



Indiana Lifeline Law

Background

Alcohol-related unintentional injuries are one of the leading causes of death among youth in the United States. One factor contributing to the high rates of these injuries is the fear of facing consequences from law enforcement. Approximately 68% of teenagers report they fear getting in trouble by law enforcement when they drink¹. This leads to fewer 911 calls being made when an underage individual suffers an alcohol-related unintentional injury, and in turn more deaths related to these injuries. This is a common theme among both high school and college students; one study at Cornell University found that while 19% of students indicated that help should have been called for an alcohol-related injury, only 4% made the call¹.

Good Samaritan Policy Explained

The Good Samaritan Policy is defined as exemption from law enforcement punishment for an underage youth who calls for medical assistance for a fellow intoxicated youth. Many states and college campuses incorporate Good Samaritan Policies under broader medical amnesty policies, which also protect those who require the medical assistance from being prosecuted². Currently, 34 states, including Indiana, and the District of Columbia have Good Samaritan Policies that include language about exemptions for underage drinkers³.

The Indiana Lifeline Law

Senate Bill 227 was passed in 2014 by the Indiana Senate and signed by Governor Mike Pence the same year. Section 2 of the bill (the Indiana Lifeline Law; Indiana Code 7.1-5-1-6.5) indicates that a law enforcement officer cannot take a person into custody based only on an underage drinking offense, if the officer

has determined that the person requested medical assistance for a person in need. The person who requested assistance must provide his or her full name and any other relevant information to the officer. In addition, the person must remain at the scene with those who need medical assistance until emergency services arrive and cooperate fully with law enforcement and emergency medical personnel⁴. Those who face offenses not related to underage consumption, such as providing alcohol to minors, operating vehicles while intoxicated, and possession of a controlled substance, are still subject to prosecution⁵. A new federal law will require all police dispatchers to receive text messages by the end of 2016; with this new law, those who text 911 for medical assistance for a youth alcohol consumer will also be under the protection of the Lifeline Law⁶.

Research Findings

Several studies have been conducted on Good Samaritan Policies on college campuses, though research is needed on statewide policies. Cornell University was one of the first universities to implement such a policy, called the Medical Amnesty Protocol (MAP). This policy was designed to increase the likelihood that students would call for help in alcohol-related medical emergencies as well as the likelihood that students who received treatment for these types of emergencies would complete an educational intervention as a follow-up to treatment. The study took place over two years, during which increases were found in both the percentages of students calling emergency medical services for alcohol-related injuries (4.5% to 5.4%) and the percentage of students who received the educational intervention after treatment (22% to 52%). The study recommended

developing similar educational interventions, such as the Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS), if medical amnesty policies are put in place. These interventions are likely to reduce heavy episodic drinking and related consequences. Increased presence of alcohol poisoning-related educational materials in residence halls and around campus was also recommended⁷.

Another study conducted supported the idea of an educational component in addition to a Good Samaritan Policy. In this study, students completed an e-learning module in which the scenario was assisting a friend with alcohol poisoning at a university. Four groups of students took part in the study. Two groups were told there was a Good Samaritan Policy in place, while the other two were not. Two groups also watched an online alcohol poisoning video that described the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, consequences, and how to get help. Those students who watched both the e-learning module that included information about a Good Samaritan Policy and the video about alcohol poisoning were the most likely to seek help in the future (78% of e-learning and online video group compared to 58% in comparison group, 65% in video only group, and 74% in e-learning only group)⁸.

While many of the studies have been conducted on college campuses, statewide policies apply regardless of location.

Impact in Your Community

The Indiana Youth Services Association has implemented the “Make Good Decisions” campaign to advertise the Lifeline Law to students at 11 Indiana colleges, including Indiana University, Purdue University, Ball State University, University of Notre Dame, and others. This campaign targets students via Facebook, Twitter, and Pandora Radio. Flyers and business card reminders have also

been distributed during move-in weeks at these colleges⁹. As of April 2016, the Indiana Youth Services Association reported that at least 19 lives have been saved because of the campaign and the Lifeline Law¹⁰.

In addition to the media campaign, the Indiana Youth Services Association also features informational videos, statistics about underage drinking, and speaking engagements to educate youth and the community at large about the Indiana Lifeline Law¹¹. Expanding education and outreach to more high school and college students and other community members would reduce the number of underage drinking deaths that occur in the state.

References

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- ⁵Attorney General: Indiana Lifeline Law. (2016). Retrieved July 28, 2016, from <http://www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/2606.htm>
- ⁶Indiana Lifeline Law Includes Text To 911 | News - Indiana Public Media. (2016, August 08). Retrieved August 09, 2016, from <http://indianapublicmedia.org/news/indiana-lifeline-law-includes-text-911-103373/>
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- ⁸Oster-Aaland, L., Thompson, K., & Eighmy, M. (2011). The impact of an online educational video and a medical amnesty policy on college students' intentions to seek help in the presence of alcohol poisoning symptoms. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 48(2), 147-164.