



Promoting Health and Wellness in our Community

December, 2022

The holidays can be a hectic time, jammed with preparations for family parties or get-togethers with friends. While parents likely have their hands full during this time, it's important for them to be diligent with their kids when it comes to underage drinking prevention. Peer pressure and opportunities for young people to engage in drinking alcohol usually increase during the holiday season.

Everyone looks forward to enjoying the holidays — but for those under 21, alcohol should not be part of the mix. Teens who have experienced a bit of freedom while away at college may find it hard to give that up now, so parents should have an open discussion with their child and clearly express their expectations upfront. Let your child know the reasons why you don't want them drinking, focusing on the risks and potential consequences. Some parents might think that underage drinking is unavoidable — that it's "a rite of passage" — but studies show that parents who had zero tolerance for drinking were the top reason that their teens did not drink.

A dangerous trend I hear about lately is that more parents are allowing their teenagers to attend parties where alcohol is served. Some even allow their teens to drink at home thinking that it is better than them drinking elsewhere which is a myth. Studies show that supplying alcohol to minors actually increases, rather than decreases the risk for continued drinking in the teenage years and leads to subsequent problem drinking later in life. **In the 2021-2022 Middletown Student Health and Wellness Survey Report, 40 percent of students said they had alcohol with their parents on special occasions and 88 percent said they got alcohol at a friend's house. Another concerning finding from the report was that students reported planning sleepovers at homes where the possibility of drinking was greater.**

Most importantly, talk to your teen about the dangers of impaired driving. Help them create an exit plan to ensure they never get into a car with an intoxicated driver. Let them know they can count on you to come pick them up. If the situation arises where your teen needs a ride home or money for an Uber, having a no-questions-asked family policy in place can be a lifesaver — literally.

Other ways you can help your teen have a safe, alcohol-free holiday season, is to monitor the alcohol in your home and remember to model responsible behavior around alcohol yourself. If your child is attending a holiday party at a friend's, connect with the friend's parents and let them know your zero-tolerance stance on underage drinking.

I wish all a safe, happy, and healthy holiday season, filled with family, friends and warmth!

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