Schools exercise a powerful influence over young people, making them ideal settings to educate about the dangers of underage drinking and sexual activity.

Despite laws in every state that make it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or possess alcohol, young people report that alcohol is easy to obtain.

- Alcohol is by far the most commonly abused substance by female adolescents with 36.5% (4.5 million) of girls ages 12 to 17 reporting alcohol use within the past year.
- Nearly 74% of adults report that they began drinking alcohol before the current legal drinking age of 21.
- A nationwide study indicates that 60% of adolescents ages 12 to 17 who drink are binge drinkers (5 or more drinks in a row).

Drinking predisposes young adults to risky sexual behaviors.

- A study of adolescent drinkers found that problem drinkers are more likely than other drinkers to be sexually active, to have a greater number of partners, and to initiate sexual activity at younger ages.
- Among the reported 34% of currently sexually active students nationwide, 25% had drunk alcohol or used drugs before their last sexual intercourse.

“Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus.”

_Institute of Medicine, 1996._

Unplanned pregnancies pose one of the greatest challenges for prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

- Roughly a million American teenagers become pregnant each year. The majority of these pregnancies (an estimated 78%) are unintended.
- Nearly one quarter of sexually active teens and young adults report having unprotected sex (using no form of contraception) because of alcohol or drug use.

School Systems can help prevent FASD by:

- Including information about FASD in health and/or human development course curricula;
- Providing alcohol-free recreation and entertainment opportunities for young adults;
- Supporting FASD peer-education programs; and
- Encouraging student participation in FASD or substance abuse-related community coalitions to meet required community service hours for graduation.