

## Alcohol Information for Sexual Misconduct Judicial Boards

### Blood Alcohol Concentration

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) is a measure of the percentage of alcohol in the bloodstream. A BAC of .20 means 2 drops of alcohol per 1,000 drops of blood.

### Standard Drink Definition

A standard drink is 0.06 oz of 100% alcohol (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism). On average, adults can metabolize about two standard drinks in three hours. Equivalencies include:

- One 12-ounce can or bottle of beer at 5% alcohol
- One 5-ounce glass of wine at 12% alcohol
- One shot of liquor (1 ounce of 100 proof or 1-½ ounces of 80 proof)
- A mixed drink with one shot of liquor (for mixed drinks with more than one shot, each shot should be counted as one “drink”)

### Absorption Rate Factors

The following factors can influence the rate and level of impairment:

- Body Size (percent of lean muscle mass vs. fat) If two people of the same sex weigh the same amount, but one is very physically fit, the fit (lean) person will become impaired more slowly than the person with a greater percent of body fat. The lean person has more body fluid in which to dilute the alcohol, which results in a lower BAC.
- Sex – Women’s BAC increases at a faster rate than men’s due to women’s generally smaller body size, greater percent of body fat, smaller quantities of an enzyme that metabolizes alcohol in the stomach (before it can reach the brain) and premenstrual hormonal changes.
- Food in Stomach – Drinking on an empty stomach results in higher BACs. Eating foods high in protein provides the greatest reductions in peak BAC. Carbohydrates provide a smaller reduction.
- Illness/Tiredness – BAC rises faster when people are sick or tired, which may be due to dehydration (reduced body fluid) and/or a slowed metabolism.
- Drugs/Medications – Narcotic drugs have an additive effect that significantly increases impairment. A person with a .06 BAC who takes an antihistamine (e.g., Benadryl) is likely to feel impairment equivalent to a BAC of .10. Caffeine and other stimulants (including ADHD medications) can mask the effects of alcohol, allowing drinkers to stay awake longer, resulting in higher BACs than normal.

### Suggested Lines of Questioning for Sexual Misconduct Investigations and Judicial Hearings

#### Introductory statement:

- The following questions are necessary to help us understand your level of impairment when the incident took place.

#### Quantity

- *Provide the definition of a “drink.”* How many drinks did you consume throughout the day?
  - What type(s) of alcohol did you drink?
  - How were drinks measured?
  - What type of a cup/container were you using?

- Over how many hours did you drink?
- What did you eat prior to drinking?
  - Did you eat anything *while* you were drinking?
  - Did you have any non-alcoholic drinks in between those with alcohol? How many?
- What was your academic work load like at the time of the incident?
  - Were there non-academic sources of stress at the time?
- Were you recovering from a cold or other illness?
- Were you taking any prescription or over-the-counter medications/pain relievers the day of or before the incident?
- Did you use any other kind of drug including caffeine?

### **Tolerance**

Tolerance is not related to BAC, but is instead a measure of how the body adapts to alcohol's effects. Tolerance to mental impairment (poor judgment) increases much more slowly compared to increases in physical impairment (stumbling, slurred speech). As tolerance increases over time, a person appears to be less impaired at higher BACs. Periods of abstinence will lead to reduced tolerance. As a result, tolerance can change significantly from semester to semester. Changes in drinking patterns (new locations, new people, new beverages, etc.) is associated with lower tolerance. Students may report feeling much more intoxicated than normal, given the number of drinks consumed.

Tolerance at the time of the judicial hearing is not important. Questioning should examine tolerance at the time of the incident.

- Describe your typical drinking night around the time of the incident – the average number of drinks you consumed when you went out.
  - *Perhaps specifically ask about weekend drinking.* On average, how many drinks did you have on a Saturday?
- Typically, how many drinks did you have before you felt the effects of alcohol? *A standard initial tolerance to the effects of alcohol is 1 or 2 drinks.*
- Typically, how many drinks did you have before you noticed physical effects (dizzy, slurred speech, stumbling)?

### **Blackouts**

Blackouts are periods of alcohol-induced amnesia which typically occur when someone rapidly reaches a high BAC (.15 or higher). About half of undergraduate students report having at least one blackout.

- Have you ever experienced a blackout/memory loss as a result of drinking?
- If yes, how frequently have you experienced memory loss due to drinking during the past three months (or during the semester in question)?
  - If the answer is – “*I’m not sure*” ask: 1-2 times? 3- 5 times? 6-8 times? more than 9 times?