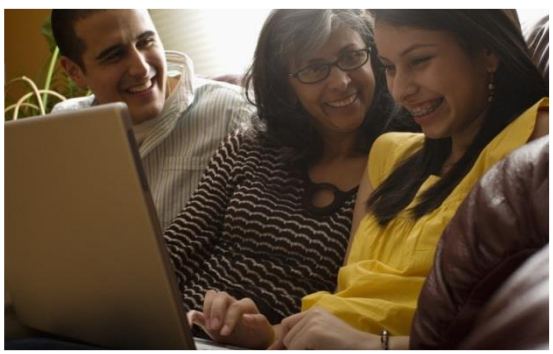
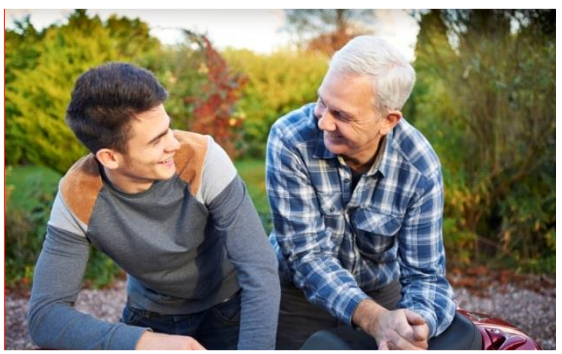
Important Underage Drinking Prevention Information for Parents of Seniors in Virginia





Welcome to Senior Year!

This is an exciting time for you and your child as he/she prepares to graduate and move on to the next stage of life. Every one of us wants your children to be safe, healthy, and successful, yet each year we lose too many futures to the consequences of underage drinking. With your help, however, we can prevent these tragedies.

Research has shown that you have the most influence on your child's alcohol-related attitudes and behaviors, so please take the time to talk with your young person and clearly discuss your family's expectations regarding underage drinking and drinking and driving.

To help you with these conversations, I am excited to share the enclosed information from your health and physical education teachers, MADD Virginia, and ABC.

Best wishes for a safe and successful Senior Year.

Regards,

Dr. Stephen R. Staples
Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Parents: Help Your Teen Enjoy a Fun, Safe, and Drug-Free Senior Year

The Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance has partnered with the Virginia Department of Education, MADD, and Virginia ABC to reinforce to you that underage drinking is unsafe, unhealthy, and unacceptable. Hosting teen parties where alcohol is present is illegal and puts your teens at heightened risk of alcohol poisoning and other injury.

With senior year upon us, it is imperative for you to be aware of the increased risk of teen alcohol parties occurring, and the potential dangers that accompany alcohol-fueled gatherings. Simply taking away the car keys does not solve all of the problems related to underage drinking.

Parents, You are the Key to Preventing Underage Drinking

Research has shown that young people are less likely to drink when parents are involved in their lives and have close relationships with them.

Adolescents are less likely to drink and have alcohol related problems when their parents

- set clear rules and expectations about drinking,
- have good parent-child communication, and
- discipline consistently.

Be Informed

Visit **SAMHSA** (www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking) and the **CDC** (www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm) for more information.

Be a Good Role Model

Children inherit their parents' drinking behaviors and attitudes towards drinking. Parents who drink and drive contribute to youth engaging in illegal drinking behaviors with all the accompanying negative consequences. Parental permissiveness sends your child mixed messages and is consistently associated with negative drinking consequences as youth transition to college and adulthood.

Have Conversations With Your Teen About Drinking and Impaired Driving

Modeling positive drinking and driving behaviors and engaging in dialogue with teens about alcohol is essential to afford them the knowledge, resources and skills to make good decisions. We are pleased to offer you a free MADD Power of Parents Handbook.

The handbook provides extensive information and suggestions to help you have positive parenting conversations with youth about alcohol use and set clear expectations and consistent consequences consistent with your family values and the law.

Know the Law

It Is A Crime In Virginia For...

- ➔ Youth under the age of 21 to consume, purchase or possess alcoholic beverages.
- ➔ Parents or other adults to contribute to the delinquency of an underage youth in connection with the purchase or use of alcoholic beverages.
- ➔ Anyone (underage youth, parents or other adults) to...
  - Purchase alcoholic beverages for underage youth.
  - Sell alcoholic beverages to underage youth.
  - Drink alcoholic beverages in a public place (i.e., street or parking lot).
  - Sell alcoholic beverages without a license to underage youth or adults, in a home or any other unlicensed place.
  - Possess a false identification card or birth certificate.
  - Operate a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or a self-administered drug.

The Penalties Can Be...

- ➔ A fine of up to $2,500 and/or a year in jail and/or 50 hours of community service.
- ➔ Court-ordered substance abuse counseling and treatment.

Source: http://www.virginiarules.com/virginia-rules/alcohol-tobacco

Carefully Plan Celebratory Parties

Many celebratory parties take place during Senior year, including those for Proms, the 18th Birthday, and Graduation.

It is important for parents to proactively take measures to help ensure these special times are fun, yet safe and drug-free for their teens.

Here are a few ideas for parents (and teens) planning celebratory parties:

- Create a party plan, including a guest list, with your teen
- Invite just the friends on your list and let them know in advance the party is 'invitation only'
- Let party guests know that if they leave, they cannot come back
- Plan some activities such as music, games, movies, etc.
- Make regular and unobtrusive visits to the party area with sensitivity to teens' needs for privacy

Source: www.drugfreeactionalliance.org

Use And Lose…

Virginia's "use and lose" law, which took effect in Virginia on July 1, 1989, significantly affects a teenager's privilege to drive a car, whether or not they now have a driver's license. Here is what it means:

If a teen is age 17 or younger, if a judge finds that teen guilty of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, in addition to being adjudged a delinquent and facing possible jail time, a fine or probation, the teen will lose his/her driver's license, or ability to get one, for one year or until age 17, whichever is longer. If this happens again, the teen loses his/her license for another year, or until age 18, whichever is longer.

If the teen is age 17 or younger, if a judge finds that teen guilty of consuming, buying or possessing alcohol, the teen will lose his/her driver's license, or ability to apply for one, for six months. If the teen is under age 16 years and 3 months, the teen cannot apply for a driver's license until the teen reaches 16 years and 9 months.

What's More…

- Alcohol possessed by youth under the age of 21 is deemed to be contraband and may be confiscated by the state.
- If personal injury, property damage or death occurs as a result of the illegal use of alcohol by youth under the age of 21, parents and other adults involved could face a costly court action.
- The cost and availability of automobile liability insurance also may be affected by alcohol-related negligence or misconduct.
- Many localities have curfews that apply to minors in public places at certain hours. Parents should be aware of their local restrictions.

Source: Virginia State Bar www.vsb.org/site/publications/minors-alcohol-and-virginia-law

Develop a Parent-Teen Driving Agreement

Sample agreements are included in the 45 Hour Virginia Parent-Teen Driving Handbook available through the school Drivers Education program.

Source: www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/Agreement/

If Your Teen is Attending a Party:

- Know where your child will be. Call the parent in charge to verify the location of the party. Ensure there will be adult supervision and that the host will not be serving or allowing alcohol.
- 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 he/she should never allow someone who has been drinking to drive them anywhere.

These materials are brought to you by Virginia's Health and Physical Education teachers in collaboration with Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control and MADD Virginia. The funding for this project was provided by the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the VCU Center for School-Community Collaboration. Visit **www.PreventUnderageDrinkingVA.com** and **www.madd.org/underage-drinking/the-power-of-parents/** for additional resources.

MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

PARENT HANDBOOK FOR TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT ALCOHOL

POWER of PARENTS

madd®

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INTRODUCTION

Being a parent is intensely rewarding, but also deeply challenging. Parents work to keep their kids safe and healthy while helping them grow into independent, well-adjusted young adults.

