

# Excessive Drinking and Related Problems among College Students: A Developmental Perspective

SAMHSA's  
11th Annual  
Prevention Day  
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Amelia M. Arria, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor  
Director, Center on Young Adult Health and Development  
Department of Behavioral and Community Health  
University of Maryland School of Public Health  
aarria@umd.edu

## **OVERVIEW**

- Young Adult Development
- Underage and Excessive Drinking Among College Students
- Spotlight on Parental Influences
- Implications for Prevention Professionals



## **EMERGING ADULTHOOD**

is defined loosely by age  
and more so by  
*instability.*

Steps are being taken toward **independence.**

There is a high degree of **exploration** of one's identity  
and role in relationships and larger society.

It is **highly variable** depending on individual characteristics,  
circumstances, culture, and historical period.

# Major Milestones



- Living independently
- Finishing school
- Getting a job
- Forming significant relationships
- Having children

# Unique Features of the Transition from Adolescence to Young Adulthood



- Decrease in community-level supports
- Increase in social expectations... perceptions of independence
- More responsibilities
- Greater exposure to “threats”
- Ongoing neurodevelopment

Why do most 16-year-olds  
drive like they're  
*missing a part of their brain?*



BECAUSE THEY ARE.



# A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE **TEEN BRAIN**

Parenting tips and advice  
Sign up today

Help us get the word out  
Tell another mom or dad

**The Partnership**  
for a Drug-Free  
America®

2-home-WHY



## **WHO** IS THIS KID?

Typical teen behaviors

## **WHY** DO TEENS ACT THIS WAY?

The science in a nutshell

## **WHAT** CAN YOU DO?

Skills, tools & tips

Scientists now know that it takes a brain 25 years to fully develop, and that a huge burst of development happens during adolescence. That burst can explain a lot of crazy — and sometimes risky — teen behavior.

