

# Unit 11: Drunk and Impaired Driving

## What Is Drunk and Impaired Driving?

Driving while drunk or otherwise impaired (using illegal drugs or taking certain prescription medications) is not an “accident”; it is against the law. It is a crime that too often results in serious injury or death. Drunk or impaired drivers seldom plan to injure or kill people. However, while they may not plan to cause a crash, they are making a choice.

It is painful for victims/survivors when the courts, media, and sometimes friends refer to the crash as an “accident” or a “nonviolent” crime. Victims/survivors have a difficult time understanding how someone would make the choice to drive a vehicle when his or her reaction time and decisionmaking are affected. For survivors, there is no time to prepare, adjust to the idea that the victim is dead, or prepare for the feelings of loss. Many survivors talk about not having had the opportunity to say “good-bye,” or “I love you,” or anything else they may have wanted or needed to say. Survivors also have to face seeing or imagining the damage to their loved one’s body from a violent and fatal crash.

Victims may suffer—

**Property damage:** Drunk drivers may not always kill a person, but they create victims by crashing into vehicles, homes, businesses, or other property. Victims may come close to being injured when the crash occurs. Victims also may have to repair or replace their property.

**Injuries:** Victims of drunk or impaired drivers often require hospitalization, physical rehabilitation, or long periods of recovery.

Some may never recover, requiring home care or assistance for life. In addition, victims may be unable to work and often suffer serious financial challenges.

**Death:** Victims may die instantly, while en route to the hospital, or later as a result of their serious injuries.



## Words To Know

- Accident
- BAC
- Co-victim
- Crash
- Homicide
- Impaired
- Manslaughter
- Negligent homicide
- Secondary victim





## In the News: Drunk and Impaired Driving Trends

People who drive in a drunk or impaired condition create a major problem in our country today. Take a look at the facts about drunk and impaired driving below. Which statements might affect your family?

- According to the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2016, 20.7 million people aged 16 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year and 11.8 million drove under the influence of illicit drugs.<sup>81</sup>
- NSDUH findings also show that men are more likely than women are to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and a higher percentage of young adults aged 18 to 25 drive after taking drugs or drinking than do adults 26 or older.<sup>82</sup>
- In 2016, 10,497 people were killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes, an average of 1 alcohol-impaired driving fatality every 50 minutes.<sup>83</sup>
- Of motor vehicle driver deaths, 16 percent were the result of drivers being under the influence of drugs other than alcohol.<sup>84</sup>
- After alcohol, marijuana is the drug most often linked to impaired driving.<sup>85</sup>
- Drivers with a prior DUI offense have a much higher likelihood of being in a fatal crash.
- More than 17,000 Americans die each year in alcohol-related crashes, and 600,000 Americans are injured.
- Three out of every 10 Americans face the possibility of being directly involved in an alcohol-related traffic crash during their lifetime.
- Of children age 14 and younger who die in traffic fatalities, 17 percent are killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. In more than half of these cases, the child was a passenger in the vehicle driven by the alcohol-impaired driver.<sup>86</sup>
- In more than half of all fatal crashes caused by alcohol-impaired drivers, the impaired driver was a male between the ages of 21 and 34.<sup>87</sup>
- Ignition interlocks are believed to decrease arrests for impaired driving by 70 percent. Ignition interlocks are devices installed in the vehicle of individuals who have already been convicted of impaired driving. In order for the car's ignition to start, the driver must blow into the device and register a BAC of less than the standard set by the jurisdiction that is considered intoxicated.<sup>88</sup>
- Because impaired driving puts people at an increased risk for accidents, public health experts urge drug and alcohol users to develop social strategies to prevent them from getting behind the wheel of a car while impaired. Steps people can take include—
  - Offering to be a designated driver.
  - Appointing a designated driver to take all car keys.
  - Avoiding driving to parties where drugs and alcohol are present.
  - Discussing the risks of impaired driving with friends in advance.

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/drugged-driving>; <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/drugged-driving>

<sup>83</sup> <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812450>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/drugged-driving>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812450>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> [http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired\\_driving/impaired-driv\\_factsheet.html](http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/impaired_driving/impaired-driv_factsheet.html)

# Examples of Drunk and Impaired Driving

As you read each scenario, consider the impact of the crime on the victims and their families.

## Drunk Driving

Eight-year-old Jose had just finished his Christmas shopping. Jose and his family were walking back to their car when a drunk driver drove onto the sidewalk and killed him.

How are Jose’s family members affected by his death?

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*When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure.*  
—Father of son killed by a drunk driver

## Alcohol and Drugs

Mark and Carol spent the evening at a party with friends. They drank alcohol and smoked marijuana. While driving home, Mark lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a tree. Mark was not injured. Carol suffered a spinal injury that paralyzed her for life.

How do you think Mark feels? How might Carol’s life change?

*The price we pay for education and prevention is far less than the price we pay for tragedy.*  
—Victim of a drunk driver

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# What Is the Impact of Drunk and Impaired Driving?

Criminal behavior such as drunk and impaired driving creates a ripple effect that has a negative impact on a number of life areas: financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual. The following lists outline some examples of how drunk and impaired driving affects these areas of victims' lives. Add your own examples below.

