

## Prevent This

Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers, Inc. and Illinois Department of Human Services

### Summer & Alcohol

Don't let alcohol put a chill on your summer. The sunshine, warmth and long days of the coming season provide a wealth of opportunities for recreation and relaxation, but, when mixed with alcohol, these activities can turn dangerous and even deadly.

The bottom line is that most young teens don't yet drink. And parents' disapproval of youthful alcohol use is the key reason children choose not to drink. So make no mistake: You can make a difference.

This newsletter will provide information and suggestions on how you can make a difference. Keep in mind they are just suggestions—Trust your instincts. Choose ideas you are comfortable with, and use your own style in carrying out the approaches you find useful.

With so much fun to be had, why let alcohol put a chill on your summer?

**Parents Are Powerful:  
You Can Make a Difference!**

#### Important Facts About Alcohol:

- \* Alcohol is a powerful drug that slows down the body and mind.
- \* Beer and wine are NOT “safer” than hard liquor.
- \* On average, it takes 2 to 3 hours for a single drink to leave a person's system. Nothing can speed up this process including drinking coffee, taking a cold shower, or “walking it off”.
- \* People tend to be very bad at judging how seriously alcohol has affected them.
- \* Anyone can develop a serious alcohol problem, including a teenager.

### How To Host a Teen Party

Summer parties are a must for most teens. So if your teen wants to “party” offer to host the party!

- ◆ Agree on a guest list—and don't admit party crashers.
- ◆ Discuss ground rules with your child before the party.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to plan the party with a responsible friend so that he or she will have support if problems arise.
- ◆ Brainstorm fun activities for the party.
- ◆ If a guest brings alcohol into your house, ask him or her to leave.
- ◆ Serve plenty of snacks and non-alcoholic drinks.
- ◆ Be visible and available—but don't join the party.

#### Contact Information:

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## ACTION CHECKLIST

- Establish a loving, trusting relationship with your child.
- Make it easy for your teen to talk honestly with you.
- Talk with your child about alcohol facts, reasons not to drink, and ways to avoid drinking in difficult situations.
- Keep tabs on your young teen's activities, join with other parents in making common policies about teen alcohol use.
- Develop family rules about teen drinking and establish consequences.
- Set a good example regarding your own alcohol use and your response to teen drinking.
- Encourage your child to develop healthy friendships and fun alternatives to drinking.
- Know whether your child is at high risk for a drinking problem; if so takes steps to lesson that risk.
- Know the warning signs of a teen drinking problem and act promptly to get help for your child.
- Believe in your own power to help your child avoid alcohol use.



**Talking Tips:** Developing open, trusting communication between you and your child is essential to helping him or her avoid alcohol use. If your child feels comfortable talking openly with you, you'll have a greater chance of guiding him or her toward healthy decision making. Some ways to begin:

- ☺ **Encourage conversation.** Encourage your child to talk about whatever interests him or her. Listen without interruption and give your child a chance to teach you something new.
- ☺ **Ask open-ended questions.** Encourage your teen to tell you how he or she thinks and feels about the issue you are discussing. Avoid "yes" or "no" questions.
- ☺ **Control your emotions.** If you hear something you don't like, try not to respond with anger.
- ☺ **Make every conversation a "win-win" experience.** Don't lecture or try to "score points" with your teen by showing how he or she is wrong. If you show respect for your child's viewpoint, he or she will be more likely to listen to and respect yours.

## Warning Signs of a Drinking Problem

- \* Mood changes: flare ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness.
- \* School problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action.
  - \* Rebelling against family rules.
- \* Switching friends, along with a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends.
  - \* A "nothing matters" attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests, and general low energy.
  - \* Finding alcohol in your child's room or backpack, or smelling alcohol on his or her breath.
- \* Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.