



# MICAP RECAP

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*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems  
Celebrating its 112<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017*

## **AS YOU PREPARE YOUR TAX RETURNS FOR 2016, THIS WILL REMIND YOU OF THE HIGH COST OF BINGE-DRINKING IN MICHIGAN**

**by Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired, Treasurer,  
MICAP Board of Directors**

### AADIF/MICAP

(517) 999-0013

[info@micap.org](mailto:info@micap.org)

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**QUESTION?** What is the significance of **\$814.00<sup>1</sup>** for every man, woman and child in the State of Michigan? **ANSWER:** That is the cost to every taxpayer in the State of Michigan as a primary consequence of abusive and Binge-Drinking (B/D) every year. What is striking for me, and another reason why I volunteer for MICAP, is the sheer cost of the abuse of Beverage Alcohol (B/A) to individual taxpayers. The following table shows you the cost per family with several members in it:

One-person families	\$814.00	Two-person families	\$1628.00
Three-person families	\$2442.00	Four-person families	\$3256.00
Five-person families	\$4070.00 plus...		

Personal cost to the taxpayer is not the only concern about abusive and B/D-ing on the part of too many youth and adults in Michigan. About 74% of the costs can be attributed to lost productivity in our factories and work places annually. That's a whopping \$6.7 billion dollars. Imagine the dollars which are now "lost" because lost-productivity takes away from bottom-line profits for manufacturers in our state. How much more income could/would be paid toward employees and/or stockholders of our major corporations? How many more bonuses might be paid to their employees? How many more jobs might be had because our manufacturers could produce goods more economically? Indeed, lower costs might increase demand for the products and lead to even more sales.

I had heard several years ago that these costs are astronomical. When my wife and I had to prepare our taxes to meet our self-imposed February 15<sup>th</sup> bottom-line deadline for our tax preparer, those figures crossed my mind again and I decided to investigate and write this article.

### **ABUSIVE AND BINGE-DRINKING FAR SURPASSES MOST PERSONS' UNDERSTANDING.**

There have been articles in the *MICAP-RECAP* about binge drinking, especially as it relates to the college campus in the past. Those of us who wrote those articles knew something about binge drinking. As it turns out, I didn't know nearly enough. And there have always been ABUSIVE DRINK-

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ERS. But who would have thought there would be so many. The Michigan Department of Community Health's Fact Sheet on excessive alcohol consumption defines "Excessive alcohol consumption"<sup>2</sup> as:

### **BINGE-DRINKING:**

Greater than or equal to 4 drinks per occasion for a woman;  
Greater than or equal to 4 drinks per occasion for a man.

### **HEAVY DRINKING:**

Greater than 1 drink per day on average for a woman;  
Greater than 2 drinks per day on average for a man;  
Any alcohol consumption by youth aged less than 21 years;  
Any alcohol consumption by pregnant women.

### **BINGE-DRINKING IS NO LONGER JUST FOR THE COLLEGE SET... OUR CHILDREN ARE ALSO BINGE-DRINKING.**

The American Academy of Pediatrics focuses on B/D and how their member-physicians should be addressing it with their patients' children. The following youth percentages and age-groups admit to B/D 5 or more drinks at one sitting:

12 – 14-year-olds	50%
15 – 17-year-olds	65%
18 – 20-year-olds	72% <sup>2</sup>

The experts tell us that one of the BIGGIES for youth drinking is what is called "PRE-GAMING." This consists of gathering before an event where youth doubt alcohol will be available for their age-group, so they do their drinking ahead of time. Vodka is the preferred beverage because it's odorless, colorless and tasteless. It also has a higher percentage of B/A than wine or beer and they are drinking to get a buzz and get it quickly. The American Academy of Pediatrics tells us that while parents have difficulty believing that their children drink to such an extent, the experts also tell us that the message to our children should be: "I know this (pre-gaming) is happening. I think it's a bad idea. I expect you not to do it." Experts also tell us that parents have a lot more influence over their children's decisions than they believe they have. Likewise, a one-time message to teenagers may not be sufficient. One professional, who works with the Health Alliance on Alcohol which offers resources to parents says, (Almost) "anything you say is going to be better than not saying anything." Another said, "Think of it as a different kind of drinking game: every time a character on television picks up a drink, every time you see a beer commercial, every time there is a news segment focused on alcohol, you talk!"<sup>2</sup>

### **OUR ADULTS ARE BINGE-DRINKING MORE THAN EVER...**

Revised estimates show that B/D-ing is a larger problem than previously thought. More than 38 million adults binge-drink. The average number of drinks per binge is 8. A few statistics follow:

- The age-group with the most B/D-ers is 18-34 years of age.
- The age-group that B/Ds most often is 65 + years of age.
- Income group with the most B/D-ers: more than \$75,000.00 annually.
- Most alcohol-impaired drivers B/D.
- More than half the alcohol adults drink in the US is while B/D-ing.
- More than 90% of the alcohol youth drink is while B/D-ing.

