

Keeping Kids Safe

Underage Drinking 101

PARENTS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE: Make your kids aware!

The growth and development of our children will continue well into their twenties. At some point before turning 21, it is possible teenagers will be confronted with alcohol- the number one drug chosen by youth. Our children are experiencing major changes in their life during adolescence that affect the way they make decisions. Parents *must* take an active part to help ensure their children are making the right decisions by talking about the truths and dangers of underage drinking.



The Problem:

- About 5,000 youth die every year in incidents involving alcohol consumption including car accidents, homicides, suicides, and drowning.
- Those who drink at an early age are more likely to have future alcohol abuse problems.
- “Thrill seeking” is normal among adolescents due to increased brain development. Teenagers have a propensity to engage in dangerous behaviors, such as underage drinking.
- Memory loss, failing grades, unprotected sex, alcohol poisoning, suicide, further experimentation with drugs, and hindered body development are real consequences that must be associated with routine underage drinking.
- Media advertising adds to the appeal of alcohol for kids; consistently presenting alcohol as the basis for very attractive people having a very good time without consequences.
- Teenagers may find alcohol a source of “liquid courage” and social confidence. This is easily the first step on to a very slippery slope of relying on alcohol in social settings- settings wherein personal judgment needs to be sharp!

The Solutions:

- Parents have a great influence on their children. Set clear rules on drinking alcohol and be sure to consistently enforce these rules. Let your children know you are NOT oblivious, that you DO pay attention and that you really DO CARE about their safety.
- Research shows that a child is less likely to drink when they feel close and supported by their parents. Elicit an open conversation about alcohol with your children. Let them express what they see and hear from their peers and the media, and then reflect on it together. This can enhance your child’s decision-making process.
- Make communicating with your children an ongoing process. Try to picture your responses and questions to what your child might say- this will generate a more productive conversation. Consistency will yield greater results with your children.
- Take the initiative to know the parents of your teen’s circle of friends and assure “same page” thinking about underage drinking.
- Be your teen’s reliable source of safety. If they need a ride home to avoid drinking, or drinking and driving, get them home safely and confront the issues when you both can do so constructively.



Rockwood Drug-Free Coalition
www.RockwoodCoalition.org