

# Cheltenham Communities That Care

## PARENT SUPPORT & RESPONSIBILITY WITH TEENS AND ALCOHOL

### What are the laws concerning alcohol in Pennsylvania?

According to the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board:

- It is illegal to sell or provide alcohol to anyone under 21, even to your own children or for religious occasions. Violations can involve fines of \$1,000 for the first offense and \$2,500 for each subsequent offense, as well as up to a year in jail.
- A minor who uses a fake ID or lies about their age to obtain, buy, or transport alcohol will lose their driver's license for 90 days for the first offense, for one year for the second offense, and for two years for each additional offense, as well as fines up to \$500 plus court costs for the first offense. If the minor does not yet have a driver's license, they will be ineligible to apply for the length of the suspension.
- Any minor who is found driving a vehicle with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of .02% can be arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). Fines and penalties will be enforced.
- 18-21 year-old DUI offenders are processed as adults. First offense penalties involve fines up to \$5,000, a one-year driver's license suspension, and mandatory participation in highway safety school.



Image from GetSMART.com



Parents enjoy sharing in the celebration of the milestones in their children's lives, such as prom and high school graduation, which are often regarded as stepping stones or a rite of passage from adolescence into adulthood. Unfortunately, some regard this rite of passage as a time for minors to rejoice with alcohol.

While there are parents who will not permit drinking in their homes, there are other parents who feel that if teens are going to drink alcohol, it might as well be at their house where they can provide a level of supervision. This decision might be offered as a compromise by parents with good intentions, and only for special occasions such as a graduation party. However, please remember that permitting a minor to consume alcohol is not a privilege or a rite of passage. Such actions promote underage drinking and are considered illegal.

## Here are some tips to consider when hosting parties for youth at your home.

### THERE WILL BE PARTY UPSTAIRS FOR ADULTS AND ONE IN THE BASEMENT FOR TEENS. ONLY ADULTS WILL BE SERVED ALCOHOL.

- **Do your best to keep alcohol in one location that is not accessible to teens.** Remember, regardless of whether or not you provided alcohol to minors, if youth are drinking in your house, you are responsible. If the party gets noisy, neighbors could complain. If the police are called and they find minors drinking alcohol, there will be penalties.
- **Talk to your child(ren) about not engaging in underage drinking.** Keep the conversation calm, and listen to their opinions, but be clear and firm about yours. Speak often and honestly.
- **Welcome all questions.** If you don't know an answer, do some research and then resume your discussion.
- **Discuss and practice scenarios in which your teen's friends are suggesting they drink alcohol.** Teach your teen how to say no and stand strong. If they are in an uncomfortable situation, where they are feeling too much pressure to drink, let them know that they can call or text you to pick them up. You could even develop a code word.
- **Talk to other parents about your views and rules about alcohol.** Do not be judgmental of theirs, but rather ask for their respect and support of your family standards.
- **Make sure your child(ren) understand that it is not safe to be driven by someone who has been drinking alcohol.**



### YOU ALLOW YOUR TEEN TO HAVE A PARTY AT YOUR HOME. YOU CLEARLY EXPLAIN THAT ALCOHOL (AND OTHER SUBSTANCES) ARE NOT PERMITTED.

- Explain that **minors drinking alcohol is not permitted in your home**—no exceptions.
- **Establish rules** about guests bringing alcohol into your home for youth, and punishments that will result.
- While checking on the teens, if you find even one teen drinking alcohol, **do not ignore the problem** so that the teens might regard you as the “cool” parent. Act responsibly by explaining the problem and then canceling the party. **Make sure those who were drinking leave the party with a responsible driver**, such as a parent who has been called to pick up their child.
- **Contact the parents of all who attended the party and explain what happened**, without identifying the offenders, and state how you dealt with the situation.
- **Discuss the situation with your child(ren).** Talk about why the actions were taken and what preventions could have been put in place.

#### **Underage drinking is not a minor problem. Here are additional resources:**

- [Alcohol Use and Your Health](#)
- [Make a Difference: Talk to Your Child About Alcohol – Parents](#)
- [Parents Who Host Lose the Most](#)
- [SAMHSA Teens and Alcohol Resources and Talk They Hear You App](#)
- [Talking with Teens About Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
- [Underage Drinking](#)