Alcohol can seem so common and familiar that parents might forget how risky drinking is for young people. Alcohol kills more teens than all other illegal drugs combined.

We created this handbook to help parents talk to teens about alcohol.

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

By reading this handbook and following its guidelines, you can substantially reduce the chance your son or daughter will drink before the age of 21.

Since each family is different, you may relate to some sections of this handbook better than others. This is okay. Not all families are the same and we respect those differences.

We hope you will review the entire handbook and use parts that are helpful to you and your family.

Because underage drinking is illegal and poses special risks to young people, this handbook encourages parents to:

- Set a family rule of no alcohol use before age 21.
- Agree on consequences for breaking the no-use rule and enforce "zero-tolerance."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

MADD is grateful to Dr. Robert Turrisi and his colleagues at Pennsylvania State University for their partnership in this handbook. Dr. Turrisi has spent years researching how parents can talk effectively with teens about alcohol. This handbook draws from their work and the body of scientific knowledge in the field.

Talk Soon

"Casey, my oldest son, was what you'd call a 'good kid' – on the honor roll every semester, in the marching band, in the choir; he wrestled and played football.

I never really worried too much throughout high school. I had the false sense of security that he had the maturity of someone who could handle his liquor, but I was wrong.

If I had it all to do over again? I would have made my message very clear.

When I found that bottle of rum Casey had hidden in my garage, I would not have thrown it away and said nothing like I did. I would have taken it out and set it on my kitchen counter.

Then we would have discussed why I did not want him drinking, sitting there and looking at each other. I would have spoken to him about alcohol more often."

Comments from a mother whose son died from alcohol poisoning at the age of 18.

Read Casey's story at madd.org/powerofparents.

A message to parents from Dr. Turrisi and MADD

Teens who drink are a danger to themselves, to their friends, and to other drivers. We have seen a single night of underage drinking destroy lives forever.

Please, do not underestimate how dangerous alcohol is for teens.

Fortunately, as a parent, you do have the power to help prevent tragedy. By following the suggestions in this handbook, you can help equip your teen to make smarter, safer choices. You can help him or her to avoid the dangers of drinking under the age of 21 or of riding in a car with a drunk driver. This handbook can even improve how you and your teen relate to each other.

We urge you to read this handbook, and then talk with your son or daughter about these important issues. The time you spend will be a precious, and potentially life-saving, gift.

YOUR TEEN'S WORLD

As youngsters grow into teens, they face many changes:

- their bodies mature and develop
- they face new pressures at school and socially
- they encounter new moral dilemmas

The changes teens go through affect how they think about alcohol.

To communicate effectively with your teen about alcohol and other risks, it helps to understand how these changes affect his or her world.

FINDING HIS OR HER OWN WAY

Teens often feel that the world revolves around them. They get self-conscious and are easily hurt by critical comments. A teen assumes, "no one has ever felt the way I feel." Because a teen feels unique, if a parent says "I know how you feel," the teen may reject this as impossible.

Teens seek freedom. One moment, a teen feels like an adult and wants to be treated like one; the next moment, he or she feels like a child and wants to be cared for.

Because teens are growing up, they want to feel in control and capable of handling any situation—even when they cannot. If parents try to offer helpful advice, teens may respond, "I got it. I can handle it."

Teens may feel rivalry with their parents. They sense that they are becoming adults and want to compete in the same world as their parents.

There is often a period when teens feel ashamed of their parents and embarrassed to be with them. Teens may also withdraw, or rebel against society and the adult world. These reactions are a natural part of the changes that teens experience.

GOING ALONG WITH A GROUP

Teens include others in their moral reasoning. If their peers do something, it makes the behavior seem more okay. Teens are less likely to rely on their own standards and values, and may justify decisions by saying, "but everyone is doing it." Teens often believe they should be excused for misbehavior if they had not planned to do something wrong. They may say, "We did not mean to drink; things just happened."

Where Peers Fit In

One reason why your teen is strongly influenced by friends is that peers have a similar level of power in the world. This "level playing field" allows teens to work out problems together, instead of just giving in to a more powerful individual, like a parent or a teacher.

TIP Instead of forcing advice on an unreceptive teen, explain that you respect his or her decisions, but as a parent you care and would like to discuss the situation. For example, "I'm not trying to control everything you do. Maybe it would help to at least talk about it. It would make me feel more comfortable….What's your plan?"

SHORT-TERM THINKING

The teen brain focuses on what's happening right now. When a teen thinks ahead, it usually means he or she is wondering about what to do this weekend, not next year. That's why your son or daughter isn't terribly concerned about the future. This puts teens at a disadvantage when they face choices about risky behaviors that can have long-term consequences, such as drinking.

When It Comes to Alcohol

Teens may know the potential risks of drinking, but think, "My friend drinks and nothing bad has ever happened." That friend's experience can have more impact than facts. Do not assume that giving information or statistics is enough to convince your teen not to drink alcohol.

Teens believe, "Nothing bad will happen to me." They assume negative things happen to others, not to them.

The Bottom Line

Adults may hold beliefs and have thoughts that simply do not exist for teens.

Help your teen develop better thinking skills by talking together about the short-term and long-term consequences of alcohol use, even if he or she shows little interest.

Risky Business

Because teens are still developing, they take more risks with alcohol. They act impulsively and don't recognize that their actions, such as drinking, have consequences.

Alcohol is especially attractive to teens because it reduces their social anxiety more than it does for adults.

WHAT STYLE OF PARENT ARE YOU?

Parents rely on certain strategies for raising their children. Do any of the parenting styles below seem familiar to you?

AUTHORITARIAN

Authoritarian parents tend to use parental power to control their children.

- Teens must do what they are told or else face serious consequences.
- Parents are unconcerned if teens understand the reasons behind rules. Parents don't tolerate teens asking for explanations.
- Parents use threats and punishment to keep teens in line.

Two parents, two styles?

Sometimes parents have different styles. For example, a father might be authoritarian while the mother is overprotective. This can create even more confusion for the child as he or she attempts to meet the expectations of both parents.

Research shows that teens who feel threatened by their parents may behave well when the threatening parent is nearby, but act out when the threatening parent is gone. These teens have difficulty behaving properly without external control. Children of authoritarian parents are less likely to develop internalized values that equip them to make wise decisions.

By focusing on obedience, authoritarian parents lose their ability to influence their teen through reasoned discussion or to help them develop good thinking skills.

If parents impose very strict rules, teens often defy them. Then parents punish the teens and the teens in turn become more rebellious. It can become a vicious cycle.

Angry teens may finally say: "I don't care how you punish me. You can't control me. Take away whatever you want. Lock me up. Kick me out. It doesn't matter because I will still do what I want." At this point, authoritarian parents lose their influence.

Research shows: Compared with all teens who drink illegally, teens of authoritarian style parents tend to consume the most dangerously high levels of alcohol.

OVERPROTECTIVE

Overprotective parents shield their children from the harsh realities of life. Like authoritarian parents, they exert a lot of control over their children, but their method is different.

Instead of using rules and threats, overprotective parents present themselves as allies. They see the world as a threat and express this fearfulness to their children. Then they rescue their children from dealing with any harsh reality.

For example, instead of helping children understand difficult homework assignments, overprotective

Seeking Positive Balance

We have explained parenting styles here to let you know about the potential consequences of being an authoritarian, overprotective, or permissive parent.

We do not mean for you to question every parenting action: "Am I being too permissive? Am I being authoritarian?" Too much questioning can paralyze you as a parent.

