

# Celebrate! SAFE

Newsletter for Parents Vol.1

**Don't be a Party to Underage Drinking...** While underage drinking is a problem at any time, long weekends, holidays and celebrations present greater than usual dangers for teens and challenges for parents. Protect yourself and your teen by enforcing underage drinking laws and having proactive conversations about underage alcohol use.

## Tougher Penalties on Parents Who Allow Underage Drinking

Communities throughout the U.S. are implementing laws to toughen criminal penalties for parents who allow teenagers to drink in their homes. Increasingly, states are passing criminal social-host liability laws. In addition, prosecutors are becoming more aggressive in their efforts to bring charges against parents who allow illicit partying.

One Missouri homeowner is being charged with murder in the drinking death of a teen. Police say she knew minors were drinking in her house but did nothing to stop it.

"People are becoming aware that they can be prosecuted or sued for providing alcohol to their underage children and their children's friends," said Jim Downum, Chairman of the Hillsborough County Anti-Drug Alliance. "Adults who serve underage drinkers are also liable for damages or injuries caused by intoxicated youth."

Adults who provide alcohol to teens or allow it to be used in their homes or on their property may face a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or six months in jail.

## Underage alcohol use is illegal in all fifty states.

- It is against the law for anyone under 21 to drink beer, wine coolers, champagne or any other alcoholic beverage.
- The average age of first alcohol use is 12 years of age, well below the legal limit.

## Underage drinking could affect your teen.

- More than 40% of Hillsborough County high school students reported drinking alcohol within the past month.

**UNDERAGE DRINKING IS POINTLESS!**

**It can ruin a really good time...or a lifetime.**

## You can help your teen to celebrate safely.

- Students say that parents are the single greatest influence in their decisions not to smoke or use alcohol or drugs—stronger than that of friends, teachers and media.
- Your kids are 60% less likely to drink if they know you disapprove.
- By explaining that you expect "no use" before age 21, monitoring their activities and preventing access to alcohol in your home, you can help your teen stay alcohol-free.
- Your example makes a big difference.

- Cultural pressures to celebrate with alcohol make it more likely for teens to drink during special occasions such as homecoming, prom, spring break or graduation.



## Tips for Talking to Teens About Alcohol

### Choose an appropriate time.

- Celebrations present special dangers for teens. Discuss your expectations, well in advance of the special event.
- Times of increased independence, such as beginning to drive and date, are opportunities to talk about increased responsibilities.

### Be clear and consistent about expectations and consequences.

- Tell your teen that you disapprove of underage drinking, and why.

### Listen to your teen.

- Ask open-ended questions, like "What pressures do you face?" or "How can I help?"
- Listening can help teens feel comfortable talking about their concerns.

### Keep the lines of communication open.

- Keep talking. One conversation isn't enough.
- Talk; don't preach.

## Points to Make to Your Teen

### To stay safe and in-control, stay sober.

When people drink alcohol, it changes the way their brains work—altering their judgment, decision-making ability and self-control. It is self-control that keeps people from doing things that are dangerous or embarrassing. Special celebrations are not only safer without drinking, they're also more memorable...no regrets, humiliation or hangover the next day.

### Drinking alcohol in large quantities can kill.

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that slows the heart and lungs. Symptoms of alcohol poisoning include: unconsciousness, abnormally slow breathing and cold, clammy skin. Remind your teen to call 911 immediately if someone passes out, because he or she could die.

### Most teens don't drink alcohol.

Nationwide, the majority of 12th graders and about two-thirds of 10th graders have chosen not to drink. In spite of what your teen may think, everybody doesn't drink.

### Parents can help teens to avoid trouble or get out of a bad situation.

Help teens think through ways to deal with difficult situations in advance. Ask, "What will you say and do if you get to the party and discover that there is drinking going on? What if the person who is supposed to drive you home has been drinking?" Offer to role-play if it helps your teen to prepare. Choose a secret code that means your teen wants out of a bad situation. Agree that if he/she calls and uses the code, you will pick up your teen, no questions asked. No nagging, no lectures.

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a Party  
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Drinking!

