

Reducing Alcohol-Impaired Driving: Lower Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) Laws for Young or Inexperienced Drivers

Task Force Finding

Intervention Definition

These laws establish a lower BAC level for young or inexperienced drivers than for older or more experienced drivers, making it illegal for the persons targeted by the law to drive with a BAC above the established limit. In the United States, the limit is 0.02% or lower, and these laws apply to all persons under the age of 21 years (the minimum legal drinking age [MLDA] in all states). In other countries, these laws apply to either newly licensed drivers or newly licensed drivers under a specified age.

Task Force Finding (June 2000)*

The Task Force recommends laws establishing a lower legal BAC for young or inexperienced drivers based on their effectiveness in reducing alcohol-related crashes in the United States and Australia. A potential harmful effect of these laws is that young drivers whose BACs exceed the legal limit for adult drivers (0.08 g/dL or 0.10 g/dL) may receive “zero tolerance” citations instead of being arrested for the more serious offense of driving under the influence of alcohol. One study reported an estimated benefit-to-cost ratio of \$11 per dollar invested for lower legal BAC limits for young drivers.

*From the following publication:

Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Recommendations to reduce injuries to motor vehicle occupants: increasing child safety seat use, increasing safety belt use, and reducing alcohol-impaired driving. *Am J Prev Med* 2001;21(4S):16–22.

Publications

Shults RA, Elder RW, Sleet DA, et al. Reviews of evidence regarding interventions to reduce alcohol-impaired driving. *Am J Prev Med* 2001;21(4S):66–88.

Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Recommendations to reduce injuries to motor vehicle occupants: increasing child safety seat use, increasing safety belt use, and reducing alcohol-impaired driving. *Am J Prev Med* 2001;21(4S):16–22.

Task Force on Community Preventive Services. [Motor-vehicle occupant injury: strategies for increasing use of child safety seats, increasing use of safety belts, and reducing alcohol-impaired driving](#) [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5007a1.htm]. *MMWR Recommendations and Reports* 2001;50(RR07):1-13.

Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Motor vehicle occupant injury. In: Zaza S, Briss PA, Harris KW, eds. *The Guide to Community Preventive Services: What Works to Promote Health?* Atlanta (GA): Oxford University Press;2005:329-84 (Out of Print).

Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions on this page are those of the Community Preventive Services Task Force and do not necessarily represent those of CDC. Task Force evidence-based recommendations are not mandates for compliance or spending. Instead, they

provide information and options for decision makers and stakeholders to consider when determining which programs, services, and policies best meet the needs, preferences, available resources, and constraints of their constituents.

Document last updated September 23, 2013