

Opinion from Community Advocates: Reflect on Alcohol's Profound Effects This April

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, providing us an opportunity to reflect on the profound role that alcohol plays in our lives. Even if you don't drink, alcohol use and abuse in Wisconsin is a large part of our day-to-day reality: drunken drivers put us in peril on the roads, costs related to chronic alcoholism sap taxpayer funds and drive up our insurance premiums, and our jails are overflowing with inmates sentenced to alcohol-related crimes.

When compulsive drinking crosses the line to become a public health issue or a social problem, it

is clear that something more is going on. Trying to incarcerate our way out of this problem isn't working, and permissiveness and binge drinking is costing us money and lives. Alcoholism is classified as a disease by the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association – about one in 10 drinkers suffer from this chronic, relapse-prone disease. For the past 30 years, federally sponsored research has repeatedly confirmed treatment's cost effectiveness and positive outcomes, yet insufficient public funding and an insurance system that routinely

denies payment for addiction treatment make it virtually impossible for the vast majority of addicted persons to access sufficient treatment.

It's time to make full addiction treatment on demand a reality. We need more public funds to pay for treatment and comprehensive health insurance for all with full addiction treatment benefits that guarantees everyone can get the help they need. Do you think you're drinking too much? Call Alcoholics Anonymous at 414.771.9119 or visit impactinc.org to take an alcoholism screen.