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:

Publications


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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.

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