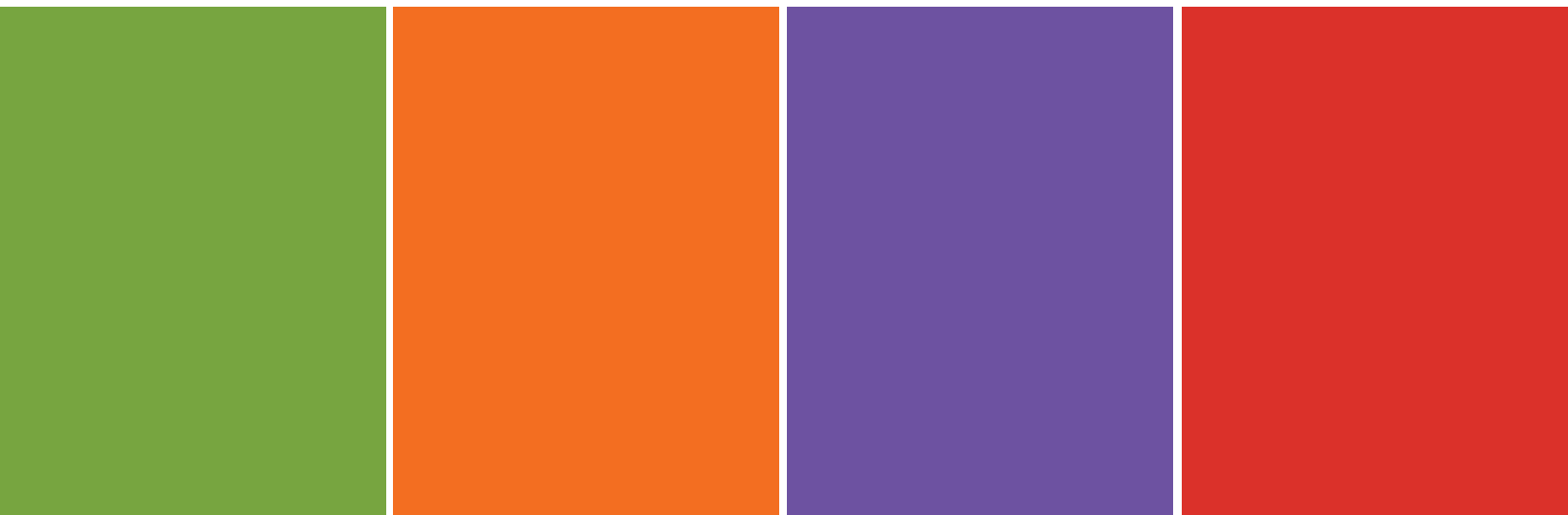


Safe Party PARENT TOOLKIT



A Community Coalition



Dedicated To Keeping Our Youth Drug And Alcohol-Free



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PARTIES

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**Why Should
Parents Care
about
Underage
Drinking**

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SECTION 1 **Socialization, relaxation and entertainment are an important part of young people's lives.**

Parties can be a great way for teens to celebrate. Unfortunately, hosting or going to a party often includes other activities that could prove harmful to teens. In fact, of teens who drink in our community, 61% report that they obtained the alcohol from social sources, such as at a party.

Dances in our community gives rise to the "after-party," a get-together with friends after the dance ends. Whether your teen wants to host an after-party or attend one, it is your right to expect that the after-party remain free from alcohol/drug use and other risk-taking behaviors. This guide is intended to help you ensure that happens.

SECTION 2

Why Should Parents Care about Underage Drinking



BRAIN DEVELOPMENT: Research shows that drinking alcohol before age 21 can ALTER the development of the brain and can cause problems with important cognitive skills of teens, such as attention, learning and memory. Underage drinking also increases the teen's risk of developing alcohol dependence later in life.

ALCOHOL POISONING: You can overdose on alcohol. A person with a blood alcohol level of .08 is considered legally intoxicated, and any more in the system can lead to alcohol poisoning and even death.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES: Alcohol increases the risks of unplanned sexual activity, sexual assault, fights, trouble with the law, drowning, etc.

