

# **Impact of Drinking Age Law**

## **Brief Program Description**

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services conducted a Youth Alcohol Survey in 1996 to examine the long-term impact of the 21-year-old drinking age law and the trends of underage drinking and drinking and driving. The 1996 survey—and previous four surveys conducted in 1982, 1983, 1985, and 1986—was conducted using telephone interviews with young adults residing in 10 New York State counties. Preliminary analyses of the 1996 survey, together with the four other surveys, suggests that the 21-year-old drinking age law had ongoing impact on alcohol purchase and use by the intended age group.

Alcohol purchase for 19- and 20-year-olds was down 70 percent in 1996, compared to 1985 purchase rates, when 19- and 20-year-olds could still purchase alcohol. The prevalence of underage alcohol purchase in 1996 was at an all-time low since 1982. Immediately following the rise in drinking age to 21 years, alcohol use among 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds dropped nearly 25 percent. Ten years later, alcohol use among this age group had decreased 59 percent. In addition, in 1996, less than 30 percent of respondents reported that their parents would approve of underage drinking, compared to 82 percent in 1982.

## **Program Development Support**

The New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration supported this ongoing research.

## **Contact Information**

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

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