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NEW WEBSITE PROVIDES INSTANT FEEDBACK ON PERSONAL ALCOHOL USE



Portland, ME—Now anyone can obtain free, confidential, personalized feedback regarding their drinking habits at www.mainebac.org. Through a collaborative effort among 21 Reasons, PROP's Communities Promoting Health, and the City of Portland, anyone living or working in Cumberland County has access to a free personalized report on their alcohol use.

"Our main target audience is young adults, who are the highest-risk age group for causing alcohol-related harm," says Beth Deeran, 22, summer intern for 21 Reasons. "We're an age group that can drink legally, but often doesn't know how to do it in a way that reduces risk. The alcohol industry says to 'drink responsibly,' but what does that really mean?"

Because alcohol affects everyone differently, "drinking responsibly" depends on a variety of factors including age, weight, gender, and family history. The MaineBAC.org assessment asks a series of questions to produce a customized blood-alcohol content (BAC) chart, personal risk analysis, estimate of health and financial costs, and recommendations for reducing these risks and costs. This unique and personalized evaluation can also be repeated at a later date, allowing individuals to track their alcohol use profile over time.

The website is being marketed by young adults to young adults throughout the summer at outdoor concerts such as the Alive at Five music series in Portland. In addition, several local bars have signed on to distribute drink coasters and wallet cards with the MaineBAC.org logo.

MaineBAC.org uses an online program developed by counselors and psychologists at San Diego State University. It was modeled after another program of San Diego State University called "e-CHUG," which is used at nearly 400 colleges and universities across 42 states. This is the first time the program has been used in a non-college setting.

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Young adults & alcohol

- In Cumberland County, 57% of young adult drivers (ages 21-29) in fatal crashes were alcohol involved, compared to 21% of all adult drivers involved in fatal crashes. ⁱ
- 18-25 year olds are our highest-risk age group when it comes to prevalence of binge drinking (42%) and heavy drinking (16%). Binge drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks on the same occasion within a couple of hours, on at least 1 day in the past 30 days. Heavy drinking is defined as consuming five or more drinks on the same occasion on 5 or more days in the past 30 days.ⁱⁱ
- Driving under the influence of alcohol is also highest among the young adult age groups, with 20% of 18-20 year olds, 27% of 21-25 year olds, and 21% of 26-29 year olds reporting that they drove under the influence of alcohol during the past year. ⁱⁱⁱ
- According to 2006 data from the NHSTA, young adults ages 21-34 are disproportionately involved in fatal crashes in which the driver was intoxicated, with 43% of all fatal drunken driving crashes involving that age group (compared to 11% involving 16-20 year olds, 21% involving 35-44 year olds, 23% involving adults 45 and older). ^{iv}
- The majority of alcohol-related deaths, disability and damage is attributable to moderate drinkers who engage in occasional risky drinking, not those who are dependent on alcohol.^v
- The NIAAA 2002 report on college drinking estimated that more than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 experience alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape each year in the United States. ^{vi} Alcohol-involved sexual assaults more often occur among college students who know each other only casually and who spend time together at a party or bar.^{vii}

ⁱ Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), 1999-2003

ⁱⁱ 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings, SAMSHA Office of Applied Studies, <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k6nsduh/2k6results.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv} <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810821.pdf>

^v Toomey, T.L. & Wagenaar, A.C. (2002). Environmental policies to reduce college drinking: options and research findings. *J. Stud. Alcohol*, Supplement No. 14: 193-205.

^{vi} Task Force of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2002). *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Health.

^{vii} Abbey, A. (2002). Alcohol-related sexual assault: A common problem among college students. *J. Stud. Alcohol*. Supplement No. 14: 118-128.