



SAMPLE NEWSLETTER ARTICLE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

Consistency is Key in Enforcing Minimum Drinking Age

It has been 25 years since states began raising the minimum drinking age to reduce underage drinking and its dangerous consequences. These laws have had a significant impact in saving young lives, with a 13 percent decline in youth fatalities reported to NHTSA between 1975 and 1996 (NHTSA, 1998). Similarly, unintentional injuries other than traffic crashes also showed a 3.9 percent decline with the increased drinking age. Other studies have found that alcohol drinking rates and addiction rates also decreased among adults into their twenties since the drinking age was raised across the country.

As police officers, we are relieved that these laws have done the job in saving many young lives. But we must ensure that we continue to do our job in making these laws a powerful deterrent to underage drinking right here in [NAME OF YOUR COMMUNITY]. In spite of minimum drinking age laws, studies show that kids are still getting access to alcohol:

- The average age when youth say they first tried alcohol is 12.8 years.¹
- 61% of high school seniors say they consumed alcohol in the last 30 days.²
- Nearly 90% of tenth graders and 75% of eighth graders say alcohol is “fairly easy” or “very easy” to get.³
- Almost 75% of seventh graders who drink alcohol obtain it from their parents (with or without their knowledge).⁴
- Almost 65% of the students who drink buy their own alcoholic beverages.⁵

As we approach the time of year when many of our young people will be going to proms and graduation parties [YOU MAY CUSTOMIZE THIS FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR], we need to be especially diligent in our efforts to keep alcohol out of the hands of kids. And when we do find kids with alcohol, we must enforce the laws of our state fairly and consistently.

Sources: 1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1997. National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1998.

2-3. “Monitoring the Future Study,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, Rockville, MD, 1998. Based on surveys carried out by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

4-5. “Drinking Habits, Access, Attitudes, and Knowledge: A National Survey.” From: Report to the Surgeon General “Youth and Alcohol: A National Survey,” by the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, June 1991. FACE-Truth and Clarity on Alcohol.



SAMPLE OP-ED COLUMN - ENFORCEMENT OF MINIMUM DRINKING AGE

NOTE: Customize and send out this column to your local newspaper's editorial section. This might be especially effective just before prom season, graduation parties, and summer festivals to emphasize your commitment to enforcing minimum drinking age laws in your community.

ISSUE: Local Enforcement of Minimum Drinking Age Laws

It has been 25 years since states began raising the minimum drinking age to reduce underage drinking and its tragic consequences. These laws have had a significant impact in saving young lives, with a 13 percent decline in youth fatalities reported to NHTSA between 1975 and 1996 (NHTSA, 1998). Similarly, unintentional injuries other than traffic crashes also showed a 3.9 percent decline with the increased drinking age. Other studies have found that alcohol drinking rates and addiction rates also decreased among adults into their twenties.

This is good news, and we are all relieved that minimum drinking laws have saved many young lives. However, I'm writing to let everyone in our community know that as police officers, we will continue our strenuous enforcement of these laws so that young lives will continue to be saved right here in [NAME OF YOUR COMMUNITY].

Now for the bad news. In spite of minimum drinking age laws, studies show that underage drinking is still prevalent across the country:

- The average age when youth say they first tried alcohol is 12.8 years. ¹
- 61% of high school seniors say they consumed alcohol in the last 30 days.²
- Nearly 90% of tenth graders and 75% of eighth graders say alcohol is "fairly easy" or "very easy" to get.³
- Almost 75% of seventh graders who drink alcohol obtain it from their parents (with or without their knowledge).⁴
- Almost 65% of the students who drink buy their own alcoholic beverages.⁵

As we approach the time of year when many of our young people will be going to proms and graduation parties [YOU MAY CUSTOMIZE THIS FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR], I want everyone in the community to know that our police department will be especially diligent in trying to keep alcohol out of the hands of kids. And when we do find kids with alcohol, we will enforce the laws of our state strictly and fairly, every time.

If you'd like to learn more about how we can all work together to reduce underage drinking in [NAME OF COMMUNITY], please contact [INCLUDE THE NAME AND NUMBER OF A COMMUNITY GROUP OR YOUR DEPARTMENT NUMBER HERE]. Thank you.

Yours in safety,
[POLICE CHIEF OR SHERIFF]

Sources: 1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 1997. National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1998.

2-3. "Monitoring the Future Study," National Institute on Drug Abuse, Rockville, MD, 1998. Based on surveys carried out by the University of Michigan Survey Research Center.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE - ENFORCEMENT OF MINIMUM DRINKING AGE

NOTE: Customize this release for your community and time of year and then send it to your local newspaper.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact: [NAME AND NUMBER OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER OR POLICE CHIEF]

Research On Underage Drinking Spurs Continued Commitment From Local Law Enforcement

It has been 25 years since states began raising the minimum drinking age to reduce underage drinking and its tragic consequences. These laws have had a significant impact in saving young lives, with a 13 percent decline in youth fatalities reported between 1975 and 1996 (NHTSA, 1998). Similarly, unintentional injuries other than traffic crashes also showed a 3.9 percent decline with the increased drinking age. Other studies have found that alcohol drinking rates and addiction rates also decreased among adults into their twenties.

In spite of minimum drinking age laws, studies show that underage drinking is still prevalent across the country:

- The average age when youth say they first tried alcohol is 12.8 years. ¹
- 61 % of high school seniors say they consumed alcohol in the last 30 days.²
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- Almost 65% of the students who drink buy their own alcoholic beverages.⁵

As we approach the time of year when many of our young people will be going to proms and graduation parties [YOU MAY CUSTOMIZE THIS FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR], the [NAME OF YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT] will be especially diligent in trying to keep alcohol out of the hands of kids. And when we do find kids with alcohol, police officers will enforce the laws of our state strictly and fairly, every time.

To learn more about how we can all work together to reduce underage drinking in [NAME OF COMMUNITY], please contact [INCLUDE THE NAME AND NUMBER OF A COMMUNITY GROUP OR YOUR DEPARTMENT NUMBER HERE].

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