



A Public Health Approach to Drugs



Are we winning the war on drugs?

I doubt anyone will say that we are.

We need to admit that we've been fighting the war on drugs in the wrong way.

The strategies and tactics that we've employed have not only failed, they've actually made the situation worse.

If we truly want to win the war on drugs, then we need to rethink our entire approach towards drugs in the first place.

And that means we need to begin treating drugs as primarily a public health, and not a criminal, issue.

This mini-platform outlines policies which will help us truly start winning the war on drugs.

Drugs

When we think of drugs we tend to think solely in terms of illegal drugs, like heroin, cocaine and marijuana.

However, this focus on illegal drugs has all too often diverted attention away from very real problems related to legal drugs, to the extent that in some cases – such as caffeine and sugar – the public are not even aware that these constitute drugs at all.

If we are to address the topic of drugs properly, then we also need to include the legal drugs of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and sugar.

Drugs also include pharmaceutical drugs.

This mini-platform provides policy positions on all of these drugs.

Alcohol

Alcohol is perhaps our most common and problematic drug.

When used in moderation alcohol can be part of a responsible lifestyle and is common in social settings, such as at meals, parties, pubs and nightclubs.

However, alcohol is addictive and the consequences of its abuse include drunk driving (including damage to property and injury of both self and others, including death), increased risk of assault and injury (alcohol lowers our sense of judgement, reasoning, balance, reflexes and coordination), cirrhosis of the liver and depression.

Far too frequently our society engages in denial about alcohol abuse and in doing so it both enables its abuse and leads to our collective failure to address its consequences.

Far too many of our people have been the victims of alcohol abuse, particularly through road traffic accidents.

It's time for a change.

It's time to stop being in denial.

It's time to take action against alcohol abuse.

Ignition Interlock Devices

- *Make the installation of ignition interlock devices mandatory for anyone convicted of alcohol-related offenses.*
- *Investigate incentives to encourage all drivers to install ignition interlock devices.*

Ignition interlock devices connect to vehicle ignitions and prevent the vehicle being started if they detect a blood alcohol content (BAC) above the legal limit. While usually fitted to cars, they may also be fitted to motor-bikes.

Drivers must provide a breath sample in order to start the car, and at random intervals the device will request additional breath samples during the drive.

If drivers fail to pull over and provide a sample within a set time, the device will set off an alarm (flashing lights and/or horn honking) until the ignition is turned off and a clean breath sample provided.

The device will also log the event.

As it is too dangerous to stop a vehicle being driven, this response by the device alerts other road users to a potential hazard and is designed to encourage the driver to pull over and provide the sample.

