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**ADMH ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO GET THE FACTS DURING
NATIONAL ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH**

MONTGOMERY – The Alabama Department of Mental Health is encouraging people to get the facts about alcohol abuse during National Alcohol Awareness Month, which is observed annually each April. Dr. Maranda Brown, director of the Office of Prevention Services in ADMH’s Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services says, “Alcohol Awareness Month provides an opportunity to raise awareness of alcohol abuse, while encouraging people to make healthy and safe choices.” Nationally, more than 18 million individuals or 8.5 percent of Americans suffer from alcohol-use disorders. In addition, there are countless millions of individuals, family members and children who experience the devastating effects of the alcohol problem of someone in their life. In fact, 25 percent of U.S. children have been exposed to alcohol-use disorders in their family.

Each April since 1987, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored Alcohol Awareness Month to increase public awareness and understanding, reduce stigma and to encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. This April, NCADD is highlighting the important public health issue of underage drinking, a problem with devastating individual, family and community consequences. National studies show that teens who experiment with alcohol before age 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent when they are older than those that wait until age 20.

Statistics such as this are why education and prevention are critically important to reducing alcohol-related problems and alcoholism. Dr. Brown says, “According to a 2011 Alabama Epidemiological Profile, alcohol continues to remain a problem within our state with 39.5 percent of youth in grades 9-12 consuming alcohol, which is similar to the national average of 41.8 percent. This number is greater than the alcohol consumption among adults in the state, which was 37.5 percent. Of equal concern is the fact that 12.3 percent of Alabama youth in grades 9-12 report driving after consuming an alcoholic beverage; higher than the national average of 9.7 percent.”

Other statistics about alcohol consumption in Alabama:

- In 2007-2008, 223,000 adults were estimated to be alcohol dependent or alcohol abusers, and 208,000 were estimated to have needed treatment for alcohol use but did not receive it.
- Categorically, statistics show that alcohol consumption during the past month, alcohol consumption by friends, and binge drinking increase among youth as grade in school increases.
- Among youth 12-20 years old in Alabama, 24.4 percent reported consuming alcohol during the past month and 15 percent reported binge drinking.

**Sources: Alabama State & Alabama Community Epidemiological Profiles, 2011*

Throughout the month, a host of events will be held statewide by substance abuse treatment providers, including town hall meetings, health fairs and fun nights, to mark this observance. For more information about these events, visit ADMH's website at <http://www.mh.alabama.gov/COPI/EventsCalendarApril2012.aspx>. Nationally, an integral part of Alcohol Awareness Month is Alcohol-Free Weekend (April 6-8, 2012), which is designed to raise public awareness about the use of alcohol and how it may be affecting individuals, families and the community. During this 72-hour period, Americans are invited to participate in three alcohol-free days, and use this time to contact local alcoholism agencies to learn more about alcoholism and its early symptoms.

According to the American Medical Association, alcohol of any type is a very dangerous drug and the health and social consequences of its use can be harmful to adolescents in many ways. The brain goes through dynamic change during adolescence, and alcohol can interfere with its normal development. In school, adolescent drinkers have poor academic performance, score worse on vocabulary and memory retrieval tests, and have trouble recalling verbal information. Young people who drink have increased risk of social problems, suicidal thoughts and strokes.

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RESOURCES

For more information about NCADD, underage drinking, NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and NCADD Alcohol-Free Weekend, visit the NCADD website at www.ncadd.org.

For general information regarding substance abuse services in the state of Alabama, please visit the Alabama Department of Mental Health Web site at www.mh.alabama.gov, or call the Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services at 334-242-3961.

For more information on the American Medical Association visit www.ama-assn.org.