

**ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO USE IN YOUTH:
EDUCATION, PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**

(Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2002)

- WHEREAS, The California State PTA recognizes the importance of promoting school health and safety policies; and
- WHEREAS, Research shows that substance abuse costs schools at least \$41 billion a year due to class disruption and violence, special education and tutoring, teacher turnover, truancy, children left behind, student assistance programs, property damage, injury and counseling; and
- WHEREAS, Each year, 13.2 million students ages 12 to 17 become new users of tobacco, alcohol and other gateway drugs; and
- WHEREAS, Teen tobacco use and underage drinking are a major public health concern throughout the state of California and additionally are the fuel for perpetual health, social and economic problems that result in harm to youth and society; and
- WHEREAS, Teen tobacco use and underage drinking detract from the ability to provide the best possible education for all children; and
- WHEREAS, Thousands of children are killed annually in alcohol-related crashes, and 400,000 Americans die from tobacco related illnesses each year; and
- WHEREAS, The use of tobacco and alcohol are illegal for persons under the ages of 18 and 21 respectively; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** The California State PTA and its units, councils and districts support the establishment of research-based standards to develop and implement best practices designed to address underage drinking and tobacco use in youth; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts advocate and support student advocacy including meeting with the governor and other state and local public officials for the development and implementation of community-based, youth-oriented alcohol and tobacco programs that address education, prevention and intervention strategies; and be it further

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RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts support legislation that will lead to the establishment of a governor’s task force and/or provide resources for the development of comprehensive programs on underage drinking and smoking, and be it further

RESOLVED, That California State PTA encourage all other state PTAs to adopt a similar resolution.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Parents, health officials and community leaders are rightfully concerned about the consequences of underage drinking and tobacco use by adolescents. Current California Healthy Kids surveys document the staggering extent of youth alcohol and tobacco use problems. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Report on Substance Abuse, February 2001, identifies substance abuse as the number one health problem in America with related costs exceeding \$41 billion yearly. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), as reported by the Associated Press on July 5, 2001, the problem remains widespread.

Although drinking and tobacco use are illegal for adolescents, many view this use as innocent, “every-kid-tries it” behavior. However, because growing bodies are so sensitive to the effects of alcohol and smoking, youth are at a much greater risk than adults for emotional and physical harm.

Aggressive efforts over the past two decades to combat underage drinking have failed nationwide. Tobacco use by youth varies from state to state and community to community. Some communities do a better job with prevention than others, however no community does all that is possible or needed.

Current approaches to address youth alcohol and tobacco use are fragmented. Strategies that do work are not universally used. Programs that are shown to be ineffective when evaluated continue to be used without the needed revisions. Local community leaders are frustrated in their efforts to deal with the problems; the politics involved and industry interference also prevent lifesaving strategies from being formulated or implemented. The results are ineffective. Each community needs a road map of successful strategies, but the necessary resources to develop such programs may not be available. Cities and counties would benefit by the requirement to establish, implement and support research-based standards to address underage drinking and tobacco use in youth.