Instead, be careful to avoid extremes and seek a positive balance.

parents actually do the work for them. This leaves a child poorly prepared to deal with the realities of adult life.

Overprotected children lack experience and may panic in stressful situations.

PERMISSIVE

Permissive parents take a hands-off approach. They:

- Do not set expectations. Instead, they feel teens should be independent.
- Permit their teen to explore the world without "interfering."
- Feel kids should be free to make mistakes and learn from them accordingly.

Permissive parents may not face as much rebellion as authoritarian or overprotective parents do. But overly permissive parents deprive their children of wise guidance in developing effective problem-solving skills.

Children of permissive parents can come to feel that their parents do not love them or care about them. These teens feel neglected and believe that their parents have little interest in what they do or the activities they are involved in. This, in turn, can lead to resentment.

Research shows: When they drink illegally, teens of permissive style parents tend to have significantly higher than average blood alcohol levels compared to other underage drinkers.

Parents Do Make a Difference. Despite how you may feel sometimes, research shows that parents are an important influence on whether or not teens choose to drink alcohol.

POSITIVE

Positive parents focus on empowering their children to grow and learn. They:

- Take an active role in teaching teens responsibility.
- Set clear expectations about teen behavior, such as waiting until age 21 before drinking alcohol.
- Explain reasons behind their expectations and encourage teens to talk about any concerns.
- Set and enforce consequences before agreements are not met.

Boost Self-Esteem

Teens who have high self-esteem are better equipped to make smart choices, deal with peer pressure, and avoid underage drinking.

Boost your teen's self-esteem by:

- Praising achievements
- Helping set realistic goals
- Giving choices
- Offering responsibilities
- Focusing on teen's strengths without comparing to others
- Taking all of your teen's concerns seriously

Positive parents know that their own age, knowledge, experience, and material resources give them more power than their children. Positive parents use that power to strengthen and protect their teens and help them grow into effective individuals.

Positive parenting is generally the most effective parenting style.

Positive parenting can be difficult, because parents gradually relinquish control and give kids more freedom and responsibility with each passing year. These parents respect a teen's drive for independence, yet maintain legitimate limits. Their philosophy is to build trust and teach skills that empower the teen to take increasing control of his or her life.

Instead of threatening severe punishment for bad behavior, positive parents discuss, set, and enforce clear consequences for breaking rules. They encourage teens to talk about problems and build problem-solving skills.

Positive parenting is generally the most effective parenting style.

Research shows: When teens of positive style parents do drink illegally, they tend to consume significantly less alcohol than teens of other parenting styles.

PARENTS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Despite how you may feel sometimes, research shows that parents are an important influence on whether or not teens choose to drink alcohol.

Teens do care about their parent's opinions. They especially respond well to a positive parenting style. In contrast, many studies show that authoritarian, overprotective, and permissive parenting can lead to negative outcomes.

Teens do care about their parent's opinions. They especially respond well to a positive parenting style.

It is wise to understand parenting styles, but don't worry too much about, "Am I being too permissive? Am I being authoritarian?" Too much questioning can paralyze you as a parent.

Instead, try to avoid the extremes and find a balanced approach to parenting. This is an important step you can take to prevent underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

For more information on how parenting styles can influence teen drinking, visit MADD at madd.org/powerofparents.

The Bottom Line

Positive parenting strategies can help empower a teen to avoid underage drinking.

TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL

The first step in talking with your teen about alcohol is simply getting started. Often, the conversation takes more than one sitting and evolves over time. As a parent, you must take active steps to start this conversation. Suggest to your teen that you would like to talk. Don't expect the teen to agree. In fact, many teens respond negatively. Here are some ways to begin:

"I know you are smart and know a lot of things. Perhaps you could help me with something that has been on my mind. I keep hearing about how much drinking is going on, and I am a little worried. Maybe if we talked about it I might feel better. Do you mind giving me a few minutes?"

"You probably have already heard a lot in school about drinking alcohol. I would like to talk with you a little about it. I know things are different from when I was young and I would not be a good parent if I choose not to talk with you about something so important. Do you mind giving me a few minutes?"

Teens are often tired after a school day or athletic event, and that may not be the best time to start a conversation. Think about your teen's schedule and how you can create a time where you will have his or her undivided attention. Perhaps take him or her out to a quiet dinner or someplace where you can comfortably start a "one-on-one" conversation.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Say something to show you are open-minded, then ask your teen about his or her own experiences. Use thought-provoking questions that can be asked in a supportive, non-threatening way. For example:

- Do you know kids who drink?
- How has it affected them?
- Have you ever been offered alcohol by someone you knew?
- If so, what did you say? If not, what would you say?
- What if someone really pushed you?
- What would you say if they said... Is there another side to this view?
- Do you see any risks?
- Do you have any concerns?

Getting Your Teen to Talk

Parents can be frustrated by their inability to get their teen to talk at length on any issue. They swear that their son or daughter has a vocabulary of "Okay, Mom," "I dunno," "Whatever," "If you want," and "Not now" when it comes to parental conversation.

Teens may respond this way when they are busy, tired, or simply not in the mood for talking. Perhaps the teen fears getting another lecture or that the parent will start nagging again. The teen may feel the parent just doesn't understand them.

Parents need to respect how a teen may feel and not force communication at a bad time. Let the matter drop and bring it up later. Try to pick a time when your teen will be open to talking.

Seek discussion; don't lecture! Share your own experiences and opinions and how they have changed over the years. As you tend to open-up, so will your son or daughter.

Keep distinctions between facts and opinions. Say things like, "My opinion is ... This opinion is based on these facts and experiences. This opinion is based on these observations."

Ask your son or daughter what he or she thinks. Listen and try to understand without being defensive.

Suspend your critical judgment while you listen attentively. This is probably the single most important aspect of good communication.

People like to talk about themselves and their opinions. People like to explore logic and details. They do not like to be told what to think!

Keep comments short. Remember, you don't have to say everything that comes to mind. Most teens have heard blanket statements like "kids getting drunk is terrible" from other adults and the media. Avoid statements such as these.

Share the Facts!

Kids who drink alcohol before age 21 are more likely to:

- Face problems in school
- Get assaulted
- Abuse alcohol later in life
- Drown or fall
- Die in a car crash

WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

Parents sometimes hesitate to impose rules against underage drinking or even to discuss drinking with their teens. Maybe they are embarrassed or assume their son or daughter is not at risk.

ARE YOU MAKING THIS ASSUMPTION?	READ THE REAL FACTS:
My son or daughter is not interested in drinking.	According to data from a Monitoring the Future national survey, about 75% of teens try alcohol outside the home before graduating from high school.
My teen's friends are good kids who do not drink alcohol.	About 43% of high school seniors have drunk alcohol in the past 30 days.
My son or daughter has learned about the negative effects of alcohol in school.	Although most teens do learn about alcohol in their health classes, research shows that many important issues never get covered. School programs alone are not enough to stop teens from drinking.
At this point, my son or daughter should know better.	Unfortunately, the reality is that many teens at this point in their lives are still uninformed about how powerful a drug alcohol can be.
My son or daughter won't listen to me at this point.	Leading national surveys reveal that parents are the number one source that teens turn to for important information. Parents can influence their teen's decision not to drink alcohol.

Teens Make Assumptions, Too

Teens who binge drink say:

- They don't believe drinking makes you sick or has bad effects.
- They are bored and there is nothing else to do but drink.
- They expect drinking to have benefits, such as improved socializing.
- "It can't be that bad if everyone is doing it," and "my friends won't think I'm cool if I don't drink."

Talk with your teen to correct his or her mistaken assumptions about alcohol.

