

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) funding to support Connecticut college campuses establish and expand evidence-based strategies to reduce alcohol and other drug usage. With this funding, DMHAS established the Connecticut Healthy Campus Initiative (CHCI).

The Center for Public Health and Health Policy at UConn Health conducted a [program evaluation](#) to assess whether the CHCI sub-grantee campuses reduced alcohol and other drug use and related problems between 2011 and 2014. As part of the evaluation, ten CHCI sub-grantee campuses administered the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey to students aged 18 to 24 in the spring of 2011 (n=6,073), and eight did so in 2014 (n=3,968). The response rate was 21.0 percent in 2011. The response rate for 2014 is unavailable.

This fact sheet focuses on suicidal thoughts and alcohol consumption. Specifically, the Core Survey asked students to indicate how often they had “seriously thought about suicide” or “seriously tried to commit suicide” due to their drinking or drug use during the last year. While causality cannot be determined from these data, there is an association with the amount of alcohol consumed and the level of suicidality reported by college students that they attributed to their alcohol or drug use.

### Overall Alcohol Consumption and Suicidality: 2011-2014

The responses to the Core Survey suggest that there was a reduction in both the amount of alcohol students consumed per week and the number of occasions in which they engaged in binge drinking between the 2011 and 2014. During the same period, the number of students reporting that they seriously thought about suicide or seriously tried to commit suicide increased slightly.

Table 1. Alcohol consumption, suicide contemplation, suicide attempts 2011 – 2014

	CHCI 2011 Mean (C.I. <sup>b</sup> )	CHCI 2014 Mean (C.I. <sup>b</sup> )
<i>Alcohol consumption</i>		
Number of drinks in past week (all respondents)	6.0 (5.8, 6.3)	5.1 (4.8, 5.3)
Number of binge drinking episodes in past two weeks (all respondents)	1.7 (1.6, 1.7)	1.4 (1.4, 1.5)
<i>Suicide contemplation and attempt in past 12 months</i>		
Seriously thought about suicide*	4.5%	5.8%
Seriously tried to commit suicide*	1.5%	2.3%
<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval for mean		
*percent of respondents answering once or more		

### Drinks per Week

#### *Seriously thought about suicide:*

Students who reported that they had seriously thought about suicide also reported drinking nearly twice as many alcoholic beverages per week as students who did not. Students who had not seriously thought about suicide reported consuming fewer drinks per week on average in 2014 than 2011.

Table 2. Seriously thought about suicide and number of drinks per week

	CHCI 2011* Mean (C.I. <sup>a</sup> )	CHCI 2014* Mean (C.I. <sup>a</sup> )
Seriously thought about suicide		
Yes	9.1 (7.4, 10.9)	9.1 (7.2, 11.0)
No	5.8 (5.6, 6.0)	4.6 (4.4, 4.9)
*p < .05 for difference between those responding yes or no.		
<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval for mean		

#### *Seriously tried to commit suicide:*

Students who reported having seriously tried to commit suicide also reported drinking more than twice as many alcoholic beverages per week as students who did not attempt suicide. Taken together, Tables 2 and 3 suggest that higher weekly alcohol consumption is associated with higher levels of suicidality. Students who considered suicide drank more than students who did not and students who attempted suicide drank even more than students who only considered it.

Table 3. Seriously tried to commit suicide and number of drinks per week

	CHCI 2011* Mean (C.I. <sup>a</sup> )	CHCI 2014* Mean (C.I. <sup>a</sup> )
Seriously tried to commit suicide		
Yes	15.0 (10.2, 19.7)	12.4 (8.2, 16.6)
No	5.8 (5.6, 6.0)	4.7 (4.5, 4.9)
*p < .05 for difference between those responding yes or no.		
<sup>a</sup> 95% confidence interval for mean		

## Binge Drinking

### *Seriously thought about suicide:*

Students who reported that they seriously thought about suicide also engaged in binge drinking more often than students who did not. The Core Survey defines “binge” drinking as five or more drinks at a sitting.

Table 4. Seriously thought about suicide and number of binge drinking episodes in past two weeks

Seriously thought about suicide	CHCI 2011* Mean (95% C.I.)	CHCI 2014* Mean (95% C.I.)
Yes	2.5 (2.2, 2.8)	2.3 (2.0, 2.7)
No	1.6 (1.6, 1.7)	1.3 (1.3, 1.4)

\*p < .05 for difference between those responding yes or no.

### *Seriously tried to commit suicide:*

Students who reported that they had seriously tried to commit suicide reported more episodes of binge drinking than students who did not.

Table 5. Seriously tried to commit suicide and average number of binge drinking occurrences in past two weeks

Seriously tried to commit suicide	CHCI 2011* Mean (95% C.I.)	CHCI 2014* Mean (95% C.I.)
Yes	3.3 (2.6, 4.0)	2.5 (1.9, 3.2)
No	1.7 (1.6, 1.7)	1.4 (1.3, 1.4)

\*p < .05 for difference between those responding yes or no.

## Alcohol Consumption and Suicidality

Logistic regression analyses were conducted to measure the extent to which binge drinking and amount of alcohol consumption are associated with the likelihood of a college student reporting serious thoughts about suicide and seriously trying to commit suicide. Both types of alcohol consumption were associated with a greater likelihood of both types of suicidality. These associations did not differ significantly by year.

### **Binge Drinking**

#### *Seriously thought about suicide:*

The results showed that a student was approximately 1.17 times as likely to have seriously thought about committing suicide for each additional binge drinking episode in a two week period (95% C.I. = 1.13-1.21, *p* value < 0.001).

#### *Seriously tried to commit suicide:*

A student was approximately 1.25 times as likely to have attempted suicide at least once for each additional binge drinking episode in a two week period. (95% C.I. = 1.19-1.32, *p* value < 0.001).

### **Drinks per week**

#### *Seriously thought about suicide:*

A student was approximately 1.04 times as likely to have seriously thought about suicide for each additional alcoholic beverage the student consumed during a typical week (95% C.I. = 1.03-1.04, *p* value < 0.001).

#### *Seriously tried to commit suicide:*

A student was approximately 1.05 times as likely to have attempted suicide at least once for each additional alcoholic beverage consumed in a typical week (95% C.I. = 1.04-1.06, *p* value < 0.001).

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