage drinking prevention.

## **Opportunities for organizations**

Your organization has a wealth of ideas, experiences, strengths and resources to contribute to the effort of reducing underage drinking. The MYAA Tool Kit not only introduces you to the ways your group can organize your efforts, it also shows you how to capitalize on promoting those efforts by connecting with other like-minded groups. Plus, the kit provides detailed information about how to publicize and market your efforts. Let these tools be stepping stones for advancing your cause in your community.

## **What's inside**

We've tried to make the MYAA Tool Kit as user-friendly as possible. Dip in and out as you need to,

utilizing only what you need. Where appropriate, as in the Media Relations Section, we've included press releases and other communications tools for you to take away as samples and customize for your needs.

The MYAA Tool Kit is available free of charge online at our web site [www.myaa.org](http://www.myaa.org). To request an additional copy of the kit, call our offices at (573) 635-6669 or toll free at (877) 669-2280.

Included in the MYAA Tool Kit is a custom CD-ROM containing an electronic copy of the entire text of the kit. All of the files are provided in PDF, or Portable Document Format. PDF was created by Adobe Systems so that Windows or Macintosh users can see and print documents as they were originally designed without having the fonts and graphics loaded on their machines. To view the PDF files, you need a program called Adobe Acrobat. You may download the Adobe Acrobat reader from Adobe's web site, [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com).

PDF files are read- and print-only documents so they cannot be altered, only read and printed in their original format.

## **Acknowledgements**

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# Who is Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance (MYAA)?

MYAA is a statewide coalition that assists local community efforts in addressing underage drinking. Its mission is to encourage advocates to reduce youth access to alcohol by implementing environmental and social policy changes in their communities. By changing policy we will improve the environment that our children are living in each day, the environment that encourages them to drink alcohol. MYAA is also a driving force behind statewide advocacy efforts at the legislative level in Jefferson City.

Since its inception in 1997 through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, MYAA has grown in size and reputation throughout the state. Currently in its second four-year grant cycle, MYAA is housed under the ACT Missouri umbrella of services. ACT Missouri maintains fiscal responsibility for MYAA but staff and the MYAA Coalition make operational decisions.

MYAA's primary purpose, in its work to reduce underage drinking, is one of policy-setting, both at the local and state levels. Since 1997, the coalition has been instrumental in the passage of such local ordinances as beer keg tracking and social host/open house parties. At the state level, MYAA and its community advocates continue to push for increasing the fees on alcohol, establishing statewide beer keg tracking, and other legislation that restricts access to alcohol by our young people. Other areas of work include enforcing a minimum age of patrons in bars, how alcohol is marketed to children and density of alcohol outlets. MYAA was also instrumental in the passage of the zero tolerance legislation in Missouri.

Membership in MYAA is open to anyone interested in reducing underage drinking. As a MYAA coalition member, individuals and community groups become a part of a strong statewide advocacy network.

The foundation for MYAA's existence is clear: the average age when a child in Missouri first has his or her first drinks of alcohol beyond a few sips is 12.7 years, or about the sixth grade. As the coalition continues to mobilize advocates to change public policy around youth access to alcohol, the startling fact

that sixth graders are consuming alcohol and setting themselves on a potentially destructive path drives MYAA's mission. **The focus remains intent on the ultimate win: increasing the age of first use of alcohol and creating a better future for young people of Missouri.**

## Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance Policy Priorities

1. Increase funding for underage drinking prevention, treatment, intervention and recovery. The main objective is to increase fees imposed on wine, spirits and beer in Missouri.
2. Implement policies that restrict commercial availability of alcohol to minors.
3. Implement policies that reduce social/public availability of alcohol to minors.

## How does MYAA fit into the national movement to reduce underage drinking?

Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance is one of 12 sites chosen by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to pursue changes in alcohol control policies through the implementation of statewide volunteer coalitions. Since the beginning of the project the 12 coalitions have been instrumental in passing countless state and local policies to reduce youth access to alcohol. Seeing the success of the environmental policy movement, many other national organizations have followed the Robert Wood Johnson Foundations' lead and started training and funding local and state groups to change alcohol control policy. Some of the groups are the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Governors Highway Safety Representatives, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, the American Medical Association, and Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. These groups are raising awareness of the underage drinking problem in the United States and its territories. **We also raise our collective voices to say We CAN reduce underage drinking and significantly improve the lives of young people.**