Teens Drink Differently

Teens often engage in intense drinking, called "binge" drinking. For males, binging means having at least 5 drinks at one time. For females, binging means at least 4 drinks at a time. Unfortunately, nearly 30% of high school teens have engaged in binge drinking. Colleges report rates as high as 60%.

Sometimes, teens plan to binge (saying, for example, "Let's go out and get hammered!"). Other times, they get caught up with drinking games or parties that get out of hand. **Teens who chug alcohol and drink as much as they can—as fast as they can—risk dying from alcohol poisoning.**

Consider these quotes from teens:

"A girl I know got so drunk that a friend and I had to carry her for several blocks, trying to keep her from burning us with a cigarette. Since then, she has gotten as drunk every weekend. It has gotten her into some bad situations."

"I was having a great night. I drank at least 15 beers. Then I blacked out. This is not unusual for me. Another time, I became violent, smashed bottles and got in tons of trouble."

These accounts sound shocking, but your son, daughter, or someone they know has likely experienced something like this.

In the past month:

- 1 of 5 students in the 10th grade got drunk
- 1 of 3 students in the 12th grade got drunk

Binge Drinking is Bad News

Binge drinkers are more likely to be:

- pushed, hit or attacked
- confronted with unwanted sexual advances
- sexually assaulted
- seriously injured

Binge drinkers are also more likely to drive drunk, ride with a drunk driver, have their property damaged, have unprotected sex, and get exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV.

KNOWING THE FACTS AS YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR FAMILY'S VALUES

Families take different approaches to alcohol use. Some parents permit their teen to drink a controlled amount of alcohol under supervision on holidays or at family functions. Other parents don't permit any alcohol at all before a child reaches the age of 21.

We have met parents who teach basic family values, like honesty and responsibility, but never discuss alcohol directly with their kids. They assume that their son or daughter will know how to apply family values to alcohol. That's a risky assumption. Teens are immature and don't make connections that are obvious to adults. You will empower your teen to meet the challenges of growing up if you explicitly discuss your expectations about alcohol, keep communication lines open, and set clear rules and consequences.

As you decide what to do in your own home, consider research findings from the United States and Europe. These studies show that teens who are given alcohol at home are more likely to drink alcohol when they are away from their parents. They also get drunk more often at early ages. Bottom line: teens who believe their parents approve of them drinking alcohol are more likely to drink outside the home.

We have met parents who teach basic family values, like honesty and responsibility, but never discuss alcohol directly with their kids.

MADD urges you to make the following agreements with your teen:

- No drinking alcohol before age 21
- No socializing in places where teens are drinking
- No riding in a car with a driver who has had any amount of alcohol

The science is clear about young people and alcohol:

Early alcohol use puts the developing brain at risk and substantially increases the risk of addiction. Kids whose parents allow them to drink at home drink more often and heavily outside the home. For health and safety of a child, the only safe level of alcohol use under the age of 21 is no alcohol use.

Teens are young and still learning about behaving responsibly. You can help your teen find many other ways to practice responsible behavior besides drinking alcohol.

As a parent, don't feel the pressure to give in and let your teen drink before the age of 21.

Also keep in mind: there can be legal ramifications to serving alcohol to your own child or other people's children. In some states, parents may serve their own children alcohol. Adults, however, are never permitted to serve alcohol to other people's children. What's more, it is illegal for young people under 21 to purchase or possess alcohol.

Discuss your position on alcohol with your son or daughter and talk about:

- How you expect your teen will behave concerning alcohol.
- Why you take that position.
- Consequences you will enforce if the teen fails to live up to those expectations.
- Establishing consequences in advance appropriate to the violation. It's best if your teen has no surprises if he or she breaks the agreement.

ENFORCING CONSEQUENCES

As a parent, be ready to follow through and enforce consequences if your teen violates a family agreement.

DO

- Impose a consequence if your teen violates an agreement.
- Impose consequences consistently.
- Be very clear about no underage drinking.

DON'T

- Base your actions on anger.
- Impose a consequence arbitrarily, in the heat of the moment.

Here are examples:

A teen comes home from a party and has clearly been drinking. The parent is angry and says, "You're grounded indefinitely. When you're not in school, you will be at home." This consequence is set arbitrarily in the heat of the moment and may not even be possible to enforce.

Another way the parent might respond would be to say, "I'm very disappointed with you. We had agreed that there would be no drinking until you are 21. We will talk about this in the morning."

The next day, the parent might say, "As you know, you violated a very important family rule. Drinking is very dangerous for you. Therefore, as we agreed before, there will be serious consequences. For the next month, you will not be allowed to use the family car and your curfew will be 9:00 instead of 11:00. I hope that after the month has passed, we will both feel more confident in your ability to follow the rules of this family."

In this example, the consequences were previously established and are discussed after the parent's initial disappointment in the teen has subsided.

Emphasize to teens how quickly drinking can lead to dangerous results. That's why you take underage drinking so seriously.

Does the Penalty Fit?

It's best for consequences to match the "crime." Small violations of family rules deserve mild punishment; serious violations deserve tougher penalties.

For example, you could consider curbing a teen's privileges, like driving, curfew, phone rights, or computer access. Evaluate the situation, and as a parent, set an appropriate consequence.

High Quality Agreements

A good agreement is clear and understood by all. However, parents and teens often make agreements only to have the teen break them. Instead of being a true agreement, the agreement really imposes what the parent wants.

At times, you may have to ask for an agreement based on respect for your authority. In those cases, emphasize that your purpose is to protect and your intent is to eventually give freedom.

Agreements are most likely to be honored when they are made in the context of high-quality relationships. High quality relationships are built on mutual trust, where both participants are confident that the other will be honest, responsible, and caring.

High quality relationships are characterized by:

- Respect for one another
- Empathy and understanding
- Knowledge of each other
- Mutual trust
- Concern for one another

TIP

Even if your teen says what you hope to hear ("I don't drink"), it's still important to talk together about alcohol. Ask questions, listen without defensiveness, and expand your teen's thinking. Discuss how he or she might handle or avoid risky situations that could come up.

Your teen may not admit to drinking yet, but you can still set no-alcohol rules. Talk together about alcohol to help prevent your teen from drinking underage.

DID YOU DRINK WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG?

Your son or daughter will probably ask if you ever drank as a teen. This creates a dilemma. If you drank and say "no," you are being dishonest. If you say "yes," your child will think you are hypocritical to expect different behavior from them.

Honesty is important and you should not lie to your teen. Parents use different approaches to answer this question:

Making the topic off limits. Some parents establish a "ground rule" at the start of their discussion: they will talk about everything else, but will not answer questions about their own use of drugs or alcohol as a teen. The parent explains that the parent's behavior as a teen is not relevant to the teen's current use of alcohol. This strategy works in some families, but not in others. Teens usually become convinced that their parents are hiding something and resent that their parents won't talk about it.

Admitting mistakes and emphasizing negative outcomes. Other parents admit they drank as teens, but focus on how it was a mistake. They use their own experience to discuss negative outcomes, such as how drinking led to an embarrassing moment or dangerous situation. They stress that because the parent behaved foolishly and was lucky enough to escape serious consequences does not mean that the teen will have the same outcome.

Here is an example of how you might handle this question:

"I did have a drink when I was younger. However, we did not know as much as we know now about the risks of alcohol. If I had known then, I would have done things differently. This is why I am talking to you about it. I want you to be safe, healthy, and happy."

Underage Drinkers Tend to Binge Drink

Underage drinkers behave differently than most adult drinkers.

Adults typically have a drink or two with a meal or at a party. Teens drink less frequently, but tend to consume larger quantities than adults.

The Physical Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol is a drug that depresses the entire body. From the first drink, alcohol begins to impair judgment, coordination, and reaction time.