### More on brain science

Brain development  
Behavior and the teen brain  
Drugs & teen moods

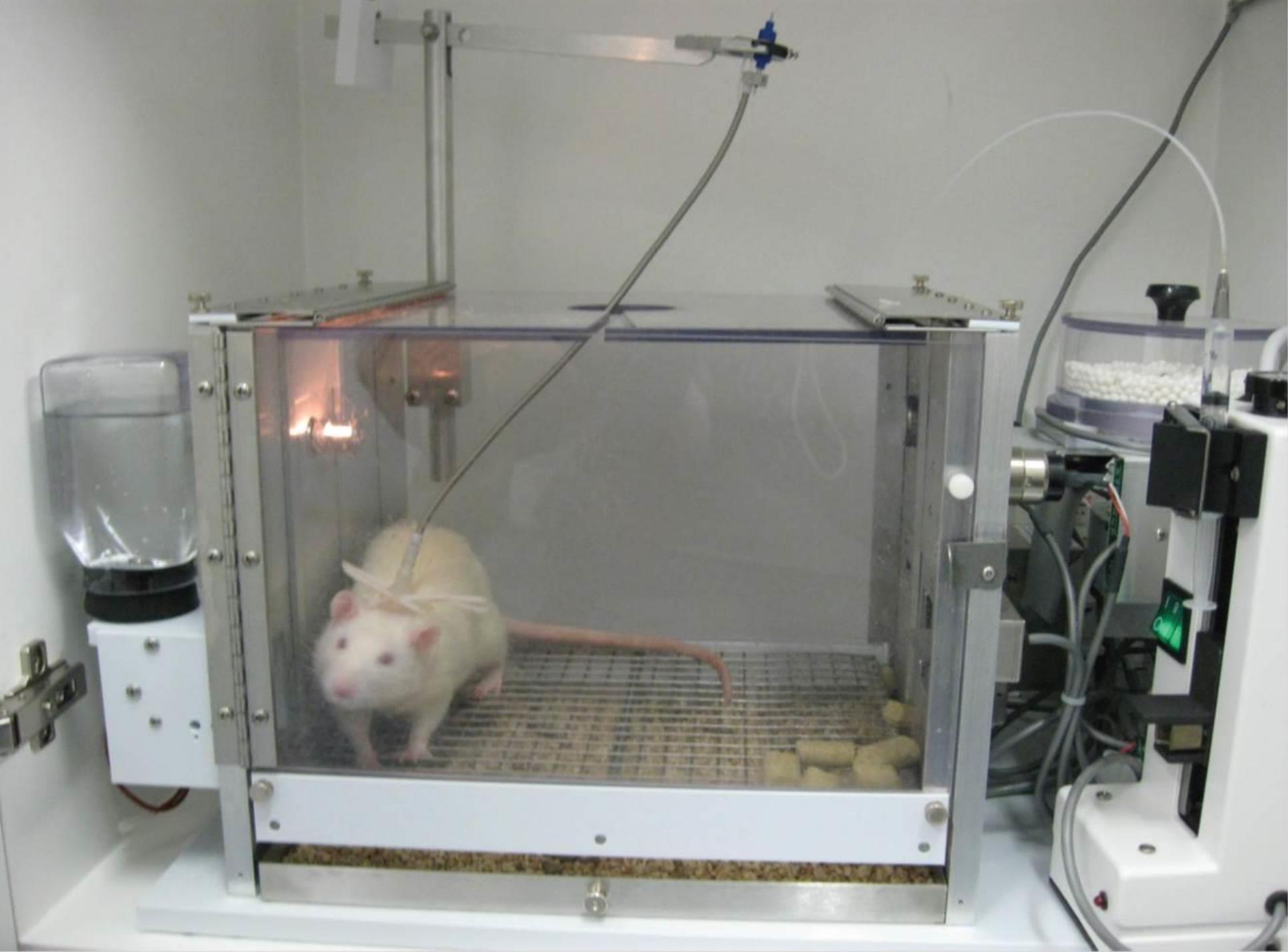


**Earlier development of the back of the brain  
and later development of the front of the brain ...**

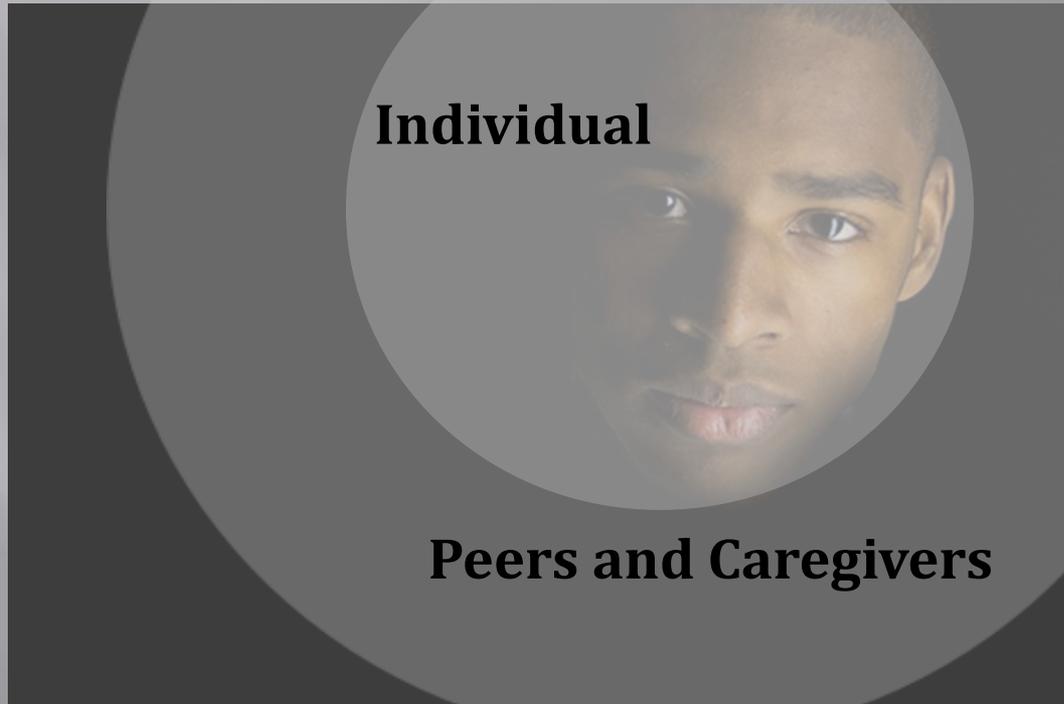
- Preference for physical activity
- Less than optimal planning and judgment
- More risky, impulsive behaviors
- Minimal consideration of negative consequences







