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Age-21 Drinking Laws Save Lives

Red Rock RPC would like to inform the public of a study that was recently published, confirming that the age-21 drinking laws save lives.

Although some advocates want to lower the legal drinking age from 21, research continues to show that the law saves lives. That's the finding of a new review published in a special supplemental issue to the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*.

Researchers found that studies done since 2006—when a new debate over age-21 laws flared up—have continued to demonstrate that the mandates work. The laws, studies show, are associated with lower rates of drunk-driving crashes among young people. And it seems they also curb other hazards of heavy drinking—including suicide, dating violence and unprotected sex.

"The evidence is clear that there would be consequences if we lowered the legal drinking age," said lead researcher William DeJong, Ph.D., of Boston University School of Public Health.

In one study, researchers found that, in 2011, 36 percent of college students said in the past two weeks they engaged in a binge drinking (five or more drinks in a setting). That compared with 43 percent of students in 1988, the first year that all U.S. states had an age-21 law. There was an even bigger decline among high school seniors—from 35 percent to 22 percent.

DeJong also said, tougher enforcement of the age-21 law, rather than a repeal, is what's needed. "Just because a law is commonly disobeyed doesn't mean we should eliminate it," DeJong noted. Clinical trials have found that when college towns put more effort into enforcing the law—and advertise that fact to students—student drinking declines.

For more information on the study or for the full report, please visit the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs. Red Rock Regional Prevention Coordinator's

(RPC) primary focus is to serve as a prevention community liaison. Red Rock RPC educates and informs communities through multiple strategies including community based services, environmental strategies, early recognition, and referral. We take a proactive approach in reducing substance abuse among communities. Red Rock RPC is funded through the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. For more information about the Regional Prevention Coordinator please visit www.redrockrpc.com or contact the Red Rock RPC at (405)-354-1928.