As higher levels of alcohol reach the brain, physical processes slow down, including breathing and heart rate. Too much alcohol makes breathing and heart rate drop to dangerously low levels–or even stop.

TALKING SO YOUR TEEN WILL LISTEN

The following strategies will help you communicate most effectively:

Listen. Allow the teen to speak without interruption. Listen to what he or she says. Sometimes, it is good to paraphrase. "Let me see if I understand you. It sounds like you feel that…" With paraphrasing, you don't agree or disagree, you interpret.

Most teens say their parents are the leading influence on their decisions about drinking.

Speak with respect and appreciation. Your teen still values your approval. Whenever you can, express your respect and admiration (for example, "I admire what you have done and how you are coping"). Everyone wants to be respected and is more willing to talk to people who respect them. Tell your son or daughter you are proud of them for being able to handle tough situations.

Choose a good time. Choose the best time to bring up and discuss problems. Don't do it when the other person is rushed or has a commitment elsewhere. Wait until you both can have a relaxed, calm discussion.

You might take your child to lunch or out for some ice cream where you could both sit down to talk and listen to one another.

Communicate directly. Pick a time to speak when you can have each other's undivided attention. Don't discuss important things when one of you is absorbed in another activity, such as reading the newspaper, watching television, or texting.

Emphasize common goals. Remind teens that you are on their side. Emphasize common goals, and use the shared goals as a basis for your guidance and suggestions. (For example, remind your teen that you both want him or her to stay healthy and safe.)

Avoid communication "stoppers." These are single statements that shut down any response. They are often threatening, such as "I better not catch you drinking or else."

Recognize conflict is natural. We are not identical to one another. We all have different beliefs and values; therefore disagreement is a natural thing. We can use conflict as an opportunity to grow and learn about each other.

Agree to step away. Agree to temporarily stop talking if things don't go well. Wait until both individuals can talk in a calm, direct fashion.

Use appropriate body language. How you position yourself physically while you talk can send important messages about your attitudes or express something you are not trying to convey. Don't look away or slouch down. Nod your head in agreement.

Avoid debate. Sometimes a teen feels he or she must "defend" a position. Then the conversation turns into a mini-debate. If you find yourself debating, try suggesting that you both approach matters from a different angle. Also, avoid statements that begin with "you" ("You did this…"). They make the other person feel attacked.

Get Behind 21

Numerous studies show the 21 drinking age law has reduced underage drinking and saved thousands of lives.

Research in the U.S. and Europe has never shown any benefit to drinking at a younger age or that teens could be safely "taught" to drink. On the contrary, they show that attempting to teach teens to drink results in increased binge drinking.

Keep It Constructive! Do your best to keep communication channels open. Most of all, be constructive in your responses to your teen, not defensive or angry.

AVOIDING POTHOLES

Sometimes teens react badly when parents try to discuss sensitive topics. Here are ways to address their concerns. (Adapt them to your teen's personality as appropriate.)

Fear of getting a lecture. Teens may be open to talking, but the last thing they want is a one-way lecture from parents about right and wrong. Studies show that teens drink more when they come from homes where parents are perceived to lecture too much.

Teen: "I know what you will do if we talk. You'll lecture me like you always do. Then if I argue you will interrupt me."

Parent: "You're right. This time I won't lecture. I will listen to what you think."

Anger about not being trusted. Some teens interpret a request to talk as a sign that you do not trust them. Reassure your son or daughter that you are not suspicious and are doing this to help them, not attack

Emphasize these themes:

- Your CARING about the teen
- Wanting to UNDERSTAND the teen
- Wanting to HELP the teen
- RESPECTING the teen's privacy and desire to be independent

them. Studies show that when teens feel they can trust their parents and are trusted by them, they are less likely to drink.

Teen: "What's the matter, don't you trust me?"

Parent: "I trust you. But this is a very important issue, and I think we need to pool the information we know to make sure you deal with everything effectively and that you know what to expect and what to do. To do that, we need to talk to each other."

Fear of punishment. Teens may fear you'll treat them harshly right from the start. Teens who fear punishment communicate less often with their parents. Studies show these teens tend to initiate drinking, drink more often, and are more likely to experience alcohol-related consequences.

Teen: "Sure, talk with you and you won't let me go out. Forget it."

Parent: "I promise that I won't be that way. I will listen to you. I'll take what you say seriously. I'll be straight with you and you be straight with me."

Studies show that when teens feel they can trust their parents and are trusted by them, they are less likely to drink.

He/she thinks they already know it all. Some teens don't want to talk because they believe they already know everything there is to know about a topic. Teens may think they know everything, but they often do not. Don't let this objection stop you from trying to communicate.

Teen: "I've heard it all before. We don't need to talk."

Parent: "You probably already know quite a bit. It would make me feel better if we talked it through. Besides, it would help me to better understand how things are different from when I was your age."

Get Behind Zero Tolerance Laws

Zero tolerance laws reinforce the minimum drinking age. They make it illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drive with a measurable amount of alcohol in their blood (a BAC of higher than .00 to .02, depending on the specific law).

Zero tolerance laws can make teens automatically lose their license for underage drinking violations. Avoiding this penalty can motivate young people who value the privilege of driving.

Encourage your public safety officials to actively enforce these laws in your community. Zero tolerance laws reduce traffic deaths of young people.

Learn more online at: **madd.org/powerofparents**

STRATEGIES THAT HELP A TEEN SUCCEED

Teens are less likely to drink alcohol when their parents:

Respect their concerns, even when maintaining limits. Respect teens' urge for independence. However, it is still important to set clear rules against alcohol use and know where your teens are.

Give calm guidance. Offer clear-headed discussion and guidance about choices teens face that are important to their life path.

Empower choices. Encourage teens to make their own choices, even relatively minor ones, such as picking a place for the family dinner, choosing a movie to go see, and so on. Sometimes choices can be framed by the parent in ways that the teen is choosing between two desirable alternatives.

Phase in freedoms and challenges. Gradually reduce parental control so teens have more freedom and responsibility with each passing year—yet maintain limits against underage drinking.

5 REASONS THAT TEENS RESPECT

When you speak with your son or daughter about avoiding alcohol, emphasize the following reasons that make many teens choose not to drink:

Reason 1: Underage Drinking is Illegal

Most teens know it is illegal to drink under the age of 21. Still, they may assume they won't get caught or they are unfamiliar with Zero Tolerance laws, which prohibit driving after drinking any amount of alcohol. Remind your son or daughter that police do receive complaints about parties. When police arrive, they may arrest all who have been drinking underage.

State clearly that you expect your teen to obey the law. Discuss the potential consequences for breaking the law, such as the teen could have his or her license revoked or face expensive legal fees. The teen, you, and your family could be publicly embarrassed, since these arrests are routinely reported in newspapers. If a court date is scheduled, you may have to take time off from work and could lose pay.

Teens rarely consider all the possible legal consequences. Discussing the implications of an arrest can help deter underage drinking.

CAUTION: Terrifying your teen could backfire

Be truthful with your teen about risks, but avoid overly harsh scare tactics.

Too much scary information can make people "turn off" and not pay as much attention. Plus, if you paint a horrific picture of the consequences and your teen doesn't see them happen immediately when someone they know drinks, they will assume you were wrong or exaggerating.

Research clearly shows that the younger a person starts drinking, the greater the chance they will develop alcohol problems later in life.

Reason 2: Drinking Can Make You Sick or Pass Out

Alcohol irritates the lining of the digestive system. Drinking too much alcohol can make people vomit and feel bad for days (a condition known as a "hangover"). Other teens don't want to be around someone who is sick or passes out from too much drinking. Remind your teen that alcohol sickness can happen suddenly and with little warning.

