

Talking to Teens About Drinking



Help for Parents on Talking to their
Teens about Alcohol



By working together, we can make a difference

By starting to read this booklet, *Talking to Teens About Drinking*, you are showing how much you care about your children regarding a very important issue facing them, and you as parents...underage drinking. This booklet is designed to help prevent underage drinking by encouraging open, honest communication between parents and children. Research among youth consistently shows that parents have the greatest influence on children's decisions about drinking.

Along with parents, tackling underage drinking requires a team approach: teachers, community groups, businesses, members of the alcohol beverage industry and many others. The **Illinois Principals Association** and the **Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois** have joined together to develop this booklet not only because underage drinking can cause harm to children, but more importantly, because many of us are parents ourselves. And just like most parents, we want our children to live happy, healthy lives by making smart choices, resisting peer pressure, respecting the law and avoiding underage drinking.

Thank you for your interest in this booklet and we hope it helps you feel a bit more at ease about talking to your children about alcohol.





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Why A Parent Guide?

Because alcohol use by American youths has shown a decline in recent years. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse shows that 82% of Illinois adolescents are NOT current drinkers. In addition, the 2002 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data (FARS*) and the U.S. Department of Transportation report that teen drunk driving fatalities have decreased 57% since 1982 and 24% since 1990.

While this is good news, in no way does it mean it's time to stop working to prevent underage drinking. It gives the alcohol beverage industry and Illinois educators encouragement to continue our efforts. According to the experts, we will see a continued decline in underage drinking and teenage drunk driving only if everyone acknowledges his or her important role in prevention.

For teenagers, that means education about alcohol. This begins in the home and continues in the classroom. Teens need to learn what alcohol really is and how it affects their minds and their bodies, and the dangers of drunk driving.

For parents, prevention means talking to their children about drinking – especially around prom and graduation when parties take place. It means setting rules and expectations about their teenagers' behavior. Just as important, if parents choose to drink, it means setting an example by consuming alcohol responsibly themselves.

We don't have to be the parent of a teenager to be affected by underage drinking. We're all in this together. And together, we can help reduce underage drinking.



*Fatal Analysis Reporting System



The Goal:

- ◆ Prevent underage alcohol consumption by helping parents talk to their children about drinking.

The Audience:

Parents, you are the most influential people in your teen's life. Believe it or not...

- ◆ They want to learn from you.
- ◆ They want protective boundaries.
- ◆ They don't want to disappoint you.



The Basic Guidelines:

- ◆ Be a good role model.
- ◆ Know the facts.
- ◆ Have clearly stated expectations.
- ◆ Know your children's friends.
- ◆ Get help if you need it.





Why Talk About Alcohol With Your Teen?

Underage alcohol consumption can be prevented.

- ◆ Teens are less likely to drink alcohol when:
 - Parents explain they expect “NO USE” before age 21 and monitor their children’s activities.
 - Access is difficult, both in the home and in the community.
- ◆ Underage youth are less likely to drink and drive when the zero tolerance laws and consequences are publicized and enforced.
- ◆ Progress has been made. In 1998, the percentage of adolescents who reported having a drink in the last 30 days was 45% lower than it was in 1982.¹

Underage alcohol consumption could affect your teen.

- ◆ Studies show that 60% of Illinois high school juniors and seniors said they drank two or fewer days within the last month, with 0 days accounting for the largest percentage, 36%.²
- ◆ 48% of Illinois high school juniors and seniors have ridden, in the past month, with a driver who had been drinking.²

Underage alcohol consumption is against the law.

- ◆ The minimum legal drinking age is 21 years of age in all 50 states.
- ◆ On average, young people who drink alcohol begin drinking at 13.1 years of age, long before the legal age of 21.⁶

Underage alcohol consumption can lead to tragedy.

- ◆ Alcohol use is a factor in the four leading causes of death in young people ages 10-24: motor vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide and suicide.³
- ◆ Young people who engage in the high-risk behavior of drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are twice as likely to have sex,⁵ four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence,⁵ and more likely to use marijuana and cocaine than those who don’t.⁴

What Parents Can Do For Their Teen

Recognize times of concern:

By having a close, supportive relationship with your teen, you can watch for times when your child might need extra help and know when your support should be subtle. Even teens who aren't going through obvious stress may think about using alcohol out of curiosity or rebellion. Be alert during:

- ◆ Transition years at school: moving from elementary to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college; or attending a new school.
- ◆ Times of increased independence: staying home alone, being allowed to date, riding in cars with friends, beginning to drive.
- ◆ Times of personal and family turmoil: a family move, a death or divorce, breakup of a relationship, loss of a friend or pet.
- ◆ Times of struggle: having an undiagnosed or untreated learning disability, depression, or mental illness, trying to fit in with friends; being bullied, harassed, or abused.

