

## For Immediate Release

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### **KDADS and Kansas Regional Prevention Centers Expand Alcohol Awareness Media Campaign**

TOPEKA – Every April for 28 years, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored Alcohol Awareness Month to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma and encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.

Under the umbrella of this year’s national theme, “Help for Today, Hope for Tomorrow,” the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) has partnered with Kansas Regional Prevention Centers and local communities to launch a new statewide media campaign, “It Matters,” designed to educate people about the treatment and prevention of alcoholism.

“It Matters” is an ongoing effort to expand and re-brand the original state campaign, “Teen Thinking” that was launched in 2006.

Alcohol use has extremely dangerous consequences not just for teens, but their communities and families as well. It is directly associated with traffic fatalities, violence, suicide, educational failure, alcohol overdose, unsafe sex and other destructive problem behaviors. According to the NCADD, 65,000 young people under the age of 21 die from alcohol-related accidents and thousands more are injured annually.

Additionally:

- Alcohol is the number one drug of choice for America’s young people and is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined.
- Each day, 7,000 kids in the United States under the age of 16 take their first drink.
- Those who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at age 21.
- More than 1,700 college students in the United States are killed each year—about 4.65 a day—as a result of alcohol-related injuries.
- Underage alcohol use costs the nation an estimated \$62 billion annually.

KDADS Secretary Shawn Sullivan believes underage drinking requires grass-root efforts like the growing campaign in Kansas that focuses on prevention, intervention and treatment to begin reaching children at a young age with these messages.

“We need to continue to mount an aggressive cooperative effort—not just by government agencies, but schools, parents and community leaders as well,” Secretary Sullivan said.

Ten Regional Prevention Centers form a network serving the entire state. Staff in each center provides technical assistance, training and resources to help community-based groups assess needs, develop plans to address identified needs, implement evidence-based prevention strategies and evaluate their effects. For more information about Kansas’ campaign, visit [www.itmattersks.org](http://www.itmattersks.org).

KDADS’ Behavioral Health Services department also licenses over 200 treatment programs in the State of Kansas. For more information on Kansas treatment programs, please visit [www.kansasbehavioralhealthservices.org](http://www.kansasbehavioralhealthservices.org).

For more national information about underage drinking or Alcohol Awareness Month, visit the NCADD website at [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org).

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*The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services mission is to foster an environment that promotes security, dignity and independence for all Kansans.*