# **What influences the balance of perceptions between risk and reward?**

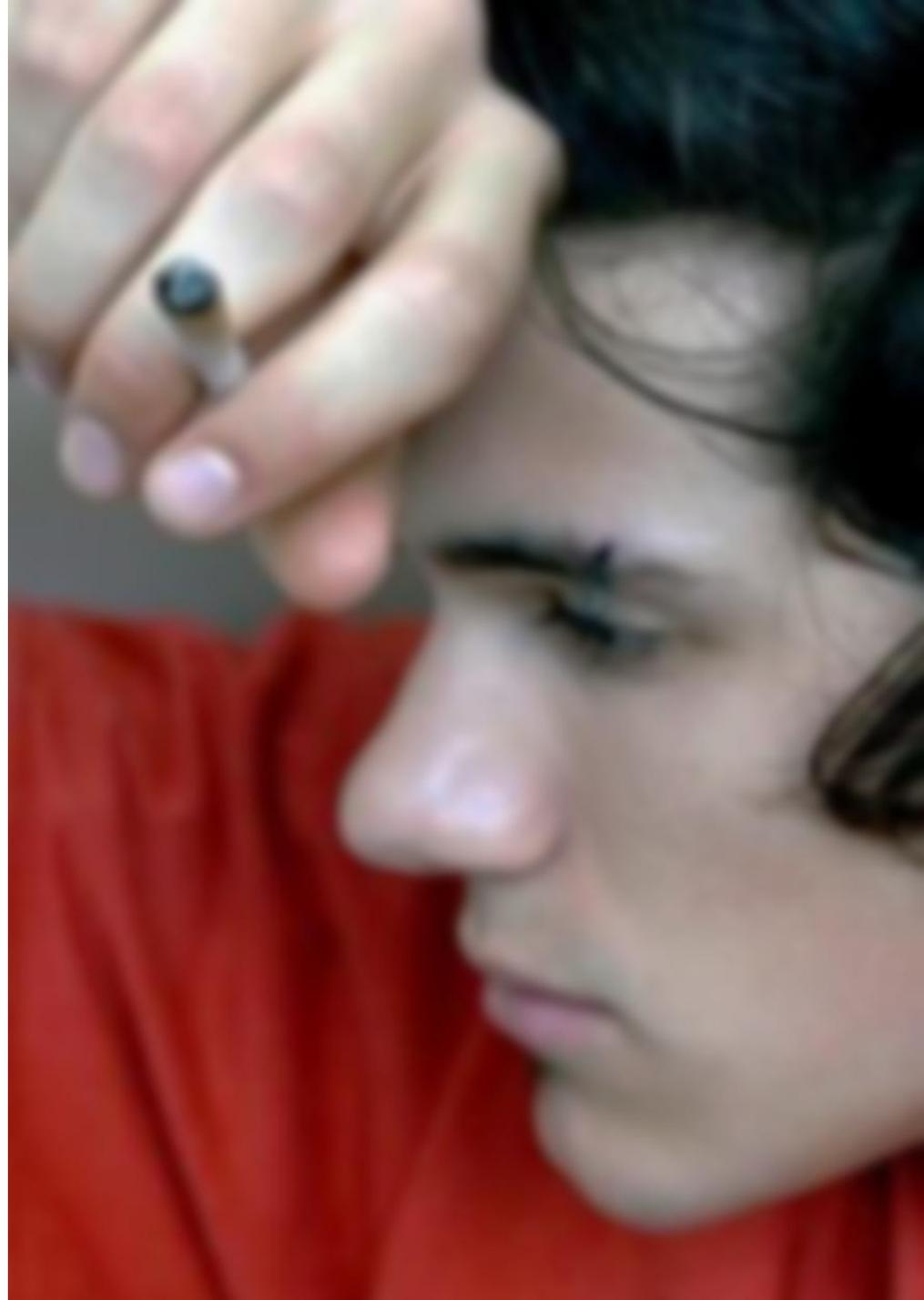


**Individual**

**Peers and Caregivers**

**Community**

**Underage and  
Excessive  
Drinking Among  
College Students**



# Estimated probabilities of developing alcohol dependence based on drinking level at college entry (College Life Study)

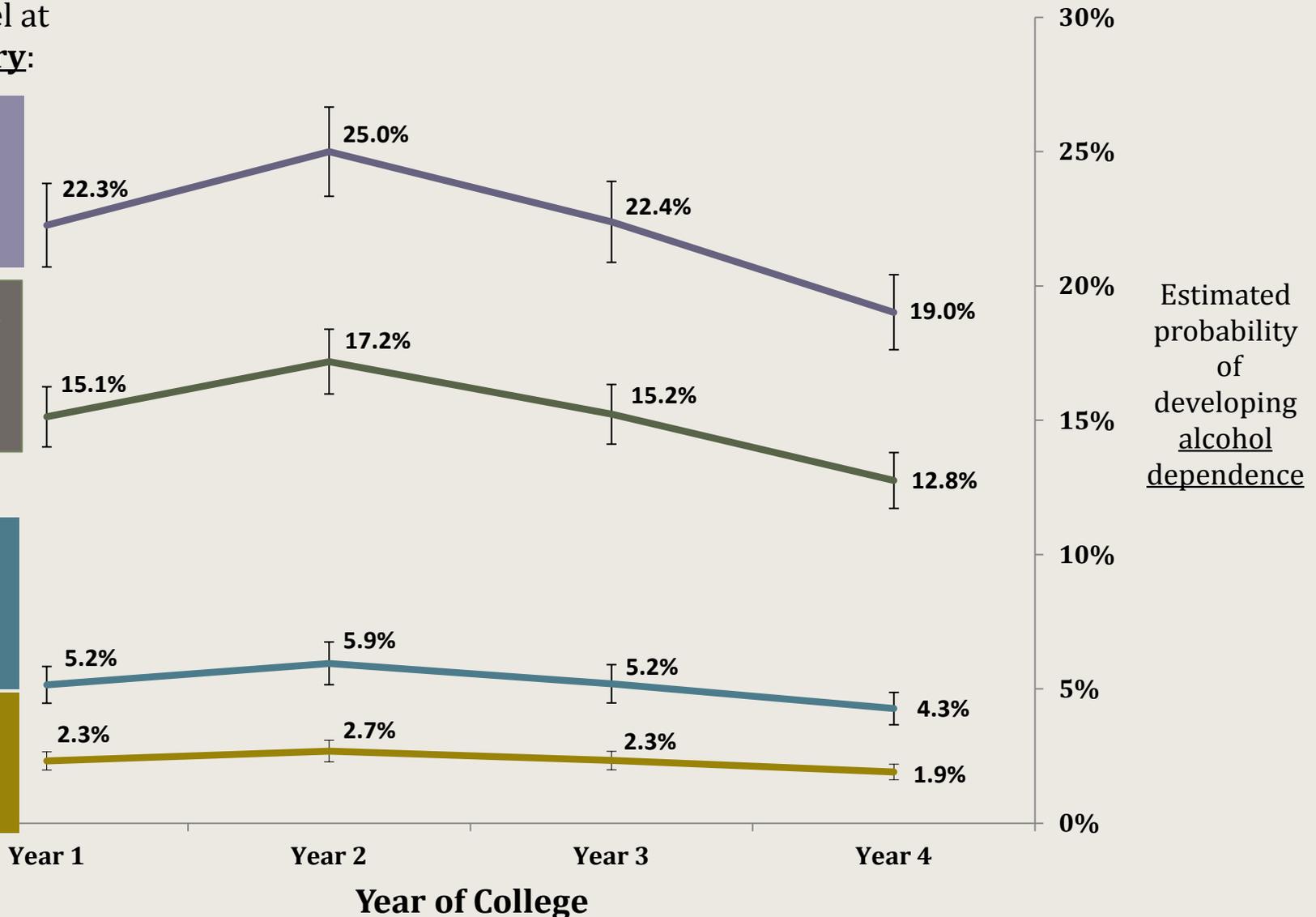
Drinking level at **college entry:**

High-risk  
Drinkers:  
26%  
(6+ drinks/day)