B/D-ing percentages vary from state to state; from Utah with 10.9 percentage to Wisconsin with a 25.6 percentage. Michigan's percentage is 21% for young males and 25% for adult males.<sup>2</sup>

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Getting back to the issue of cost: The cost of B/D-ing averaged about \$1.90/drink in 2006. At that time, state and federal taxes totaled only about 12 cents/drink. The annual unpaid alcohol tab in Michigan is a staggering \$8.16 billion; not near as high as that for Texas (\$18.82 billion) or New York (\$16.33 billion), but it puts Michigan in the top 10 worst states in the US for B/D-ing with 20.1% of all Michigan adults (men and women) B/D-ing in the last 30 days.<sup>2</sup>

### **WHAT CAN WE DO?<sup>3</sup>**

There are several suggestions for the Federal and State governments to do to lessen binge-drinking throughout the states. But there are local suggestions too, including:

- Developing Community Coalitions among schools, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, health-care and public health agencies to reduce binge-drinking.
- Recognizing that most binge-drinkers are not alcohol dependent or alcoholics.
- Urging people to drink in moderation if they do drink.
- Encouraging your Senators and Legislators in Michigan to:
  - Support the minimum legal drinking age of 21 years for B/A.
  - Increase B/A costs and excise taxes.
  - Hold B/A retailers responsible for harms caused by their underage or intoxicated patrons (dram shop liability).
- Restricting access by maintaining limits on the days and hours of B/A retail sales.
- Providing consistent enforcement of laws against underage drinking and alcohol impaired driving.
- Maintaining government controls on alcohol sales (avoiding privatization).
- Screening and counseling for alcohol misuse.<sup>4</sup>

MICAP is addressing some of these issues through our contacts with our State Senators and Representatives. But your letters, calls, notes, e-mails and support is crucial to convincing these agents of ours about our seriousness with these issues. We need to convince them that their good work consists not only in being responsible to the hospitality and beverage industries, from whom they receive many dollars in lobbying fees/gifts. But it is also to the PUBLIC GOOD and BEST USE POLICY when it comes to beverage alcohol.

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1 [https://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/08/31/the-conversation-about-alcohol-that-families-arent-having-binge-drinking/? R=0](https://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/08/31/the-conversation-about-alcohol-that-families-arent-having-binge-drinking/?R=0)

2 <https://www.lifesaver.com/blog/binge-drinking-in-michigan>

3 <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/alcohol>

4 <https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/binge-drinking.htm>

## **A Donation to MICAP Would be Wonderful**

MICAP is a small non-profit organization with a mission to provide information about the consequences of alcohol abuse, and to promote public policies that address these issues. It is a big task, and we are committed to doing our part.

For this work, MICAP depends 100% on gifts from people like you. Our work year-around depends directly on these gifts. MICAP could not do its work without your financial support, which truly makes a difference in this important work.

MICAP is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Your gift to MICAP is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the tax code. Please use the enclosed envelope, or send your check to: MICAP, P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901. From the bottom of our heart, we thank you.



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Mailing address: P.O. Box 10212, Lansing, MI 48901

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## **“POSTSCRIPT: You Can Help MICAP By Telling Your Friends!”**

One of the changing values in our fast-paced society seems to be that Beverage Alcohol (B/A) is the new norm for almost every occasion. MICAP needs your help to get the WORD out about Temperance. B/A is not always needed to complete a celebration. In fact, the fallout from B/A annually costs every man, woman and child over \$800.00 per year. This includes family/spouse violence and abuse, illness, death, prison and court costs, accidents and more. We also know that when use of B/A begins before age 21, those persons are more likely to become abusers or have problems with B/A later in life.

We greatly appreciate your support of the newsletter through your generous donations. Surely, you have friends who have the same values as you do. Perhaps to help us reach more people with our newsletter, the *MICAP-RECAP*, you could pass this issue off to them and ask them to request to be on our mailing list. Or, you may give us their names and addresses (We never give or sell our mailing lists to anyone). We will be happy to include them in mailings of future issues. Send, or have them send their names and addresses to: *MICAP-RECAP*, P. O. Box 10212, Lansing, Michigan 48901.

Thank you for helping MICAP grow.

Sincerely,

Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired  
Member, MICAP Board of Directors