<p><b>Financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of income</li> <li>• Inability to work</li> <li>• Loss of job</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain damage</li> <li>• Loss of limbs</li> <li>• Scars</li> <li>• Surgeries</li> <li>• Skin grafts</li> <li>• Paralysis</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage to self-image</li> <li>• Embarrassment</li> <li>• Shame and guilt</li> <li>• Suicide/attempted suicide</li> <li>• Violent dreams</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Frustration</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Religious/Spiritual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling abandoned by a "higher power"</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>



## OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD

After viewing the OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD clip about drunk and impaired driving, answer the following questions:

*You don't have the right to take a life or change a life.*  
—Sister of a victim of drunk driving

**What was the physical impact on Cindi's daughter Laura?**

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**How did this crash and crime affect Cindi?**

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# Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Victims of drunk or impaired driving crashes suffer physically, emotionally, financially, and religiously/spiritually. Their lives are often changed in such a way that many never fully recover. For those who are killed, their families will always mourn the loss. All drunk and impaired driving crashes are preventable. **No one has the right to drive drunk or impaired and risk injuring or killing others.**

## How Can I Be Accountable for My Crimes?

*The judge is ordering substance abuse classes while I'm locked up, and I need the help. I'm going to attend the classes and change my ways.*  
—Kenny

*I was wrong and selfish to think, "I only have three blocks to go." I finally realize that I did make a choice and I hurt at least three people.*  
—Hannah

*This isn't the first time ... but this time I killed my own friend who was riding with me. I commit not to drink and drive. I want to make amends to my friend's family and to my family.*  
—Bruce

*When I am released on parole and I'm allowed to drink again, even if I have one beer, I'll call someone for a ride. That's a good decision.*  
—Susan

**In addition to these statements, what else could offenders do to demonstrate accountability?**

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## Additional Activities

### Activity B – Gregory

Read the following scenario and fill in the impact charts below for each person.

Gregory is a well-known lawyer and is interested in becoming a judge. He has been drinking heavily at a bar for a few hours with friends. His friends laugh when he slurs his words, stumbles around, and says, "Sure hope I don't mess up my car on the way home."

While driving home, Gregory crashes into three cars, injuring the following people: Karen, a single mom, has wrist injuries; her young child is uninjured. Marcus is married, has a family, and just got a new job with a good salary. He is in a coma and medical personnel are unsure of the extent of his injuries. Tamara has a broken leg. She is a defense attorney scheduled for a final day in court for a death penalty case.

**Karen**, a single mom, has wrist injuries; her young child is uninjured.

<p><b>Financial</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<p><b>Religious/Spiritual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>

**Marcus** is married, has a family, and just got a new job with a good salary. He is in a coma and medical personnel are unsure of the extent of his injuries.

<b>Financial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>	<b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>
<b>Emotional</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>	<b>Religious/Spiritual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>

**Tamara** has a broken leg. She is a defense attorney scheduled for a final day in court for a death penalty case.

<b>Financial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>	<b>Physical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>
<b>Emotional</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>	<b>Religious/Spiritual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul>



## Activity C — “Bud” Role Play

### **Bud (drunk driver)**

You pick up your son Buddy at your mom’s house. You have just come from a party where you have been drinking for about 2 hours. You are in a hurry to pick up Buddy and drive home, a few miles away. Your mom tells you not to drive home, but you don’t listen. You put Buddy in the car seat and drive off. You then call your mom on your cell phone to prove everything is okay. You talk to her for a second before saying, “Oh, no!” and crashing the car. You end up semiconscious in the emergency room, asking for Buddy.

### **Mike (Bud’s friend)**

You are at the same party as Bud. You see him leave the party and you know he’s drunk but you don’t say anything. You argue with yourself about whether to try to stop him, “Man, he’s my friend, I should stop him. He may think I’m nagging him. He doesn’t have far to drive.”

### **Buddy (Bud’s 6-year-old)**

You ask “grandma” to drive you home because daddy is acting funny. Neither one of them pays much attention to you. After the crash, you are left sitting outside the emergency room by yourself.

### **Mom**

Bud shows up to pick up his son. You notice that he looks and smells like he has been drinking. You try just a few times to get him not to drive, but he doesn’t listen. You have seen him in the same condition before, and he always gets home safely. He calls you later from his cell phone telling you that everything is fine. Suddenly, he says “Oh, no!” You hear a crash, and then the line goes dead.

### **Doc (emergency room doctor)**

Bud is brought into the emergency room with injuries. A blood alcohol test shows he is over the legal limit. You see injuries and deaths from drunk driving crashes all the time. You are upset that Bud put his son at risk and you tell him that.

### **Optional Roles**

#### **Dr. Bill (talk show host)**

You are conducting a phone interview with Mr. Bucks, CEO of Sudsweiser. You ask him whether his company feels any responsibility for Bud’s crash.

#### **Mr. Bucks (CEO of Sudsweiser)**

While being interviewed, you deny any responsibility for the crash, saying that you heard the man was talking on the cell phone—which caused the crash. “Was he drinking MY product?” you demand. “I’m not responsible for people’s drinking habits!”