



## Legal Issues

### Parents should know:

- As a parent, you cannot give alcohol to your teen's friends under the age of 21 under any circumstance, even in your own home, even with their parent's permission.
- You cannot knowingly allow a person under 21, other than your child, to remain in your home or on your property while consuming or possessing alcohol.

### If you break the law:

- You can face a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.
- Others can sue you if you allow anyone under 21 to consume alcohol and they, in turn, hurt someone or damage property.
- Officers can confiscate any alcohol, money or property used in committing the offense.

## Health and Safety Issues

While parents may rationalize: "I'd rather my kids drink at home than in a car." "At least they're not doing drugs." "If I let them drink a little now, they won't go crazy when they turn 21." "I did it when I was young and I'm ok." The fact is, underage drinking is hazardous to the health and safety of our children.

### **#1 If your child drinks alcohol, it is likely that the alcohol will affect his/her brain development.**

- It takes about 21 years for the human brain to fully develop.
- If alcohol is heavily consumed in adolescence, the part of the brain responsible for learning and memory can shrink by about 10%.
- When it comes to behavior and brain function, while alcohol has a sedative effect on adults, it acts as a stimulant to adolescents. Due to this, youth are more likely to drink past the point where adults would end up passing out. The more alcohol consumed, the more likely youth are to engage in risky behaviors.

### **#2 If your child drinks alcohol, you will more likely to have to deal with those issues parents dread.**

- Kids who drink are more likely to become sexually active (putting them at greater risk of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases).
- Students who use alcohol report higher levels of skipping school, cheating and getting lower grades.

### **#3 If your child drinks alcohol, he/she is at a greater risk of becoming addicted later in life.**

- The rate of alcoholism is five times higher for kids who drank before age 21.
- Kids who begin to drink before age 15 have an even greater risk of alcohol dependence as an adult.

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## Suggestions for Parents

### *If your teen is giving a party*

- Help your teenager plan the party. Make a guest list and invite only a specific number of people.
- Have your child pass out or send invitations and try to avoid the “open party” situation.
- Don't send e-mail invitations. They can be forwarded to a large number of people quickly and you lose control of who has this information.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.
- Set rules ahead of time such as no alcohol, drugs or tobacco. Set a start and end time for the party.
- Let attendees know that if they leave, they can't come back.
- Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Plan some activities such as music, games, movies, etc.
- Let your neighbors know in advance there will be a party and that you will be there to supervise. Familiarize yourself with the noise ordinance in your area.
- Limit the party access to a certain area of the house/property.
- Have a plan for dealing with vehicles. Include parking information on your party invitation.
- Call parents of any teen who arrives in possession of alcohol or under the influence. If you can't get in touch with the parents, keep the teen there or call the police if necessary. You can be civilly liable if you know they have been drinking and you let them leave.
- Secure all forms of alcohol, firearms and other potentially hazardous items in your home in a safe place.

- Make regular and unobtrusive visits to the party area with sensitivity to teens' needs for privacy and independence.
- Invite some other parents to help chaperone if there will be a large number of teenagers.

***When you're away from home or out of town***

- Set and communicate rules and standards to be followed in your absence.
- Do not allow underage youth to have unsupervised parties or gatherings.
- Remind them of their responsibilities and the consequences of their actions.
- Have a relative or responsible adult stay at your home during your absence, have your teenager stay with a responsible adult or ask a neighbor to watch the house and stop in while you are gone.
- If you are concerned that your child might have a party anyway, you can call your local police and ask them to drive by at some point over the time you are gone. Make it a point to tell your child that you have asked the police to do this.

***If your teen is attending a party***

- Know where your child will be. Call the parent in charge to verify the occasion and location of the party and ensure there will be adult supervision.
- Ask how many teens are expected at the party and offer to help supervise or provide refreshments.
- Make certain that the host will not be serving or allowing alcohol. Ask how they plan to handle the situation if a teen shows up with alcohol or has been drinking.
- Indicate your expectations to your child and the parent hosting the party that if the teens leave and go somewhere else, you will want to know.
- Set a curfew for your teen to be home and when they arrive home, have them check in with you.
- Know how your child is getting to and from the party. Reinforce the message to your teenager that they should never allow someone who has been drinking or using other drugs to drive them anywhere.
- Assure your child that they can telephone you to be picked up whenever needed.
- If the activity seems inappropriate, express concern and keep your child home.

***Other ideas***

- Get to know your children's friends and their parents.
- Find out their policy on alcohol, drug and tobacco use.
- Remember, it is illegal to serve minors, or to knowingly allow a minor to have alcohol on your property.
- Encourage alcohol-free and drug-free parties and activities for underage youth.