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CONTACT: Michael Scippa 415-548-0492
Gilberto Leon 415-810-0158

California Blacks and Hispanics More Likely to Die in Alcohol-related Homicides

Marin Institute landmark study on alcohol deaths and hospitalizations reveals significant disparities by race, age, and gender in California

San Rafael, CA (January 19, 2010) --- In a study published today, Marin Institute researchers concluded that alcohol-related harm is disproportionately worse depending on demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, age, and gender.

“The most striking results came from the race and ethnicity data,” explained lead author Mandy Stahre, a PhD student at the University of Minnesota. *“Hispanics have a significantly higher alcohol-attributable death rate from homicide than non-Hispanics. Moreover, while Whites and Blacks had similar numbers of traffic fatalities, the alcohol-related homicide rate for Blacks was five times higher than for Whites. This is disturbing because it’s similar to data from 20 years ago, indicating that not much progress has been made in reducing racial disparities from alcohol harm,”* she added.

The first study of its kind in more than 20 years, “Alcohol-related Deaths and Hospitalizations by Race, Gender, and Age in California” is published in *The Open Epidemiology Journal*, and is co-authored by Mandy Stahre and Michele Simon, research and policy director at Marin Institute.

For the under 21 population, the leading cause of alcohol-related death in California was homicide (263 cases), and the second leading cause was motor vehicle crashes (207). *“California estimates are driven by high numbers of underage males who die from homicide,”* Stahre explained. *“For California females under age 21, the leading cause of death mirrors the national culprit - alcohol-attributable motor-vehicle traffic crashes.”*

“Thanks to widely publicized media campaigns, sometimes funded by the alcohol industry, most people still associate alcohol problems only with drunk driving, but our study showed that the majority of alcohol-related deaths and hospitalizations were due to chronic illnesses such as liver disease,” added co-author Michele Simon.

“The fact that African-Americans, Latinos, and youth are dying in disproportionate numbers from alcohol-related homicides is a wake-up call to California policymakers and the Governor,” said Ruben Rodriguez, Executive Director of Pueblo Y Salud and Co-Director of the Los Angeles Coalition on Alcohol Policy (LA-CAP). *“The alcohol industry’s ‘drink responsibly’ campaigns are not enough. Big Alcohol should pay its fair share through higher alcohol mitigation fees for prevention programs to reduce the 10,000 annual alcohol-related deaths in California,”* he added.

To read the entire report visit: MarinInstitute.org

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