Reason 3: Drinking Can Lead to Sexual Assault

Teens who are drinking are more vulnerable to dangerous situations and often can't escape the threat of rape or assault.

Your teen probably trusts the people she or he is around, and you may trust them too, but alcohol

can turn situations dangerous. Eighty-five percent of women who have been sexually assaulted were assaulted by someone they knew.

Reason 4: Drinking Can Lead to Early Death

Heavy drinking can damage the liver, kidneys, brain, and heart, all with serious long-term consequences.

However, even one night of heavy drinking can have life-changing results, including unprotected sex (which may lead to pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease, such as HIV), death from alcohol poisoning or choking on vomit, or car crashes that are fatal.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The best approach is to discuss negative consequences in a straightforward and honest manner.

Reason 5: Drinking Might Lead to Being an Alcoholic

Most teens have negative images of alcoholics, and most do not want to become alcoholics. Yet they believe they can control their drinking and will not become alcoholics.

Research clearly shows, however, that the younger a person starts drinking, the greater the chance they will develop alcohol problems later in life. Adults who started drinking at age 15 or 16 are five times as likely to be diagnosed with alcohol dependence as adults who started drinking after age 21.

Coffee Doesn't Work!

After you drink, the liver removes alcohol from your body and bloodstream. This process takes time and cannot be sped up.

As a result, there is no proven way to make a person sober quicker.

You can't get sober faster by:

- Drinking coffee • Exercising
- Eating food • Getting fresh air
- Taking a cold shower

Remind your teen: Never get in a car with a driver who is trying to sober up. Coffee and other methods just don't work.

HELPING YOUR TEEN MAKE GOOD CHOICES

The biggest reason why teens drink is peer pressure. A friend might directly suggest your child participate, saying "Let's go get drunk," or your teen might assume everyone else is doing it and that it's an acceptable thing to do.

You can't completely protect your son or daughter from peer pressure, but by teaching your teen to make good choices and by supervising and monitoring his or her activities, you can help shield your teen from the most dangerous situations.

DEALING WITH PEER PRESSURE

Sometimes, teens face situations where they are pressured to do something they would rather not do. For example, a friend might push your teen to have a drink when your son or daughter doesn't want to.

Your teen might be told:

- Come on, everyone has tried it.
- If you won't drink with us, then why are you hanging out with us?
- It's part of growing up.
- We drank once before, so what's the problem now?
- You'll have an incredible time if you do.
- Come on, take a drink. It will get you in the mood.
- You've been working too hard. You deserve to party.

Teens need ways to resist this pressure and rely on their own values, beliefs, and attitudes. You can suggest they use simple "one-liners" that remove the pressure without making a big scene or issue about it.

For example, your teen could respond simply:

- "It's just not for me; it's not what I want."
- "I don't drink."
- "No thanks."

Your teen might also consider:

- Offering an alternative, like "I'd rather have soda."

TIP

Let your teen know that not everyone their age is drinking. Teens often overestimate how many of their peers are drinking or have tried alcohol.

It's a fact

Anyone who has been drinking cannot accurately tell how drunk he or she is.

- Making an excuse, like "I have a test to study for tomorrow."
- Having an explanation, like "I really just don't like the taste."
- Changing the subject.

Encourage your teen to think of short, yet effective, responses. If your teen decides on "one-liners" beforehand, he or she will be prepared for an uncomfortable situation that might arise.

FINDING ALTERNATIVES TO DRINKING

Some teens have "positive" reasons (from their perspective) for why they might choose to drink. Help teens think of other ways to achieve similar goals.

Positive reason: Celebrate

Some teens believe that drinking helps celebrate a special occasion.

Alternatives: Encourage your teen to find other ways to celebrate positively. Options might be:

- Shopping for something special (e.g., clothes, music, sporting goods).
- Having an outing, such as dinner, that would include a few special friends.
- Offering to have friends over for a party (without alcohol).

Positive reason: Lower Stress

Some teens believe alcohol helps reduce worries.

Alternatives: Remind the teen that a problem does not go away because you drink (and, in fact, it may become worse). Help your teen find productive ways to confront problems directly, rather than avoid them.

Positive reason: Express Feelings and Reduce Inhibitions

Some teens believe that alcohol helps make it easier to express feelings or talk with members of the opposite sex.

Alternatives: Acknowledge how difficult certain social situations are for teens. But remind your teen that while alcohol might make him or her feel less shy, drinking actually clouds judgment. In addition, alcohol often confuses communication and leads to unwanted sexual advances, arguments, and sometimes fights.

Positive reason: Go Along with Friends

Your son or daughter may feel pressured to drink. This pressure can be direct, like when someone hands him or her a beer at a party, or it can be indirect, like when he or she wants to be part of a group that experiments with alcohol.

Alternatives: Parents can try to influence who their kids pick for friends, but parents cannot choose their kids' friends. Instead, help your teen understand the dynamics of peer pressure and how important it is to be his or her own person. Also, help your son or daughter plan how to react to situations where they could get pressured to drink, such as a friend bringing alcohol to a party.

Parent-Child Connections Help Your Teen Stay Safe!

Research shows that the more you connect with your kids…

- by having dinner together
- by talking together
- by enjoying activities
- by sharing feelings and concerns

…the more protected your kids are against alcohol and other drug use.

Keep Track of Your Teen

Ask your teen where he or she is going to be, especially on weekends. Have your teen check in periodically through the day and keep you informed.

While you cannot ban a friend, you can limit contact with friends who strongly pressure your teen to drink or engage in other dangerous behaviors.

Make sure all activities with high-risk friends are in supervised and structured settings with no alcohol.

Positive reason: Fit In

Even when peer pressure is not obvious, teens may feel that without drinking, they won't be seen as a true part of the group.

Alternatives: Emphasize to your teen that "war stories"—like who drank the most shots, who blacked-out, and who had the worst hangover—only highlight the dangers of drinking. Encourage your teen to focus on his or her own values and to overlook boasting about drinking and drunkenness.

Parents can try to influence who their kids pick for friends, but parents cannot choose their kids' friends.

Positive reason: Lift Mood

Many teens believe that alcohol will help them get in a better mood.

Alternatives: Reassure your teen that it is normal to feel sad and stressed at times. Explain that it's possible to improve their mood without alcohol or other drugs. Exercise is an excellent way to help improve mood.

Also note to your son or daughter that the "high" from alcohol is accompanied by extreme lows as well.

Positive reason: Something to Do

Some teens get bored and turn to alcohol as a means of entertaining themselves.

Alternatives: Encourage your teen to get involved in sports, hobbies, music, dance, games, reading, and school clubs. He or she could volunteer with organizations associated with causes they care about, such as protecting the environment, preventing drinking and driving, or promoting literacy.

Teens often go to parties as a means of entertainment. Since drinking frequently occurs at parties, it's a good idea to monitor and set limits about the kinds of parties your child attends (including leaving a party where alcohol is served). Suggest ways teens can enjoy themselves without alcohol.

CHOOSING FRIENDS

Friendships are very important to teens, and teens typically spend more and more time with friends. Parents need to know who their teens are spending time with and what their teens are doing on a daily basis. You can also encourage your teen to have healthy friendships.

Talk with your teen about the true meaning of friendship. True friendship is not based on superficial things like money, looks, popularity, or being with someone who is "cool."

True friendship is based on mutual respect, caring, understanding, trust, and concern. Real friends want to keep their friends safe and well.

When you discuss the meaning of friendship together, you'll help your teen think about choices. You can also help your teen avoid risky choices by monitoring his or her activities.

Keep tabs on your son or daughter to help your teen avoid dangerous, high-risk situations.