It's AGAINST THE LAW for your teen: In Illinois, if you are under the age of 21, it is a violation of the law to possess alcohol with the intent to consume. Youth under 21 who drink and drive can lose their license for up to one year for small amounts of alcohol and face jail time for larger amounts.

It's AGAINST THE LAW for parents/caregivers to host a party where alcohol is served. The Illinois Social Host Law holds parents or other adults accountable for knowingly permitting underage youth to consume alcoholic beverages at their residence or on other property they own or otherwise control. Potential fines range from \$500 to \$25,000, and penalties can even include jail time. If a minor who was drinking at your house injures or kills someone, you could be held civilly liable and/or charged with a Class 4 felony. Remember: If you contact the police and request assistance before anyone files a complaint, you can avoid prosecution for social host statute.



SECTION 2 What parents can do about it: **TALK, TALK, TALK.**

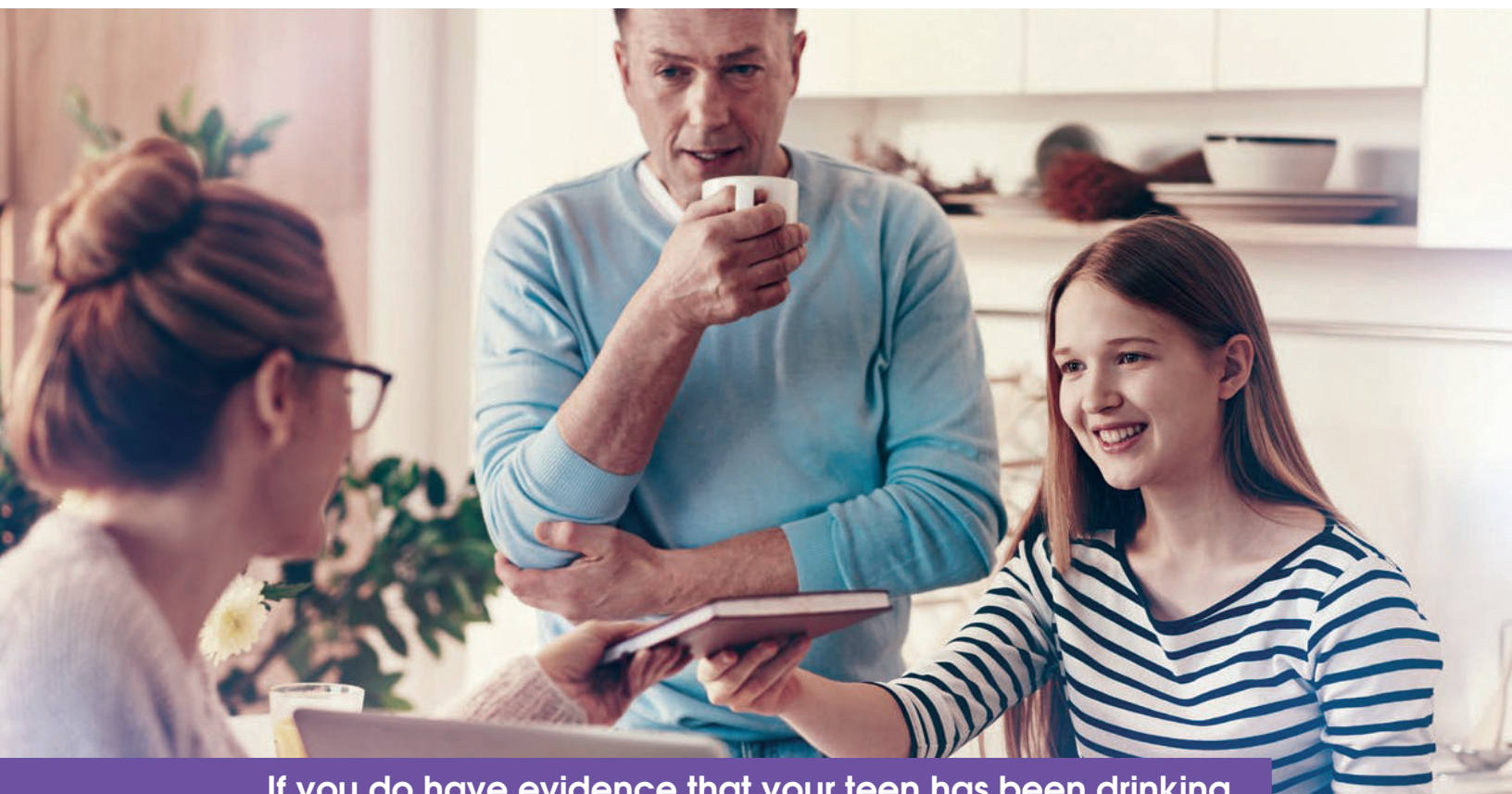
The majority of students in our community do NOT drink alcohol. It is not a rite of passage. Research has shown that the #1 influence on whether a teen decides to drink alcohol is his or her parents. The best way you can prevent your child from drinking is to set clear, specific rules and give clear, non-use messages. Even though it doesn't seem like it, your child is listening.

