



The National Center on  
Addiction and Substance Abuse  
at Columbia University

**STATEMENT BY JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR. CHAIRMAN  
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ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE (CASA\*) AT  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY AND FORMER U.S.  
SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE  
ON THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE'S REPORT ON  
UNDERAGE DRINKING**

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NEW YORK CITY, September 10, 2003 – We congratulate the Institute of Medicine on its exhaustive analysis of underage drinking, which confirms CASA’s own findings. Beer and other alcohol is the number one drug of abuse for American children and teens. Rates of teen drinking remain at epidemic proportions with underage drinkers annually downing 19.7 percent of all the alcohol consumed in the U.S.

The IOM report calls for a comprehensive strategy to change the way America thinks about and responds to this problem. Parents, teens, schools, health professionals, advertisers, retailers, communities, government and the alcohol industry must all play a role if we are to stem the heartache and destruction caused by the mix of alcohol and kids.

Like CASA, three former Surgeons General and Former First Lady Betty Ford, the IOM report challenges the alcohol industry’s stated concern about underage drinking by calling for the industry to fund a completely independent non-profit foundation with the sole aim of preventing and reducing underage drinking. If the industry is truly concerned about underage drinking it should put up \$1 billion to solve the problem rather than simply pocketing its share of the \$22.5 billion in alcohol consumed by kids each year.

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\*The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is neither affiliated with, nor sponsored by, the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (also known as "CASA" ) or any of its member organizations, or any other organizations with the name of "CASA".