

State Agencies Partner to Prevent Underage Drinking

More than 40 percent of Kansas high school seniors report drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, a statistic that four state agencies hope to help change this prom and graduation season.

Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Kansas Alcoholic Beverage Control (KABC) and Kansas Family Partnership (KFP) have joined together to promote the It Matters Campaign, a media initiative designed to reach thousands of Kansans and raise their awareness around underage drinking issues.

"Messages from the It Matters Campaign illustrate the impacts of underage drinking and why these issues should matter to Kansas teens and adults," said Michelle Voth, KFP Executive Director. "Prom and graduation are two critical times when teens may be approached with the opportunity to drink alcohol, and it's important for them to understand the consequences of its use."

The campaign begins on April 15 during National Alcohol Awareness Month and ends with the conclusion of National Prevention Week, May 17-23. During the campaign, these state agencies are encouraging communities across Kansas to use It Matters Campaign resources to help teens say no to alcohol and to keep adults from providing it.

"More than one third of Kansas high school seniors believe that it would be very easy for them to get alcohol, a common issue we see in communities throughout the state," said Sarah Fischer, KDADS Behavioral Health Prevention and Promotion Manager. "In addition to educating teens about the dangers of drinking alcohol, we also want adults to understand the consequences of providing to minors."

The It Matters Campaign also aims to keep Kansas roadways safe as teens travel to prom and graduation-related events. In 2013, alcohol-impaired drivers between ages 15 and 20 were involved in 254 crashes in Kansas, resulting in 14 fatalities and 21 disabling injuries. Twenty percent of Kansas high school students also report that they've ridden with a drunk driver in the last 30 days.

Schools, businesses, organizations and community groups can order free It Matters Campaign resources from KFP, including stickers that can be placed on alcoholic beverages in community stores, and cards that can be handed out at businesses offering services for prom and graduation. For more information about the It Matters Campaign, visit KFP's website at www.kansasfamily.com/it-matters-campaign. Find KFP on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kansasfamily and Twitter [@KsFamilyPartner](https://twitter.com/KsFamilyPartner).