CONVERSATION TIPS:

- **Start Early.** Setting and enforcing clear expectations about not using alcohol as a teenager are key to delaying first use. That's important, since the younger adolescents are when they first use alcohol, the more likely they are to deal with its negative consequences.
- **Keep Communication Open.** Be interested in your teen's life, and be open to information s/he may share. Not only will this make it easier to talk about difficult issues regarding alcohol and other topics, but it also will give you information about where your teen may be facing pressure or temptation to use alcohol.

*It isn't
one 60 minute
conversation,
it is 60,
One-Minute
Conversations!*

- **Set clear, specific rules** about alcohol use. Teens who have well-defined, alcohol-specific rules are less likely to start drinking. Those who start later are likely to drink less.
- **Make it clear** that drinking is not permitted under any circumstances and let your teen know that you trust them not to drink alcohol.
- **Help your child build self-reliance** by asking them how they plan to deal with situations such as being offered alcohol or being invited to ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking. While we have come a long way communicating the risks of drinking and driving with our youth, still, 7% of seniors in our community admitted to driving a car while high or while using alcohol or drugs.
- **Wait up** (or set an alarm) for your teen to return from being out with friends so that you can chat about what happened. Strive to convey love and concern, not mistrust.
- **Create a plan** with your teen about what to do if your teen is in a situation that involves alcohol. This could include an agreement to call you for help at any time, with no questions asked at the time (though consequences could be in place after the immediate danger has passed). You can even create a code word that means you will come get your teen immediately.



If you do have evidence that your teen has been drinking, confront them. Don't minimize it.

OTHER ACTIONS

- **Band together with other parents:** 99% of local parents believe it is wrong to provide alcohol to teens. So know that other parents are likely to share some of your concerns. Create a pact to work together to keep parties and get-togethers alcohol free (for example, by ensuring that an adult is around when parties happen). Stevenson's Patriot Parent Association (PPA) offers members access to an online directory which includes the names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of SHS families. For more information or to join the PPA, visit their page on the SHS website.
- **Support broader school and community efforts.** Underage drinking is not a teen problem or a family problem. Prevention of underage drinking requires many people and systems working together, including efforts by all sectors of our community to support and reinforce appropriate rules and consequences. As you're able, link to and support these broader efforts, RECOGNIZING THE VALUE THAT BROADER EFFORTS CAN PROVIDE FOR PARENTS. Join Stand Strong's efforts and volunteer your time! Email Hanna Wierzba at hwierzba@standstrongcoalition.org
- **Limit access:** If you have alcohol at home, keep track of it. Know what you have, how much you have and keep it where it is not accessible to teens. Take a moment to always thank store clerks for carding.



- **Do not allow teens to drink in the home.** Though some people advocate letting adolescents drink at home so they can learn to consume alcohol “responsibly,” research indicates that doing so increases the risks of underage drinking. Those whose parents provide alcohol have the greatest increases in drinking behavior, and are more likely to drink more heavily away from home.

Source: (Lancet, “Association of parental supply of alcohol with adolescent drinking, alcohol-related harms, and alcohol use disorder symptoms: a prospective.” Cohort study Richard P. Mattick, Phillip J. Clare, et al.)