Teach Good Problem Solving

Help your teen practice these problem-solving skills:

1. Notice a problem.
2. Identify possible actions that might solve the problem.
3. Gather information about the pros and cons of each possible action.
4. Carefully examine the pros and cons, and select one option that seems best.
5. Carry through on the decision.

Do you worry that your teen is hanging around with the wrong crowd?

Monitor social activities and supervise parties. Before your teen attends a social event, contact the host teen's parents to make sure that the party will be supervised by adults and won't involve alcohol or other dangerous behaviors.

Don't ban a friend. If your teen has a friend you disapprove of, possibly the worst thing to do is forbid your teen from seeing that friend. Teens value their friendships highly and defend friends strongly. If you directly attack a friend, your son or daughter will feel compelled to defend the friend and explain all of the "good" features of the friendship. A better strategy is to include the friend you disapprove of in some family activities. Then you get a chance to know the friend and share your family values.

Encourage more friends. Encourage your son or daughter to participate in after-school programs, religious functions, or community centers where they can meet other teens with appropriate values. Making more friends helps prevent undue influence by a single "bad" friend.

Help teens avoid high-risk group situations. The most dangerous situations for teens are unsupervised group activities and parties. Teens find it especially tough to stand up against a group of friends pushing him or her to do something illegal, like drink alcohol. That's why it's so important to monitor your teen's activities and make sure he or she avoids these high-risk settings. Also, discuss ways your teen can resist peer pressure, to prepare for dangerous situations that might arise.

TIP

More Teens, More Risk

Teens find it hard to resist peer pressure, especially in a group.

Help your teen steer clear of trouble by monitoring his or her activities.

STEERING CLEAR OF DRIVING DANGERS

It is illegal for teens to drink alcohol, and it is illegal for teens to drink any amount of alcohol and drive.

An underage drinker might not feel tipsy or drunk and decide it's okay to drive after drinking. However, this is extremely dangerous. Even with small amounts of alcohol, teen drivers are more likely to be in a crash than older drivers after drinking.

Drinking and Driving

Most teens have a "here and now" perspective. They need your help to understand all of the short-term and long-term consequences of driving under the influence.

TIP Coach your teen about roadway hazards and safe driving principles. Ride in the car together and see how your teen is driving. Driver education classes are just the beginning.

Discuss the possible:

Legal outcomes

- Being charged with purchasing, having, or drinking alcohol underage; being charged with driving while under the influence.
- Fines.
- Car insurance rates could go up (unaffordable insurance may then prevent keeping a car).
- Reduced college options, due to admission policies of certain colleges.
- Alcohol citation may stay on legal record, depending on local regulations. (For a list of laws in your state visit www.madd.org.)
- License could be revoked.
- Jail time.

Physical outcomes

- Damage to car.
- Damage to other property.
- Personal injury—minor or lasting.
- Death.

Riding with an Impaired Driver

Someday your teen may be faced with deciding whether or not to ride in a car with an individual who has been drinking. Emphasize to your teen that getting in a car with any impaired driver is extremely dangerous.

Set a clear family rule: No riding with any driver under the age of 21 who has been drinking.

Discuss with your teen the danger of driving with anyone who may have had too much to drink. Help your teen make a plan in case he or she experiences an unsafe situation. Talk about effective alternatives, such as calling a taxi or asking someone else for a ride home.

Remind your teen that drinking coffee or other techniques for "sobering up" don't actually work. He or she should not rely on these techniques to make a friend a "safe and sober" driver.

Teens who don't consider all the consequences are more likely to drink and drive. Since teens pay most attention to short-term consequences, parents need to set clear no-alcohol use rules and enforce consequences.

Wrong Message?

Some parents worry that offering a ride home could send the wrong message and make teens believe it's okay to drink alcohol.

Even if you offer a ride home, you can still enforce previously established consequences for breaking the no-alcohol rule.

Assure your teen that safety is the first priority. When teens have good communication with their parents and trust that their parents won't overreact (by getting angry and setting harsh or unknown punishments), teens are more likely to call home for help.

Encourage teens to call if they need a safe ride home. When your teen calls you to pick him or her up because either he or she or someone else has been drinking:

1. Pick up your teen and get him or her home safely. Be calm and not angry on the way home.
2. If the established household rule has been broken, pick the soonest appropriate time to discuss consequences with your teen. It may be best to wait until the next day.
3. Talk again about the rules and consequences. You only want to keep him or her safe from harm.

Alcohol is More Dangerous for Young Drivers

Young drivers are at greater risk for crashing than adult drivers, even with low levels of alcohol in the blood.

- Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens (15-20 years old), and 31% of teen traffic deaths are alcohol-related.
- In 2007, nearly one-third of all drivers killed in car crashes under age 20 had .01 blood alcohol content (BAC) or higher; 26% had .08 or higher BAC.
- In 2008, almost a third of teen drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes had blood alcohol levels at or above the adult limit.

Tips for Keeping Teens Safe on the Road

MADD recommends that parents make clear rules about driving to help keep their teens safe. In particular, parents should become familiar with the provisions of graduated licensing and zero tolerance laws in their state and firmly enforce those rules at a minimum. These laws typically set night driving restrictions for young drivers and set limits on passengers. Both of these rules are very important to the safety of teen drivers.

Take the following steps shown to help keep teens safe:

- Set no-alcohol use rules.
- Tell your teen to always buckle up in all seats of the car.
- Tell your teen to slow down and respect the speed limit.
- Do not allow your teen to make phone calls or text messages while driving. The best way to prevent this activity is to have your phone off while driving.
- Limit the number of passengers allowed in the car when your teen is driving.
- Limit nighttime and weekend driving for your teen.
- Set curfews on the time your teen needs to be home to limit the amount of risk.
- Know where your teen is by monitoring his or her activities.

Graduated Drivers License (GDL) Laws

Each state offers a type of graduated driver licensing that phases in privileges for new drivers. GDL is an important public safety tool; it prevents about one in five crashes for teen drivers. Learn the GDL laws in your state, and make sure that your teen is obeying them.

Learn more online at:
madd.org/powerofparents

COULD YOUR TEEN HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM?

Your teen could already be drinking, and even have a drinking problem, if 1) alcohol is missing from bottles or cans in your home, or 2) you've discovered alcohol hidden in your teen's backpack, car, or room. Your teen may have a problem with alcohol if he or she is:

- Using breath mints or mouthwash heavily—these may be an attempt to mask the odor of alcohol
- More sluggish and passive than usual, and doesn't care as much about former interests or appearance
- Unusually aggressive or rebellious
- Hanging around with different friends and is more secretive than usual
- Struggling with grades or skipping school
- Borrowing money more often
- Acting drunk and intoxicated, stumbling or moving awkwardly, slurring speech and has a dull, unfocused look or bloodshot eyes

These signs suggest your teen may have a drinking problem.

If you think your son or daughter might have a drinking problem, do not turn your back on the problem.

DO

- Discuss the problem calmly with your son or daughter.
- Explain that you are concerned and willing to help.
- Stay awake when your teen stays out late, when possible, and show you are interested in what they are doing.
- Seek professional help to handle this situation.

DON'T

- Take over your teen's responsibilities. Instead, provide him or her with the means to take responsibility for himself or herself.
- Argue with your son or daughter if she or he is drunk.
- Make excuses or cover up for your son or daughter.

Need more help?

If your teen is drinking, find resources for help at the back of this handbook.