Recognize and respond to warning signs:

- ◆ Watch your child for a change of friends, drop in grades, lack of interest in sports or hobbies, mood swings, secretiveness and dishonesty, or nausea, vomiting, headaches and bloodshot eyes.
- ◆ Monitor regularly to see if alcoholic beverages are missing from the home.

For Example:

- ➔ Tony and Jan are worried about their son, Scott. Twice in the last month, he has been sick on Saturday morning. Last night, he wasn't where he said he would be. They have decided to talk to him about their concerns and get counseling for him if he has problems.





Maintain a positive parent-teen relationship:

- ◆ Spend time with your teen.
- ◆ Be present and be involved with your teen.
- ◆ Open your home to your teen's friends.
- ◆ Allow your teen to make age-appropriate decisions.



For Example:

- ➔ Karen's daughter, Casey, has been invited to a friend's party on the same day as the youth group's bowling party. After talking about the house rules and making sure alcohol will not be present, Karen asks Casey to think about the pros and the cons of each choice, make a decision and tell her which party she wants to attend.

How to help your teen out of a bad situation:

- ◆ Talk to your teen about what to do if he or she needs help getting out of an uncomfortable situation. Decide on a family code word that means you will pick up your teen, no questions asked. The code word will let you know your teen wants out, without anyone else catching on. For example, if your teen is at a party and people are drinking and pushing alcohol, your teen could call you and say "I'm starving for pizza," or whatever you decided would work as your code. That way, your teen can get out without losing face with friends.



Communicate with your teen:

- ◆ Listen when your teen speaks.
- ◆ Share your values and opinions about underage alcohol use in a relaxed, conversational tone.
- ◆ Remind your teen that “everyone is NOT doing it.” Many adults and teens choose not to drink alcohol.
- ◆ Be clear about your expectations for “no use” of alcohol.

For Example:

- ➔ Sharon just found out about a neighborhood keg party and wonders what her daughter, Emily, thinks.

She tells her that she knows about the “keg” party and asks what she thinks about the situation. When Emily has answered, Sharon tells her daughter, “I realize there will be times when alcohol is around, and some of your friends will drink. I just want you to know that I expect you to wait until you’re 21 to make decisions about drinking. Until then, our family rule is *no drinking* and I’m trusting you to follow that rule. If you don’t, I wouldn’t be able to trust you for a while and you’d have to prove yourself trustworthy again.”



Provide protective boundaries for your teen:

- ◆ Monitor your teen’s activities by asking, “Who, what, where, and when?”
- ◆ Stay up and talk to your teen whenever he or she returns home.
- ◆ Call ahead to parents hosting teen parties to make sure they will be home and alcohol will not be allowed.

What Parents Can Do For Themselves

Check your own attitudes about underage alcohol use:

- ◆ Do not assume that all teens will drink alcohol.
- ◆ Demonstrate to your teen that people can have fun without alcohol.
- ◆ Get support from your spouse or partner and other family members about the rules and consequences before talking to your teen about not consuming alcohol.
- ◆ Be prepared to say “no” to your teen and his or her friends if they ask permission to drink alcohol.

For Example:

- ➔ Clarissa is having her girlfriends spend the night on her birthday. Both of her parents have told Clarissa that alcohol will not be allowed. Clarissa’s mom asked the girls to think of fun things to do, and they decide to do their nails and learn how to swing dance.



Set an example for your child by displaying responsible behavior:

- ◆ Show responsible use of alcohol if you are an adult who drinks.
- ◆ Avoid drinking to relieve stress.
- ◆ Avoid laughing or talking about people getting drunk.
- ◆ Let your child know you use a designated driver when attending events where you will be consuming alcohol.

How you can help prevent underage alcohol use:

- ◆ Become involved with school programs that address underage drinking prevention.
- ◆ Encourage schools and recreation organizations to have more after-school activities.
- ◆ Assist young people in planning and organizing alcohol-free parties for youth.
- ◆ Recruit adult mentors to form relationships with young people.
- ◆ Become familiar with laws regarding underage drinking and parental responsibilities.

For Example:

- ➔ Maria is concerned about the number of high school seniors who talk about drinking. She attended a school board meeting to ask them about their policies on drinking. She offered to be in charge of developing new alcohol awareness and prevention programs.



What Parents & The Community Can Do

Parents & Communities working together can:

- ◆ Form a group that reminds families about the importance of making sure their children and their friends do not have access to alcohol in their homes.
- ◆ Visit stores that sell alcohol to make sure they check IDs and refuse sales to underage youth.
- ◆ Support local law enforcement and their efforts to prevent underage drinking in your community.
- ◆ Plan community-wide events that are alcohol free.
- ◆ Contact your local beer distributor for information on underage drinking prevention program materials (see page 18).