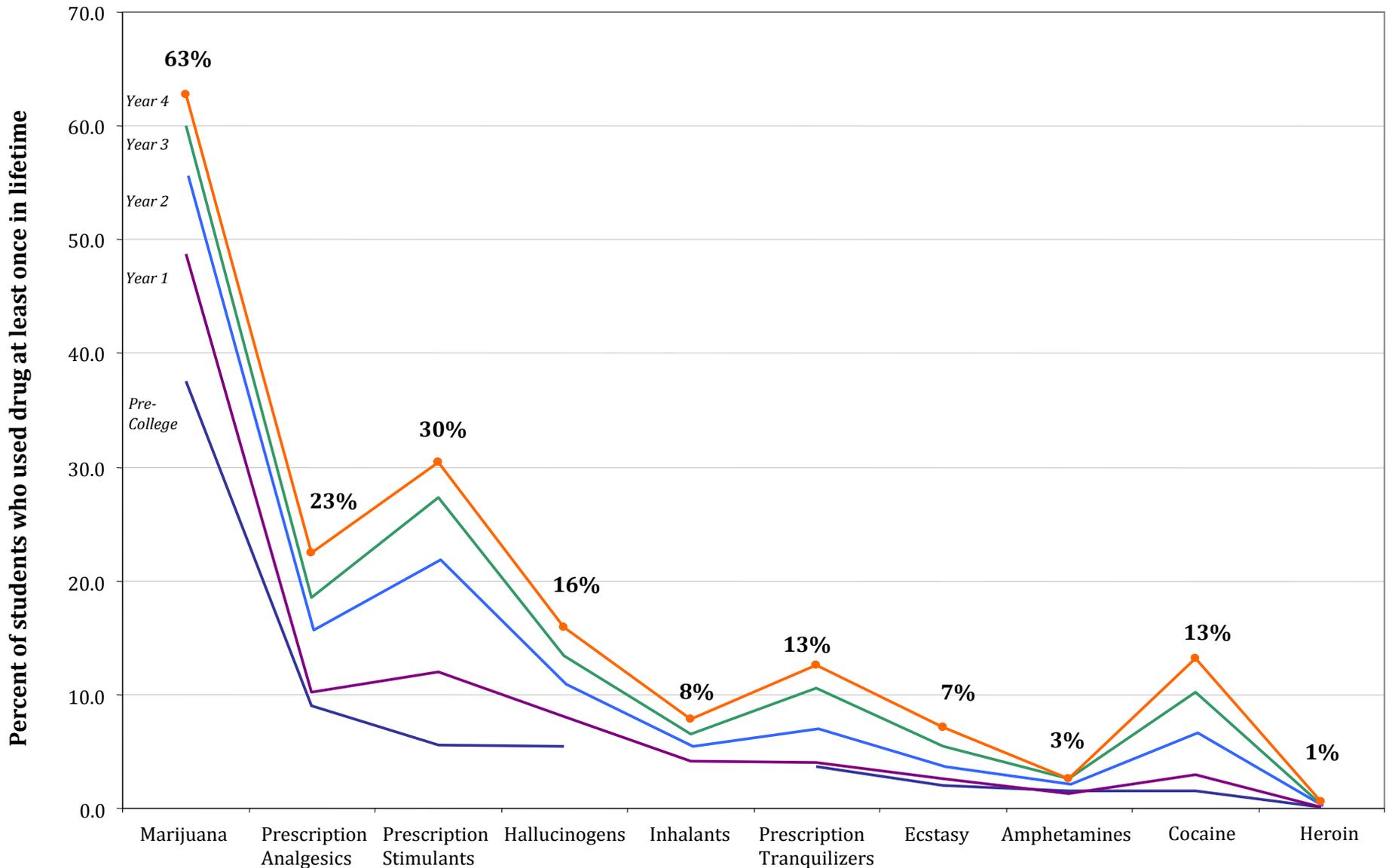
Medium-risk  
Drinkers:  
40%  
(3-5 drinks/day)

Low-risk  
Drinkers:  
22%  
(1-2 drinks/day)

