

What is Georgia Strategic Prevention System (GASPS)?

The Georgia Strategic Prevention System (GASPS), funded by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Addictive Diseases, State Office of Prevention Services and Programs (OPSP), is a multilevel system design that aims to prevent substance use and abuse and promote healthy choices and lifestyle among Georgians by implementing sustainable evidence-based strategies. The purpose of GASPS comprehensive model is to build capacity and infrastructure within the state, regions, and sub regions through key policy stakeholders and resources mobilization, coalition and workforce development, and research infrastructure enhancement.

The Georgia Alcohol Initiative, what is it?

The objective of this initiative is to implement statewide primary prevention strategies (programs/practices/policies) that are consistent with needs as identified by epidemiological data with the following goals:

- 1) Reduce the early onset of alcohol use among 9-20 year olds
- 2) Reduce access to alcohol and binge drinking among 9-20 year olds
- 3) Reduce binge drinking and heavy drinking among 18-25 year olds

Why are we focusing on alcohol?

Underage drinking and alcohol abuse among young adults is a widespread public health and safety problem. It has serious personal, social, and economic consequences.

Alcohol is the most widely abused substance among youth in the US and in Georgia; most youth between the ages of 9 and 20 use alcohol more than tobacco or any other substance.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), cumulative data (2005-2009), lifetime prevalence of alcohol use is approximately 72% higher than cigarette use (54%) and marijuana (38%) among GA HS students. Similarly, regional NSDUH cumulative data (2002-2009) indicates lifetime prevalence of alcohol used is approximately 79% for alcohol, 67% for cigarette, and 39% for marijuana use among Georgians 12 years and older.

According to YRBS (2005-2009), alcohol is the most frequently used substance before the age of 13 by GA High School students and before age 11 by GA middle school students.

According to CDC data, an average of 2,375 people in Georgia die from alcohol-related injuries or illness each year. 22% of these were homicides and suicides and 21% were motor-vehicle crashes. In 2008, there were approximately 190,000 emergency rooms visits by persons under age 21 for injuries and other conditions linked to alcohol. More teens die as a result of alcohol use than all other illegal drugs combined (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 2002). In fact, alcohol is the 3rd leading cause of death in Georgia (YRBS 2009).