- Alert the police if you have information about where and how teens are obtaining alcohol in your community. You can always report to the police anonymously BUT, if you prefer, you can use Text-A-Tip. Text-A-Tip is a 24/7 anonymous text crisis hotline offering emotional support for middle school and high school youth. Text SHS to 1-844-823-5323 and within seconds, you will receive an automated response, and within minutes a live mental health counselor will respond to your text.

“ Adolescence is *the* most important period of life for learning. It’s not the time to block the ability of the brain to change with experience - and that’s exactly what alcohol does.”

Women who are pregnant are advised to abstain from alcohol and drug use in order to protect their infant’s brain during this important growth stage. For these same reasons, parents should protect their teen’s developing brain from the disruptive effects of alcohol. ”

Dr. Aaron White, Duke University Medical School.



SECTION 4 Party Night!

Pre-Event Pictures. With the advent of social media, the pre-event “picture” gathering can be almost as exciting for teens as the actual dance. Consider a no-alcohol policy at this event for the adults. Teens watch what we do and if we make alcohol an important part of our celebration, they may too.

After-party. The following is a list of suggestions based on what CAN happen and are not meant to be scary. Remember, most teens in our community do NOT drink.

SECTION 4 **If you are the host:**

- Set the ground-rules with your teen and his or her friends before the party.
- Set clear expectations and specify consequences if expectations are not met.
- Encourage small parties that are invitation only as they are easier to control and monitor. Do not allow for last minute changes.
- Contact parents of every attendee before the party. Share your expectations of a sober event and ask parents to share these expectations with their teen. Obtain cell phone information for all attendee's parents.
- Invite other parents to stop by and help chaperone.
- If a teen is sleeping over, ask her parents to check her bag prior to leaving home.
- Check your entire home prior to party, including all entrances and check for hidden substances in bushes around the outside of the house, removable ceiling tiles, window sills, storage areas, etc.
- Remove all access to alcohol and prescription drugs.
- Notify the neighbors and the police when planning a large party.
- An adult chaperone should be present and visible throughout the party. Do not allow siblings to chaperone and do not remain in a different area throughout the party.
- Monitor all entrances/exits and watch for inappropriate or prolonged activity outdoors, in the restrooms, or elsewhere in your home.
- Do not have your own guests over unless they agree to help chaperone.
- All keys should be collected from teens when they arrive.
- All keys to the home and family car should be safely locked away.
- Anyone who leaves the party should not be allowed to return. If this happens, notify the guest's parents.
- Be alert for signs of alcohol or other drug use. If you suspect a teen is intoxicated, call 911 and then call their parent.
- Do not hesitate to call the police if the party gets out of hand. You will not be charged with social host if you call the police before they call you!

SECTION 4 **When your child is invited somewhere else.**

- Contact the parents of the party host to verify plans and verify that no drugs or alcohol will be permitted. Do not be afraid to communicate your family's "no use" rules. Remember, you can look up most parents phone numbers in the PPA online directory. For more information, visit <https://www.d125.org/parents/patriot-parent-association>
- Offer to help chaperone the party.
- Know where the party is and how to get there.
- Let your teen know to call you with any change in plans.
- Ask your teen to call you from the host parent's home phone or consider obtaining a GPS "app" to monitor location of your teen's cell phone.
- Check the ending time to make sure it's consistent with local curfew restrictions.
- Be awake when your teen comes home, or have your teen waken you when he/she arrives. Talk to your teen and inquire about the party. Night time is often when teens are most talkative!
- If your teen is staying overnight, plans should be made prior to the party and verified with the other parent. Consider a no-sleepover policy for parties as this is often how teens keep their alcohol and drug use hidden from their parents.
- Allow your teen to always feel comfortable to call home for a ride or assistance. Establish code words with your teen that indicate their need for your assistance



SECTION 4 **Consider alternatives**

Consider alternatives to a party in the basement. Teens tell us that one of the reasons kids drink alcohol is that they are just bored. Here is a list of some ideas to keep them busy and entertained!

Amusement Parks

Arcades

Bowling

Escape Rooms

Fitness Centers

Mini Golf

Movie Theaters

Park District Activities