Non-  
drinkers:  
12%

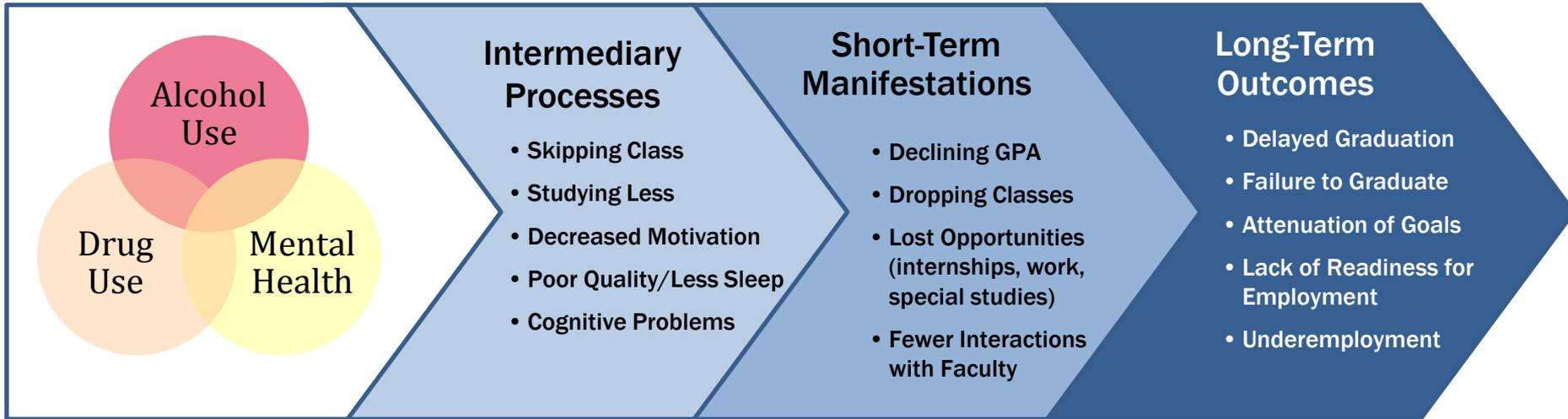


# Drug Use in the First Four Years of College, by Year, CLS



Data weighted to adjust for both sampling bias and attrition.

# Conceptual Model



# Why Does Substance Use Have a Negative Impact on Academic Performance?



## 1. “Toxic” Effect on Cognition:

*Substance use is associated with attention problems, sleep disturbances, and other cognitive deficits, making classroom learning, studying, and homework more difficult.*

# Why Does Substance Use Have a Negative Impact on Academic Performance?



## 2. “Hijacking” of Brain Reward Pathways

*Substance use “hijacks” reward pathways in the brain.*

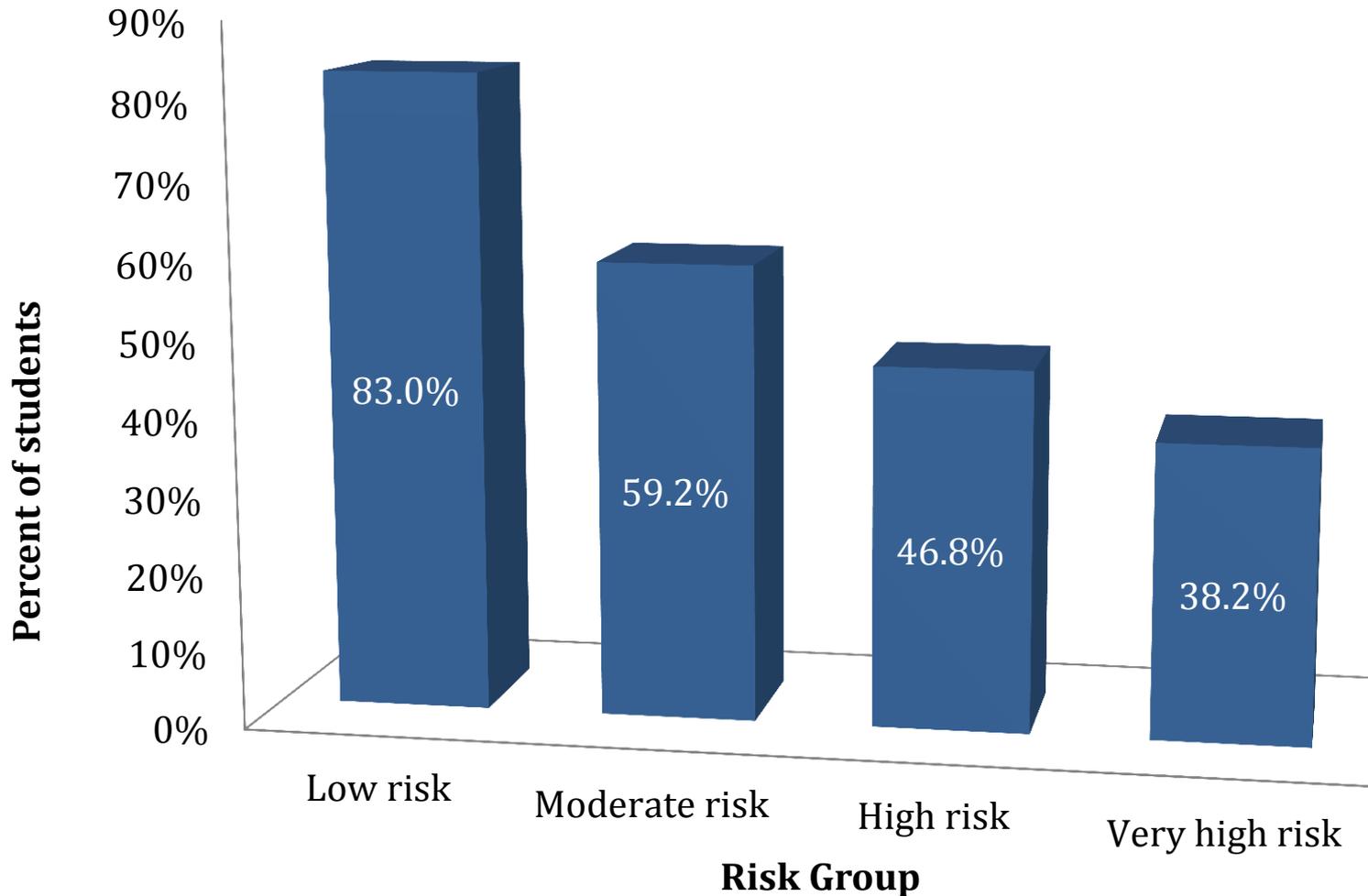
*Academic pursuits become less meaningful as drugs become more valued.*