## The \$8,000 Drink

Towing Charges . . . . .	\$150.00
Lawyer . . . . .	\$3,500.00
Fine . . . . .	\$400.00
Alcohol Education Course . . . . .	\$150.00
3 Year Insurance Surcharge . . . . .	\$1,500.00
License Reinstatement . . . . .	\$1,000.00
Court Fees . . . . .	\$450.00
Drug and Alcohol Evaluation . . . . .	\$75.00
Alcohol Treatment . . . . .	\$400.00
Loss of Work Time . . . . .	\$50.00
Cost Recovery . . . . .	\$350.00
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>\$8,025.00</b>



## Is it really worth the risk?

# Serious About Surviving this Party Season?

## These checklists may help!

### When your teen is going to a party:

- Call the host's parents to make sure the party will be supervised and drug- and alcohol-free. Offer to help.
- Know how your teen will get to and from the party. Offer to drive, if necessary.
- Remind teens NEVER to ride in a car with a driver who has been using alcohol or other drugs.
- Provide a phone number where you can be reached if they need a ride home or if their plans change.
- Tell them it's okay to use you as an excuse. This puts you and your teen on the same team.
- If your teen has a cell phone, be sure that he/she carries it and answers it, in case of an emergency.
- If you will be out of town, inform your neighbors, parents of your teen's friends and the police of your absence.
- Enforce a curfew that is early enough to prevent drinking after organized events. In spite of what they may tell you, most teens DO have a curfew!
- Stay awake to talk to your teens when they get home.

### When your teen is giving a party:

- Plan ahead. Set time limits.
- Choose a theme and organize alcohol-free activities to keep guests busy.
- Set a reasonable limit on the number of guests. Know who the guests will be.
- Double-check gun and liquor cabinets to be sure they are locked.
- Actively chaperone all parties at your house. Invite another parent to help.
- Agree to rules ahead of time. Some possible examples:
  - 1) No drugs, including alcohol.
  - 2) No leaving the party and returning.
  - 3) Lights will be left on.
  - 4) Invited guests only.
  - 5) Some rooms in your home are off-limits.
- Serve non-alcoholic drinks in individual containers—no punch!
- Don't let anyone drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Notify your neighbors in advance that there will be a party and that you will be supervising. If the party is to be a large one, notify police.
- Avoid renting hotel rooms for teens. The combination of privacy and possible alcohol use is inappropriate. You can be held legally liable for any damages.

### When your teen makes a poor choice

When teens make a mistake (alcohol-related or otherwise) let them know that you still love them even though they made a poor choice. Tell them how disappointed you are and why. Discuss what happened in detail, but remember that there is a difference between an interrogation and a conversation. Ask, "What is the most important thing you learned from this experience? What are you going to do next time? How can I help?"

## Doctors Say Underage Drinking is a DUMB\* Decision

Approximately 11 million American youth under the age of 21 drink alcohol, yet parents seriously underestimate the amount and the severity of underage drinking. Alcohol is the deadliest drug for America's teenagers: a 16-year old is more likely to die from a drinking-related problem than any other cause.

According to the American Medical Association, research shows that **Drinking Underage Maims the Brain.\*** Scientific evidence shows that even drinking small amounts of alcohol during late childhood and adolescence results in brain damage—possibly permanent brain damage. Doctors say that underage drinking can interfere with teens' ability to learn, to cope with stress, and to make good decisions.

### The American Medical Association cites other dangers in underage drinking:

- Alcohol use kills five times more people under 21 than all other drugs combined.
- Alcohol contributes to the four leading causes of teen deaths: motor vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide.
- Alcohol use is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes among teens.
- Alcohol use is a major factor in unprotected sex among youth, increasing their risk of HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.
- Young people who drink alcohol before age 15 are twice as likely to develop alcoholism and more likely to use marijuana and cocaine than those who don't.
- If your family has any history of alcoholism, your teen is at greater risk of becoming an alcoholic if he or she drinks. It is even more important for teens in these families to wait until at least age 21 before making a responsible decision about alcohol use.

## R E S O U R C E S

### Book:

*How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber. This book provides a realistic and respectful approach to communicating with children of all ages.

### Website:

Visit the National PTA's interactive website, [www.pta.org/commonsense/](http://www.pta.org/commonsense/), for more advice on keeping your kids free from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

### Network:

Contact SafeHomes, a national organization in which parents pledge that they will not serve alcohol to minors in their homes: c/o Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, 4255 Harlem Rd., Amherst, NY 14226; 716-839-1157 [www.eccpasa.info](http://www.eccpasa.info)

### Help:

If your teen, or someone else you care about, needs help because of problems with alcohol use, these organizations may be able to help:

**Alcoholics Anonymous** [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org/)

**PH:** 813-933-9123

**AL-Anon / Alateen** [www.al-anon.alateen.org/](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org/)

**PH:** 813-881-9372