

PARENTING IN THE AGE OF ALCOHOL

Topic: Underage Drinking

The Facts

- ☛ 29% of 12th graders, 22% of 10th graders and 11% of 8th graders have engaged in binge drinking, defined as consuming 5 or more drinks on a single occasion. (SAMHSA, 2006)
- ☛ If young people have their first taste of alcohol before the age of 15 it sharply raises their risk of becoming alcohol dependent later in life, often using alcohol for stress relief. (NIAAA)
- ☛ Parents have the most influence on whether or not their child will drink alcohol. (TRU Omnibuzz, 2008).
- ☛ Most kids don't drink!
- ☛ Two out of three teenagers said it was easy to get alcohol from their homes without their parents' knowledge, while one out of three teens said they were able to get alcohol from their own consenting parents. (Underage Drinking in the United States: A Status Report, 2005)

Start a Conversation with Your Kids

- Ask your child, "Why do kids your age drink alcohol? What do they say about drinking? Do you ever feel pressure from your peers to drink? How do you respond?"
- Ask, "What kind of example do you think we set for you with regards to drinking? What do your friends' parents say about kids and drinking?"
- Help your child practice saying, "No," to people who offer him/her alcohol or other drugs. Be sure to include yourself as a scapegoat; i.e., "My parents would kill me if I drank."

Advice From the Experts

- Talk with your child about the dangers of alcohol, but try to avoid scare tactics.
- Find discussion points, not lecture topics. Find out what your child knows about alcohol and how he/she feels about teen drinking. Ask why his/her peers drink and listen without interrupting.
- Share facts about alcohol, dispelling myths and misinformation. Make sure he/she knows alcohol is a drug, and that people are very bad at judging how alcohol affects them, especially when under its influence.
- Establish and state your expectations regarding avoiding alcohol and clearly communicate consequences for any infraction of rules.
- Talk about how alcohol can compromise self-respect. People who drink often do things they regret later, and this can affect their own self-respect as well as damage relationships with others.
- Remind them that drinking before age 21 is illegal, and there are legal ramifications for breaking this law.