# Spotlight on Parental Influences

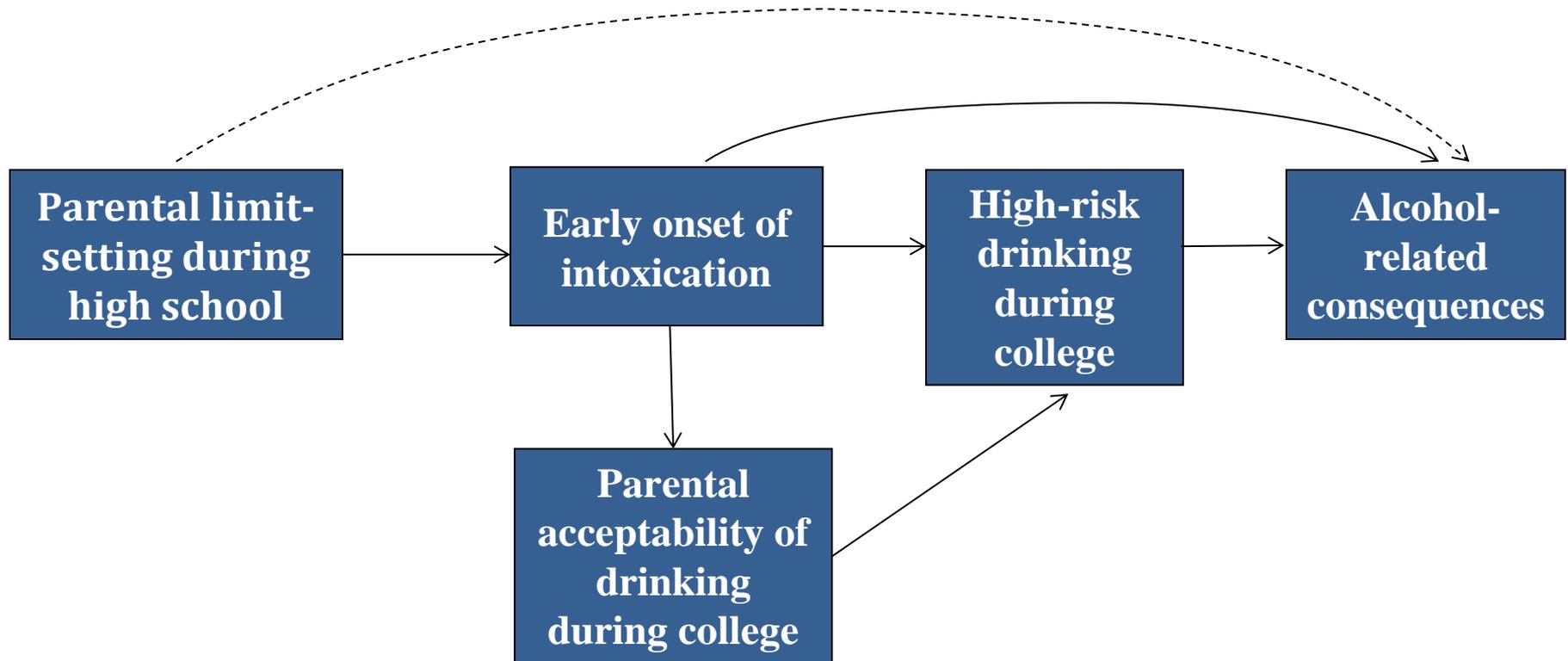


# Protective Factor: Parental Limit-Setting

Percent of students with parents who did not permit any alcohol consumption during high school



# Parental Limit Setting



# Parental Limit Setting

- ❑ Parents who disapprove of early drinking and set zero-tolerance limits on alcohol use during adolescence reduce their child's chances of alcohol problems later in life.
- ❑ Parents set expectations, monitor whereabouts/activities, and academic performance.