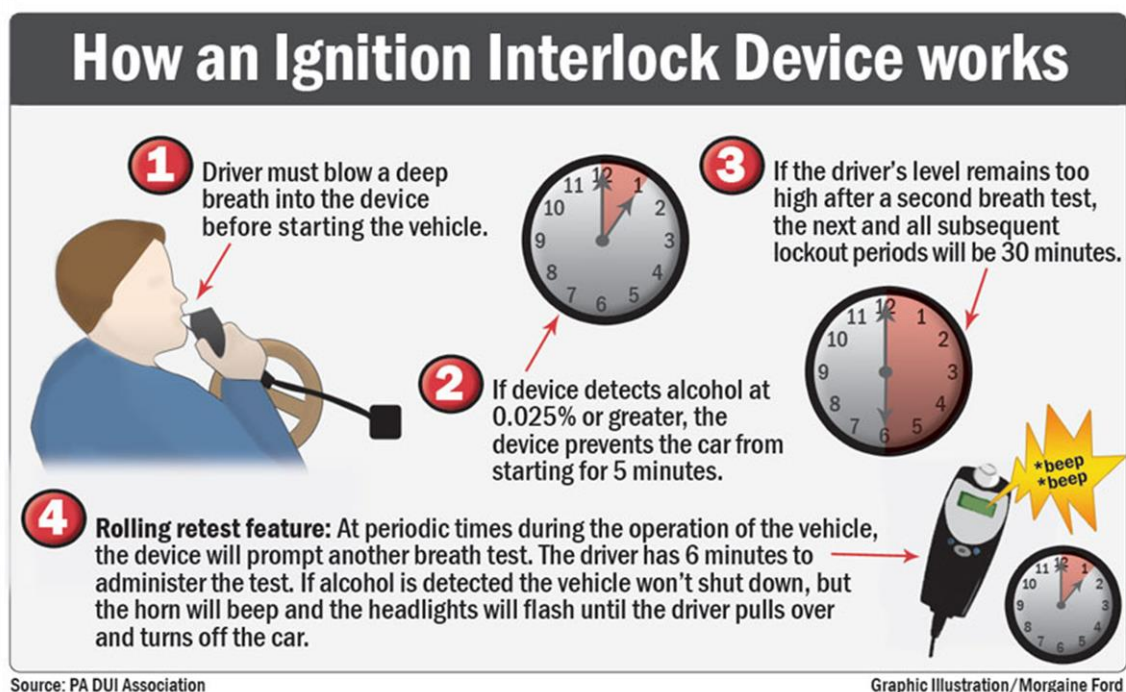


Figure 1 An example of how ignition interlock devices work from Pennsylvania, USA. The actual BAC limit can be calibrated for our legal limit.

Blood Alcohol Content

- *Reduce the blood alcohol limit to 50 mg per 100 litres for drivers over the age of 20.*
- *Reduce the blood alcohol limit to 20 mg per 100 litres for drivers aged 18-20.*
- *Introduce roadside sobriety checks on a regular basis.*

Did you know?

Tests have found that at a BAC of 60mg/100liters the average person experiences:

- Impaired depth perception
- Impaired peripheral vision
- Impaired glare recovery

These may all contribute to road traffic accidents.

Younger drivers, with less road and alcohol experience, are even more prone to road traffic accidents under the influence of alcohol.



Getting from A to B...

It's important to note that we must treat alcohol consumption holistically.

The objective here isn't to deter people from enjoying responsible alcohol consumption, but to ensure that property and people are safe from potential damage and injury.

As such, we also need to address our public transportation options, and ensure that everyone can go and drink without worrying about how to get home without being tempted to drive under the influence of alcohol.

An expanded public transportation system that runs at least a minimum service throughout the night would provide a safe alternative for people to travel home after enjoying responsible alcohol consumption.

Advertising & Sale

- *Ban the sponsoring of sporting or community events by alcohol-companies.*
- *Ban the advertising of alcohol in newspapers, online news media, local television and radio.*
- *Ban window displays of alcohol.*
- *Ban the sale of alcohol at gas-stations.*
- *Alcohol sold in grocery stores to be located in a single defined area physically distant from the store entrance.*
- *Introduce minimum pricing per unit of alcohol, as determined by an annual commission. I recommend a price of \$2 per unit of alcohol.*

Did you know?

On average, a pint of beer, or a glass of wine (175ml) each contains 2.3 units of alcohol.

On average a bottle of wine (750ml) contains 10 units of alcohol.

A single bottle of beer (330ml) generally contains 1.7 units of alcohol.

On average a single shot of spirits (25ml) contains 1 unit of alcohol.

Why these policies?

The sponsorship of sporting or community events helps normalise the consumption of alcohol and can enable the abuse of alcohol. In short, they can contribute to turning a blind-eye to the problems that alcohol causes in our society and encourages people to drink as 'the thing to do'.

Alcohol companies want to make a profit, and it is in their interest to encourage people to drink more or to encourage new drinkers.

While these companies also encourage responsible drinking, it is society and individual families that pay the costs for alcohol abuse.

As such, it is in society's interest to restrict the quality and quantity of alcohol advertising in our society.

Placing alcohol further away from the entrance of stores reduces the temptation to drink but does not restrict someone purchasing it if that was their intention on entering the store. And selling alcohol in gas stations just sends the wrong message regarding drinking and driving...

