



# Parents Encouraged to be Mindful of Underage Drinking

**A**s a parent, you have the most influence on your child's decisions about drinking. Preparing your teen for the challenges and decisions about alcohol consumption must begin before they are faced with these situations. Parents need to educate teens that their actions have serious consequences. Not only do statistics show that alcohol-related car crashes are the number one cause of death for persons between the ages of 14 and 22, but incidents of alcohol poisoning are not uncommon. The law holds parents responsible for these serious consequences when they allow underage drinking at their home.

Talk, talk, talk and talk some more with your teen about dealing with peer pressure, and discuss feasible ways to turn down alcohol and other drugs. Some of the things to discuss

with your teen include: drinking at home or at friends' parties and the consequences that will result. Set guidelines that they may attend only parties that will be supervised and where no alcohol will be served. Agree that they will never get into a car with a driver who has been drinking. Let your children know that they can always call you at anytime to pick them up, if they find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Talking with their friend's parents will also help to reinforce the message. Let's keep our kids on the right track.

Please remember, the legal drinking age in New Jersey is 21. Parents providing alcohol for minors or allowing minors to consume alcohol at their homes are violating the criminal code. Fines up to \$1000 and up to 6 months in jail can be imposed for this offense. Serving alcohol to minors also places significant liability on the parent.

## SOME SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

**W**e are approaching the season for proms, graduations and summer parties. These occasions may provide a venue for teenage drinking.

If you are holding a party in your home, discuss the guidelines with your child beforehand. Some strategies are:

- A parent must be home during the party. Circulate among the guests and make your presence known.
- Set specific hours for the party and establish the number of guests attending.
- Do not let teens leave and return to the party.
- Provide plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.

If your teen is attending a party, make sure you:

- Have the name, address and phone number of the party host.
- Confirm with the host that the party will be supervised responsibly and that no alcohol will be served.
- Establish a time when your teen will come home.

- Set up an agreement with your teenager that they will not drive while intoxicated or get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.

## CONSEQUENCES OF USE

- More than 40% of individuals who begin drinking before age 13 will develop alcohol abuse problems or dependence at some point in their lives.
- Underage drinking is a factor in nearly half of all teen car crashes and 50-65 percent of youth suicides. Alcohol abuse is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes of teens and college students.
- Nearly 28% of New Jersey's 7th and 8th graders who used alcohol in the past 30 days got F's in school.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR PARENTS

- It's a criminal offense in New Jersey to allow underage drinking in your home, so you're looking at a disorderly persons charge, which means a record and a fine.
- Your homeowners insurance may increase. The company may even drop you. Most policies don't cover damage or theft

from underage drinking parties.

- If an underage party-goer drives after drinking, it will cost you. If there is a crash, you are responsible and can be sued.
- Injuries, alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, drowning, or suicide may result in lawsuits. You will be held civilly liable if sued by another parent.

