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Support for HB 279 – Reauthorization of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board

The Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse supports reauthorization of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (ABC Board). The ABC Board is a critical part of Alaska's substance abuse prevention system and the long-term success of efforts to reduce underage drinking.

Preventing underage drinking is about more than minor consuming. Research shows that youth who use alcohol before age 15 are four times as likely to become alcohol dependent than people who wait until age 21 or later.¹ The American Medical Association reports that underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen traffic crashes and contributes to youth suicide and other fatal injuries, date rape and sexual assault of teens and college students, and high-risk behaviors.²

Enforcement of underage drinking laws, preventing adults from purchasing and providing alcohol to minors, and training of sellers and servers have been endorsed by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science as effective strategies for reducing underage drinking.³ Alaska's state Plan to Reduce and Prevent Underage Age Drinking includes these strategies.⁴ That is because these strategies work.

We have seen substantial decreases in reported underage drinking in the last 15 years. For example, **the rate of high school age youth actively using alcohol in the last thirty days has decreased by 18.9% since 1995.** This is better than the national average of 41.8% (Figures 1-2). This success is attributable to a comprehensive prevention strategy, which includes those critical strategies that are implemented by the ABC Board.

For these reasons, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse supports HB 279 and the reauthorization of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

¹ "Age at Onset of Alcohol Use and its Association with DSM-IV Alcohol Abuse and Dependence," Grant, B. and Dawson, D., *Journal of Substance Abuse*, 9:103-110 (1997) (abstract available online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9494942>).

² *Facts About Youth and Alcohol*, American Medical Association (online at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/public-health/promoting-healthy-lifestyles/alcohol-other-drug-abuse/facts-about-youth-alcohol.page?>).

³ *Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility*, Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science (2003) Recommendation 9-2 at 169, Recommendation 9-7 at 176, and Recommendation 9-4 at 172 (available online at http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10729).

⁴ Alaska Plan to Reduce and Prevent Underage Age Drinking, 2009 at 11 (available online at http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dbh/prevention/docs/2009_underagedrinkplan.pdf).

Figure 1: Alaskan Students Who Had at Least One Drink of Alcohol on One or More Days During the Past 30 Days

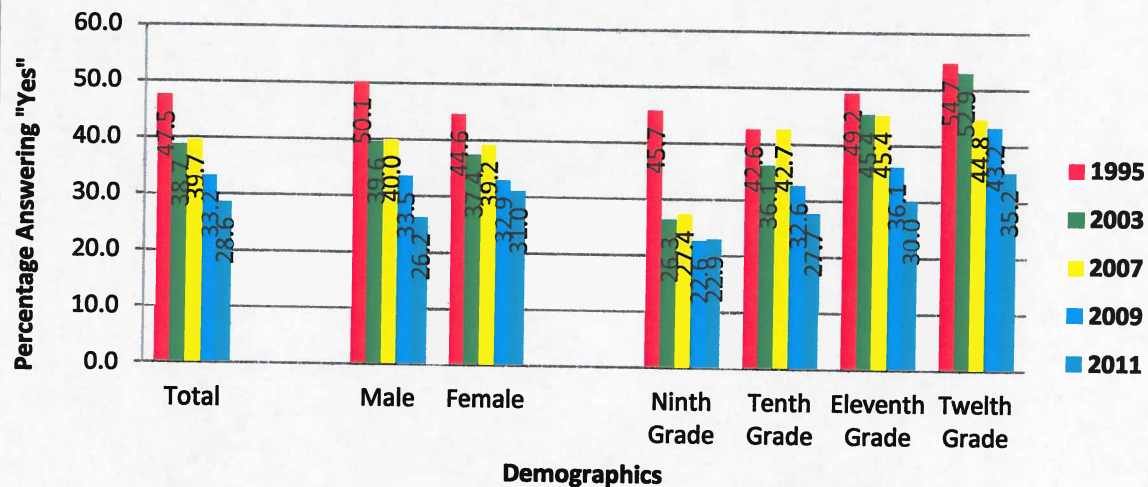
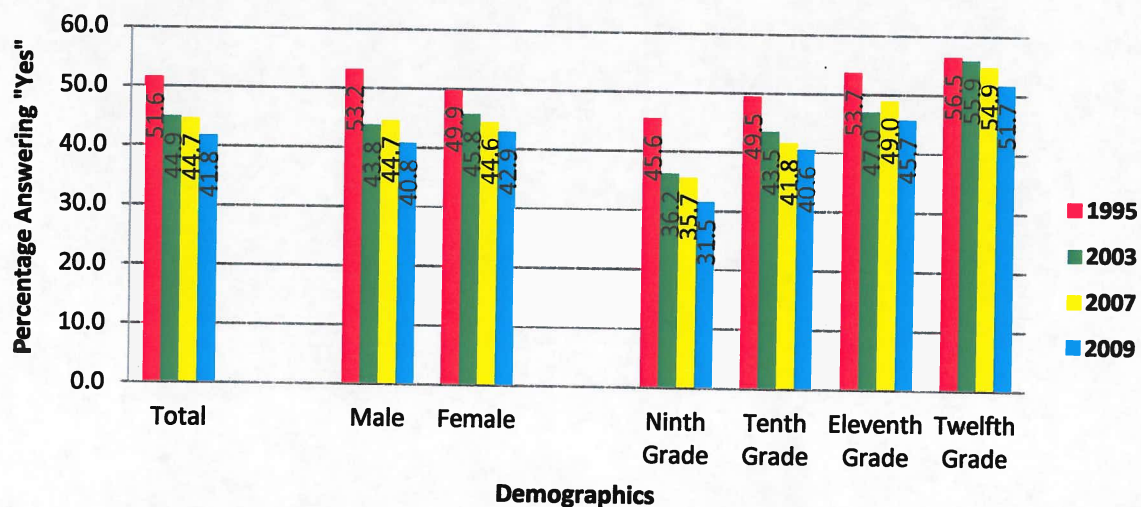


Figure 2: US Students Who Had at Least One Drink of Alcohol on One or More Days During the Past 30 Days



Source: Youth Behavior Risk Survey,⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Alaska Division of Public Health (analyzed by Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse staff).

⁵ Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey results for 1995-2011 can be reviewed online at <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/school/YRBS.htm>.