DISCUSSION CHECKLIST

Remember to cover these points when you talk with your teen:

1. Emphasize the fact that drinking is illegal for teens and for very good reasons.
2. Let your teen know that not everyone their age is drinking. Teens often overestimate how many of their peers are drinking or have tried alcohol.
3. Talk about how drinking affects the brain. Teens need to know how drinking will affect them and that a person who is drinking is not a good judge of how impaired they are.
4. Explain your own position concerning your teen's drinking. Discuss your family's rules about alcohol and agree on the consequences for breaking the rules.
5. Talk about what sometimes motivates teens to drink, and discuss alternatives for achieving those goals.
6. Discuss reasons for NOT drinking and the many bad consequences that can result from drinking.
7. Help your teen brainstorm ways to resist inappropriate peer pressure. Reinforce that you want to help your son or daughter find constructive alternatives to drinking.

Tell your teen:

- "I care about you and want you to stay safe. That's why I need to know where you are."
- "You matter so much to me; that's why we need to talk about how risky alcohol is for teens."
- "I love you and want you to have the brightest future possible. That's why there's no drinking until you turn 21."

Remember, parents do matter. Have the conversation about alcohol today.

PROMOTING A SAFER COMMUNITY

Even one parent can influence policy makers and enforcement agencies and help assure a safe and healthy environment. MADD urges you to get involved by taking the steps below.

Step 1: Support strong laws. Tell lawmakers that you support the 21 minimum drinking age and want to cut off teens' ability to obtain alcohol. Encourage programs that:

- Require registration and tracking of beer kegs.
- Support social host laws that penalize adults who host underage drinking parties.
- Limit new or renewed liquor licenses in your community.
- Support 21 minimum age purchase laws.

Step 2: Push for strong enforcement. Ask police officials and judges to actively enforce "zero tolerance" laws and programs that fight underage drinking. For example:

- After an underage drinker has a traffic crash, officials should find out how the youths got the alcohol and hold those parties accountable.
- Identify and penalize retailers that illegally sell alcohol to youth.
- Support sanctions against youth who attempt to purchase alcohol or who use fake IDs to purchase alcohol.

Step 3: Involve educators. Contact your schools and colleges and ask what they're doing to prevent underage drinking. When looking at college campuses with your teen, understand and question college policies on underage drinking to ensure your teen is safe.

Step 4: Hold advertisers accountable. When you see alcohol marketing that targets young people, complain and push to have that advertising removed. For more information, visit madd.org/powerofparents.

Get Behind 21

Numerous studies show the 21 drinking age law has reduced underage drinking and saved thousands of lives.

IN CONCLUSION

To help keep your teen safe:

- Begin talking together about alcohol.
- Listen to your teen's concerns respectfully, and use positive parenting techniques.
- Set clear no-alcohol use rules, and agree on appropriate consequences for breaking these rules.
- Enforce consequences when the rules are broken.
- Discuss short-term and long-term risks of underage alcohol use.
- Help your teen plan how to deal with social pressure to drink alcohol.
- Keep track of where your teen is, and with whom.
- Make sure your teen is in a supervised, alcohol-free environment.
- Work with other parents and community leaders to make and enforce policies that keep alcohol away from underage youth.
- Support the 21 Minimum Drinking Age law.

MORE RESOURCES

MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

madd.org/powerofparents

madd.org/powerofyouth

ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS

adultchildren.org

CASACOLUMBIA FAMILY DAY

casafamilyday.org

CENTER FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

prevention.samhsa.gov

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

cdc.gov/alcohol

HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER FOR ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG PREVENTION

edc.org/hec

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG INFORMATION

health.org

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE

ncadd.org

NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM

niaaa.nih.gov

NATIONWIDE INSURANCE

makesafehappen.com

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY/DR. TURRISI

bbh.hhdev.psu.edu/lab/prcprohealth

RESEARCH SOCIETY ON ALCOHOLISM

rsoa.org

SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS

ed.gov/offices/oese/sdfs

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

samhsa.gov

Parenting is the process of empowering your teen to become an effectively functioning and happy adult.

POWER of PARENTS

madd®

PowerTalk 21®

April 21st is the national day to talk with your kids about alcohol.

Founded by a mother whose daughter was killed by a drunk driver, **Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD)** is the nation's largest nonprofit working to protect families from drunk driving and underage drinking. With the help of those who want a safer future, MADD's **Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving®** will end this danger on America's roads. **PowerTalk 21®** is the national day for parents to talk with their kids about alcohol, using the proven strategies of **Power of Parents®** to reduce the risk of underage drinking. And as one of the largest victim services organizations in the U.S., MADD also supports drunk and drugged driving victims and survivors at no charge, serving one person every 8.6 minutes through local MADD victim advocates and at **1-877-MADD-HELP**. Learn more at **madd.org** or by calling **1-877-ASK-MADD**.

NATIONAL PRESENTING SPONSOR

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NATIONAL SUPPORTING PARTNER

GM FOUNDATION

NATIONAL PROGRAM PARTNERS

NFL · PTA everychild.onevoice. · NASSP National Association of Secondary School Principals · AASA · DFAA Drug Free Action Alliance · NASRO · NOYS · THE PARTNERSHIP AT DRUGFREE.ORG · DSAA · Family Day

MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING

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Irving, Texas 75062

madd.org/powerofparents
1.877.ASK.MADD

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Parent/Teen Agreement on No Underage Drinking and Driving

- ❑ I have had a conversation with my parent(s) about drugs and alcohol and understand their expectations.
- ❑ I understand that alcohol use may damage my brain and that it increases the likelihood of:
  - ❑ Damage to car.
  - ❑ Damage to other property.
  - ❑ Personal injury—minor or lasting.
  - ❑ Death.
  - ❑ Being charged with purchasing, having, or drinking alcohol underage;
  - ❑ Being charged with driving while under the influence.
  - ❑ Fines.
  - ❑ Car insurance rates going up to unaffordable rates
  - ❑ Reduced college and career options
  - ❑ License revocation.
  - ❑ Jail time.
- ❑ I promise that I will respect laws about drugs and alcohol. This means
  - ❑ I will drive only when I am alcohol and drug free.
  - ❑ I will never allow any alcohol or illegal drugs in the car.
  - ❑ I will not ride in a car with a driver who has had any amount of alcohol.
  - ❑ I will call my parents or another responsible adult if I need a safe ride home.

Consequences for Agreement Violations

- ❑ Drove after drinking or using drugs.
- ❑ Allowed alcohol or illegal drugs in the car.
- ❑ Rode with a drinking driver.

No driving for [ ] months.

Other: _____

Driver Pledge

I agree to follow the aforementioned rules and restrictions. I understand that my parents will impose penalties, including removal of my driving privileges, if I violate this agreement. I also understand that my driving privileges may be increased as I gain experience and demonstrate that I am a safe and responsible driver.

Signature: Driver_____ Date _____

Parent Pledge

I also agree to drive safely and be an excellent role model.

Signature: Parent_____ Date_____
Parent_____ Date_____

Adapted from Parents are the Key- Parent/Teen Driving Agreement http://www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey

PARENTS WHO HOST LOSE THE MOST®

GOOD PARENTING MATTERS

TALK WITH YOUR TEENS

- Teens are five times less likely to drink if they have a parent who delivers a clear and consistent message that under-aged drinking is totally unacceptable.
- It is a crime for parents to host underage drinking parties.
- Studies have shown that adult supervised settings for alcohol use, intended to minimize harm, actually result in higher levels of harmful alcohol consequences for young people!
- Set clear expectations.
- Be an adult role model.
- Drinking and driving is illegal for anyone.
- Protect your children.
- Teen drinking harms the developing brain.
- Teen drinking increases the risk for injury, pregnancy, sexual assault, and academic failure.

VAHPERD
Virginia Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance

DFAA
Drug Free Action Alliance

Teen Drinking is Costly to Teens, Families, and Communities

FIND OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW | www.PreventUnderageDrinkingVA.com