Create awareness of laws and penalties:

- ◆ Partner with schools to support effective policies and enforcement related to underage alcohol use.
- ◆ Publicizing law enforcement efforts can create awareness and change the community “norm” regarding underage alcohol consumption. (Suddenly it isn’t so cool to be caught!)
- ◆ Publicize law enforcement “party patrols” that will break up parties where underage youth are consuming alcohol and cite those responsible for providing alcohol to minors.





What Parents Should Know

Whenever possible, talk with your teen about the consequences of underage alcohol consumption. Grab those times when you are with your teen: while eating breakfast or dinner, during travel in the car, and at bedtime. Use “teachable moments,” such as television shows, movies, newspaper and magazine articles and real-life events, to talk about the consequences of alcohol use. Include some of these ideas if your teen doesn’t think of them.

How to get help:

- ◆ If your child, or someone else you care about, needs help because of problems with alcohol use, help is available. Contact the resources listed on page 18, or look in your phone book for Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, or Alateen.

Alcoholism/Addiction/Chemical Dependency:

- ◆ All three terms may be used to describe the disease that results in a physical and psychological dependence on alcohol. Approximately one in every ten people who drink alcohol develops this disease. Children who begin using alcohol before age 21 are more likely to develop addiction than those who don’t. This happens because their bodies are still developing and their metabolism is different than adults.

Family history of alcoholism:

- ◆ If your family has any history of alcoholism, your teen has a greater risk of becoming an alcoholic.⁷ That makes it even more important for young people to wait until at least age 21 before making a responsible decision about alcohol consumption.



Being in control:

- ◆ Advise your teen to be in control, and not turn control over to alcohol. When people drink alcohol it alters the way their brains work. Their ability to make decisions and judgments decreases. They lose the self-control that keeps them from doing things that are embarrassing or dangerous. They also lose the self-control that moves their bodies, so they are not coordinated and may get hurt or killed.



The possible personal effects of underage alcohol use:

- ◆ Loss of your trust and their privileges.
- ◆ Reduced academic achievement due to brain cell damage and reduced ability to form new memories.
- ◆ Impaired development of coping skills and emotional maturity.
- ◆ Expulsion from school, sports teams and other school activities.
- ◆ Car crashes with injuries and fatalities.
- ◆ Increased rate of addiction, called alcoholism.





The possible societal effects of underage alcohol use:

- ◆ Costs for juvenile and criminal justice
- ◆ Medical and addiction treatment expenses
- ◆ Loss of productivity in life

How peer pressure can affect teens:

- ◆ Teens may think peer pressure is being asked to drink or having someone threaten to hit them if they don't have a drink. Help your teen practice saying, "No thanks, I don't want it." However, peer pressure is usually more subtle than that. It is also listening to all their friends talking about how much they drank Saturday at a party. They're laughing, and your teen is feeling left out because he or she wasn't invited. It is the pressure inside that says, "I want to belong." Teach your teen positive self talk, "I don't have to drink to have friends. My friends have more interesting things to do."

How alcohol affects physiological development:

- ◆ Drinking alcohol before age 21 can prevent teens from becoming all they could be. During the childhood and teen years, bodies and minds are growing at an amazing rate. Alcohol is especially damaging to brain cells, and can keep teens from being able to learn and cope with stress.

Parental Responsibility:

- ◆ Parents should know that it is a Class A misdemeanor, with possible fines up to \$2500, to knowingly allow individuals under 21 to drink in their home and, possible imprisonment for up to one year for providing alcohol to a person under 21.

Time to decide:

- ◆ At age 21, young people will decide whether or not to drink alcohol. For now, gather data to help them make a decision. Suggest that they watch people who drink and people who don't. Help them learn how to act on their beliefs and say no to things they don't want to do. Encourage them to develop their minds, bodies and relationships. There's plenty of time.



Driving Under the Influence

Illinois' "Use It & Lose It" Zero Tolerance Law:

- ◆ Illinois' "Use It & Lose It" zero tolerance law became effective on January 1, 1995. It set the acceptable blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level for drivers under the age of 21 at .00.
- ◆ Persons under the age of 21 who are caught driving with any trace of alcohol in their systems will lose their driving privileges. They may also be charged with a DUI (Driving Under the Influence) if they have a BAC of .08 or greater, or in excess of .05 with additional evidence proving impairment.
- ◆ All 50 states and the District of Columbia have zero tolerance laws for drivers under the age of 21.