# Implications for Prevention Professionals

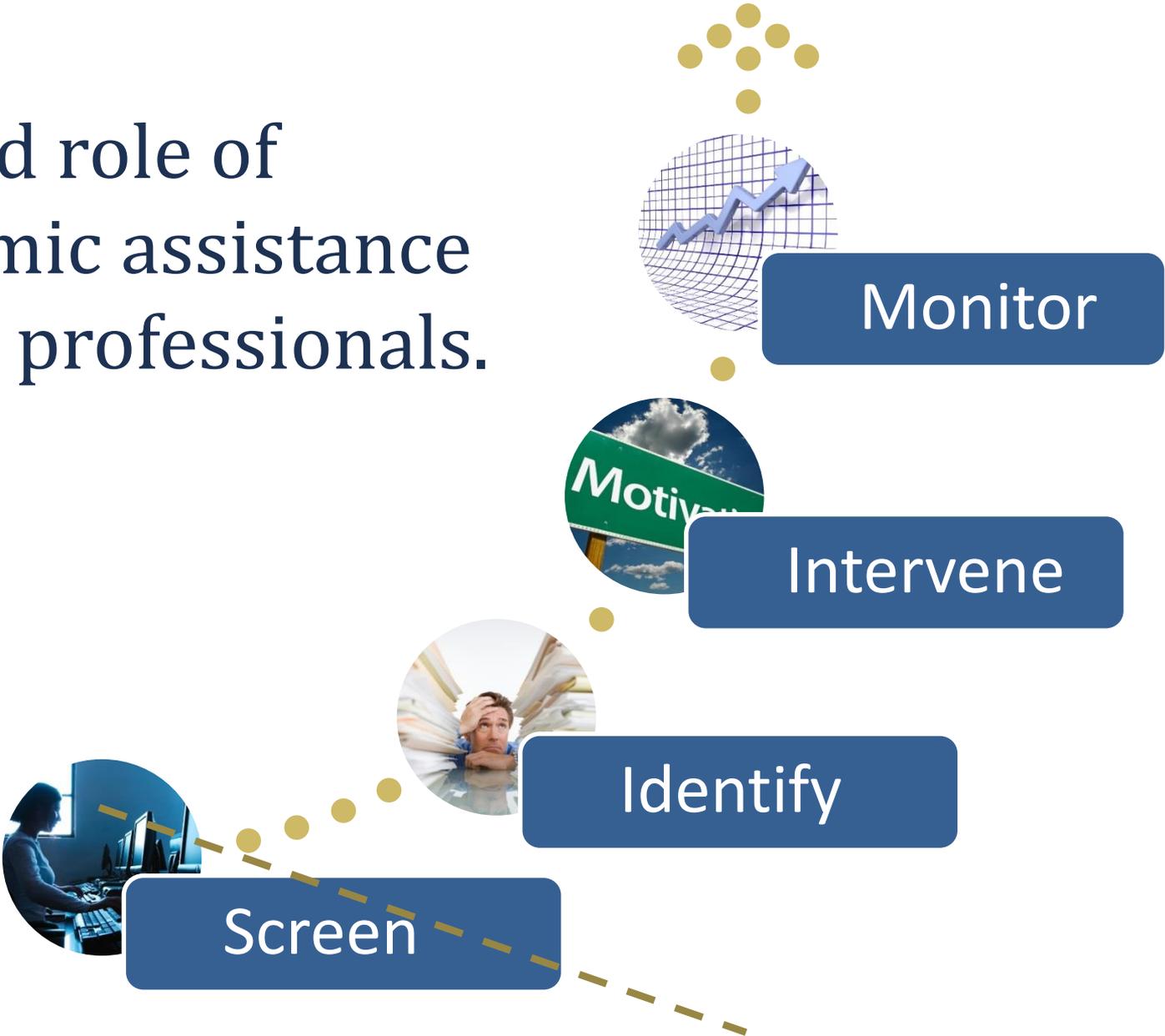


# High-Risk Students

**Design new individualized approaches to intervening with high-risk students**



# Expand role of academic assistance center professionals.

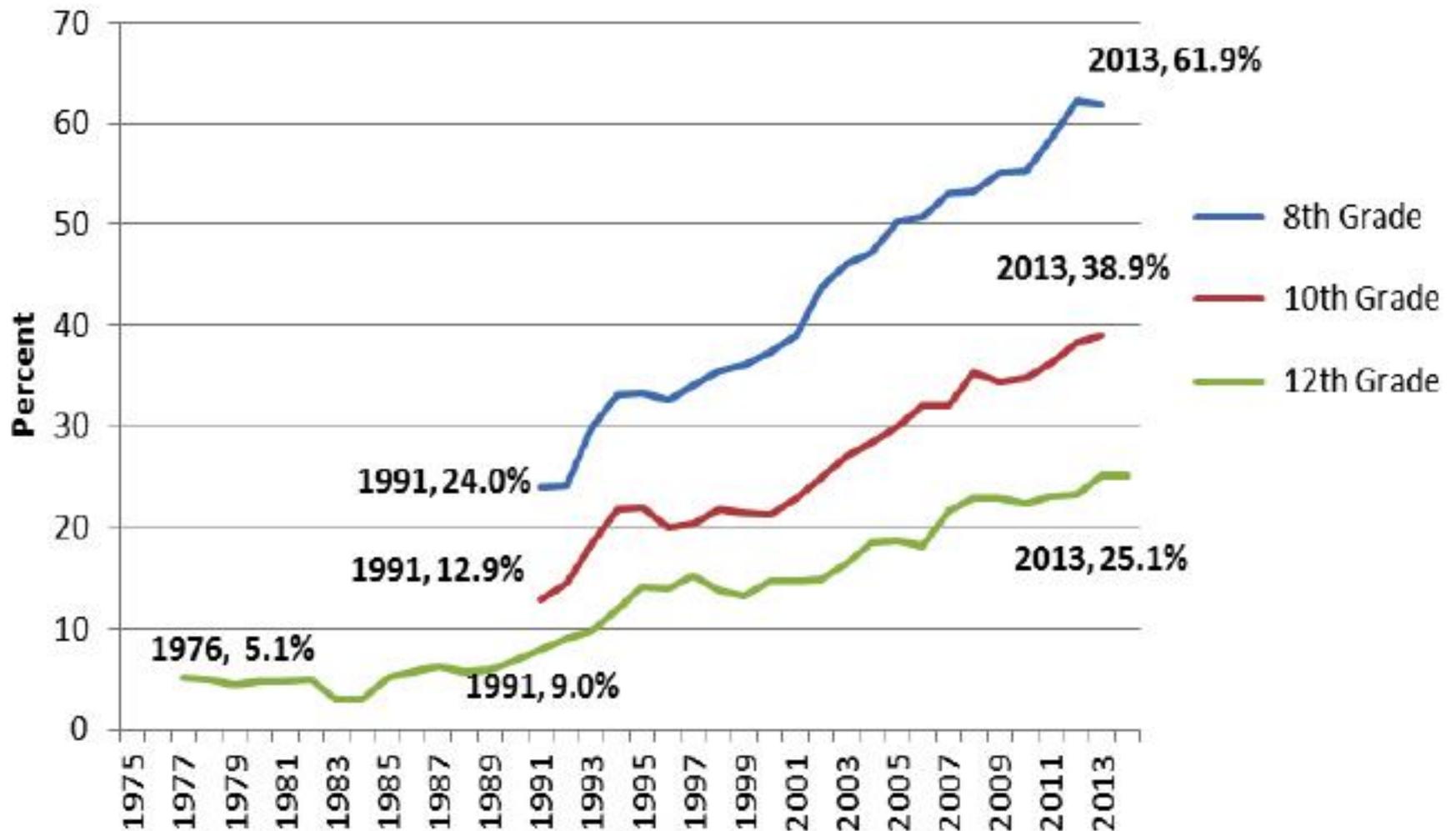




Prevention efforts should incorporate messages that avoiding substance use **promotes** student achievement and making progress toward goals.



# Trends in Abstaining from Illicit Drugs, Alcohol and Cigarettes - Lifetime



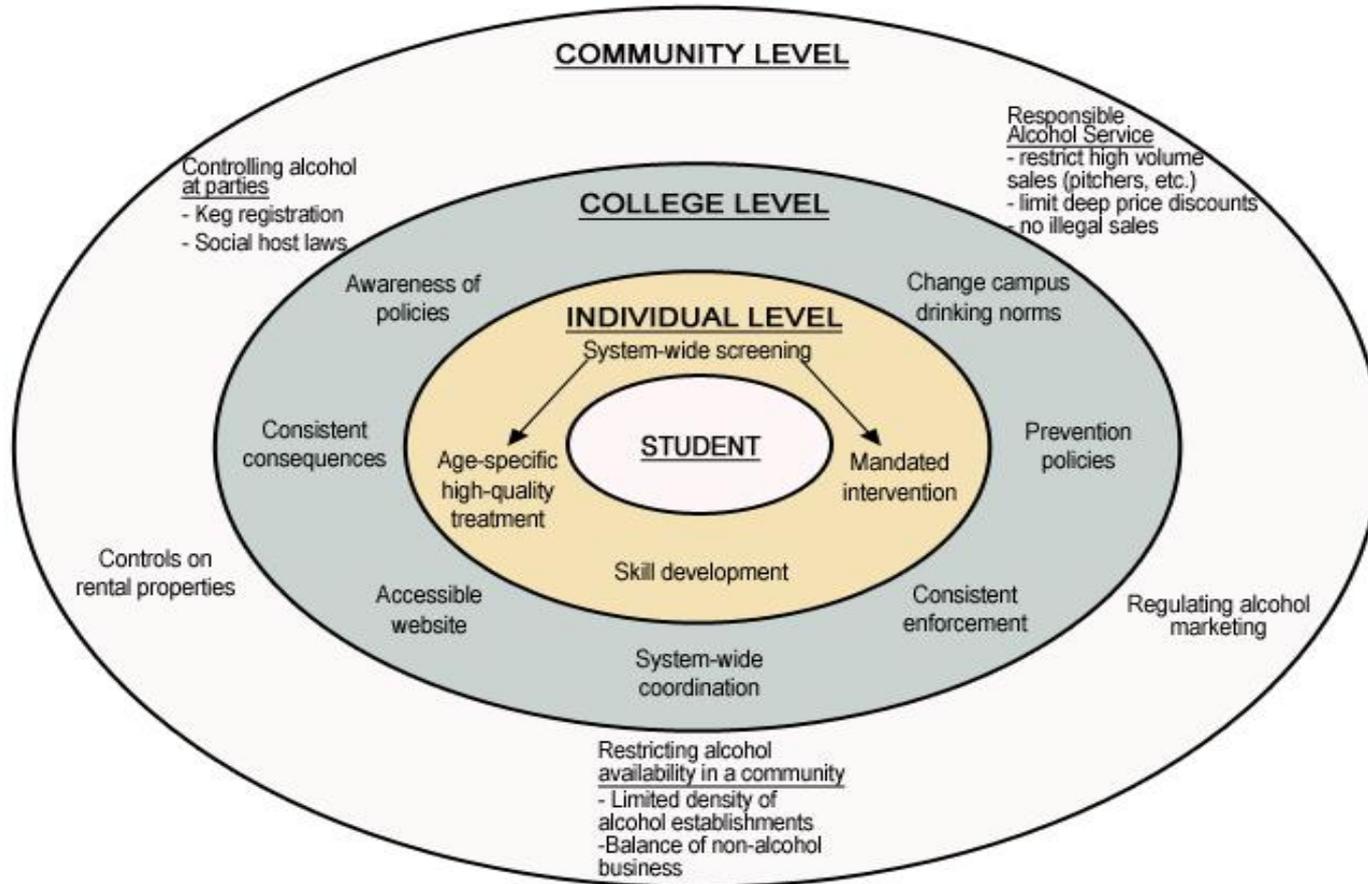


Give a louder  
voice to  
students who  
don't use.



# Environmental-level Strategies

College alcohol problems are systems problems, and require a multi-level, multi-component response. Building campus-community collaborations is essential.





For more information and a list of publications, please:

- Visit [www.cyahd.umd.edu](http://www.cyahd.umd.edu); or
- Send an email: [aarria@umd.edu](mailto:aarria@umd.edu).

Thank you!