Illinois' "Use It & Lose It" Penalties:

- ◆ Test Failure
 - First violation: Loss of driving privileges for 3 months
 - Second violation: Loss of driving privileges for 1 year
- ◆ Test Refusal
 - First violation: Loss of driving privileges for 6 months
 - Second violation: Loss of driving privileges for 2 years

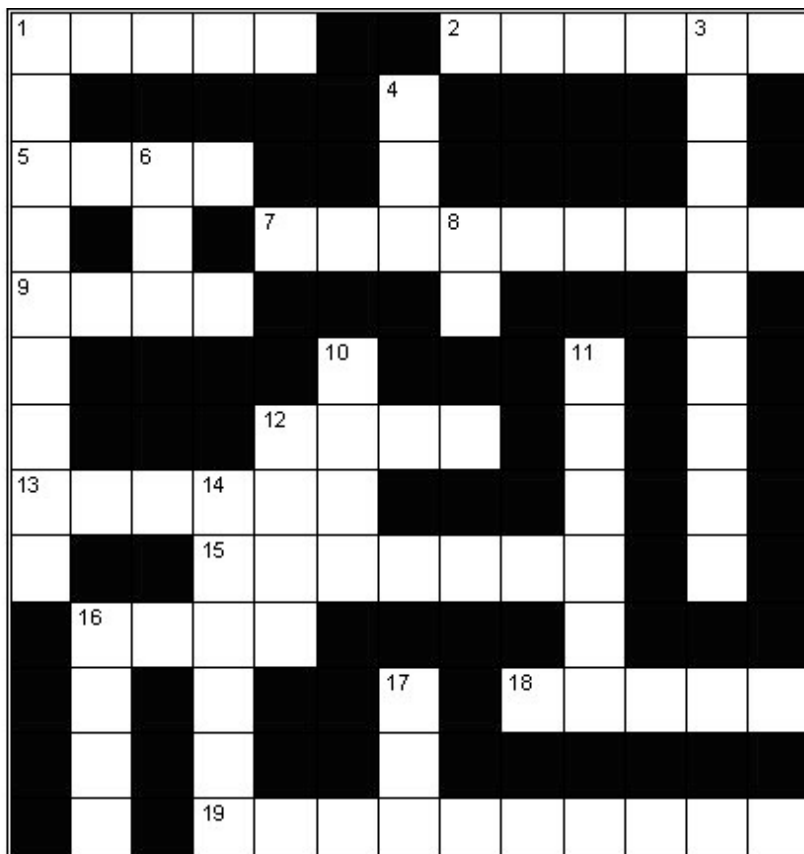
Illinois' Under 21 DUI Penalties:

- ◆ First Offense
 - Loss of driving privileges for a minimum of 2 years
 - DUI conviction is permanently on record.
- ◆ Second Offense
 - Loss of driving privileges for a minimum of 5 years
 - DUI conviction is permanently on record.

See page 18 for more information on Illinois' "Use It & Lose It" Zero Tolerance Law. Laws stated in this publication are current as of May 2004, however, they are subject to change.



How Much Did You learn?



ACROSS

- 1 Confidence To Do Right
- 2 Those Over 21 Years of Age
- 5 Use It & ____ It
- 7 Choices Made
- 9 Endanger
- 12 Communicate
- 13 Time Limit for Kids Under 17
- 15 Show Consideration For
- 16 Hurt
- 18 Bring Together
- 19 _____ Driver

DOWN

- 1 Zero _____
- 3 Legal Drinking Age
- 4 Blood Alcohol Concentration
- 6 Secretary of State
- 8 Document Showing Proof of Age
- 10 What You Break
- 11 Parents Need to Do When Kids Talk
- 12 Ages 13-19
- 14 Pal
- 16 Equal Cohort
- 17 Driving Under the Influence

Solution on page 19





Resources

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI): 800-729-6686; Web site: www.health.org

Illinois Secretary of State; 2004 DUI Fact Book; Web site: www.sos.state.il.us

Michigan Beer & Wine Wholesalers Association; Web site: www.mbwwa.org

Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois; call 217-528-4371 to locate your local beer distributor or visit the ABDI Web site: www.abdi.org




End Notes

- 1 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. (2000). Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: gov; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2001). U.S. Department of Transportation: gov.
- 2 Drinking and Driving Attitudes and Behaviors among Current Junior and Senior Students in High Schools in Illinois: Main Findings 2001; Secretary of State and Illinois Department of Transportation Project; SIU Carbondale
- 3 United States Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 2001; 2001 Illinois Youth Risk Behavior Study:gov.
- 4 United States Department of Health and Human Services. (1998). National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: Main Findings 1998. US Dept. HHS:gov.
- 5 Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, (1999). Dangerous Liaisons: Substance Abuse and Sex, Columbia University.
- 6 Grant, B.F., & Dawson, D.A. (1997). Age at Onset of Alcohol Use and Its Association with DSM-IV Alcohol Abuse and Dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. Journal of Substance Abuse, vol. 9:103-110.

***All models in photos are for illustrative purposes only and have signed releases for such use.**






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