



Underage Drinking

Not a
“minor” issue

CENTER FOR PREVENTION AND COUNSELING

A Letter to Sussex County Parents

As parents, you play a crucial role in influencing your children's alcohol use. You control the availability of alcohol in your household, serve as role models of alcohol use, influence family norms on alcohol use, and set alcohol-related expectations for your children. Nevertheless, the efforts of even the most conscientious parents can be challenged by teens' easy access to alcohol throughout the community and the reality that parents cannot constantly monitor their children's activities to keep them alcohol-free.

It's a problem facing many parents, underage drinking could be happening in your own home, or the homes of your children's friends. A 2012 survey of Sussex County youth conducted by the Center for Prevention and Counseling shows that:

Student's Grade	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
Past 30-day use of alcohol	4%	10%	21%	20%	23%	41%	52%
Ever tried alcohol	13%	23%	37%	44%	52%	70%	77%
Use alcohol at a friend's house	1%	3%	14%	20%	23%	48%	57%

- The average age that county 12th graders first tried alcohol is 14.2 years.
- By 9th grade, youth who drink are doing it at friends' houses more than anywhere else.

Underage drinking is a problem that affects the entire community. **The potential consequences of underage drinking are all too real and potentially long lasting to ignore.** Everyone must take responsibility to send a strong no-use message.

Consequences of underage drinking:

- More young people are killed by alcohol than all illegal drugs combined.
- Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems at some point in their life than those who wait until age 21.
- 3% of Sussex County 6th graders, 2% of 7th, 5% of 8th (3% of middle school students) and 16% of high school students said they couldn't remember what happened while they were drinking.
- 9% of Sussex County 11th graders and 13% of 12th graders reported that drinking alcohol caused them to do something sexual that they later wished they hadn't.
- 2% of Sussex County 6-8th graders and 5% of high school students reported hurting themselves as a result of drinking alcohol.
- Over 4% of Sussex County 6-8th graders said that drinking alcohol has hurt their school work.

By working together, we can reduce the acceptance of underage drinking and improve the future of our children.

If you have knowledge of, or suspicions about, an underage drinking party in Newton, please contact the Newton Police Department. To make a report, call 973-383-2525 or securely submit crime tips online, via text message or by utilizing the Police Department's iPhone or Android Apps. To learn how to submit tips electronically, go to <http://newtonpolice.org/crimetips.php>. **These services are for reporting tips to aid in investigations, not for emergencies. If this is an urgent matter, call 9-1-1!**

For additional information, please contact Chief Michael Richards at (973) 383-2525.

Social Host Laws

Get the Facts. They're Sobering.

FACT: It is a criminal offense in the state of New Jersey (2C:33-17a) to serve alcohol to anyone who is under the legal age of 21.

FACT: It is a criminal offense in the state of New Jersey (2C:33-17b) to make your home or property available for the purpose of allowing minors a place to consume alcohol.

FACT: New Jersey's Social Host Liability Law imposes civil penalties on social hosts who serve alcohol to minors who subsequently are involved in incidents causing death or injury.

Make clear to your child that you don't allow unchaperoned parties in your home. In addition, never serve alcohol to your children's underage friends as it will leave you liable for any damages that may result. It's a criminal offense in NJ to allow underage drinking in your home; so for starters, you're looking at a disorderly persons charge - that's a record and a fine! Also, your homeowners insurance may increase. The company may even drop you. Most policies don't cover damage or theft from underage drinking parties.



You will be held civilly liable if sued by another parent. Injuries, alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, drowning, or suicide may result in lawsuits. You can't put a price on relationships, but you've just lost the trust of other parents and you've lost the respect of your neighbors and friends.

New Jersey's Underage Drinking Ordinance

FAST FACTS

\$250

Fine for a first offence of violation of the underage drinking ordinance

6 months

Length of time driving privileges maybe be suspended or postponed

For your teenager and his/her friends, almost every Sussex County municipality has a local underage drinking ordinance (Private Property Ordinance). In 2000, New Jersey legislated the Underage Drinking Ordinance (NJ statute C. 40:48 -1.2 P.L 2000, Chapter 33), which empowers municipalities to "enact an ordinance making it unlawful for any person under the legal age who, without legal authority, knowingly possesses or knowingly consumes an alcoholic beverage on private property." While many of the ordinances enacted are very similar to the NJ statute, some towns have chosen to enact altered versions of the ordinance. To read your municipality's legislation, go to www.drugfreenj.org/law_database/#Sussex_County.

What are the penalties for violating this ordinance?

A fine of \$250 for a first offense and \$350 for subsequent offenses. In addition, driving privileges may be suspended or postponed for 6 months.

Does a violation of this ordinance constitute an "arrest" on one's record?

No. An individual found to be in violation of this ordinance would be issued a municipal ordinance violation ticket, similar to that issued for a parking violation.



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PARENT PARTY TIPS

- Help your teenager plan the party. Make a guest list and invite only a specific number of people.
- Have your child pass out or send invitations and try to avoid the “open party” situation.
- Don’t send e-mail invitations. They can be forwarded to a large number of people quickly and you lose control of who has this information.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.
- Set rules ahead of time such as no alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. Set a start and end time for the party.
- Let attendees know that if they leave, they can’t come back.
- Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Plan some activities such as music, games, movies, etc.
- Let your neighbors know in advance there will be a party and that you will be there to supervise.
- Familiarize yourself with your community’s noise ordinance.
- Limit the party access to a certain area of the house/property.
- Have a plan for dealing with vehicles. Include parking information on your party invitation.
- Call parents of any teen who arrives in possession of alcohol or under the influence. If you can’t get in touch with the parents, keep the teen there or call the police if necessary. You can be civilly liable if you know they have been drinking and you let them leave.
- Secure all forms of alcohol, firearms and other potentially hazardous items in your home in a safe place.
- Make regular and unobtrusive visits to the party area with sensitivity to teens’ needs for privacy and independence.
- Invite some other parents to help chaperone if there will be a large number of teenagers.

Reprinted from Drug-Free Action Alliance’s *Parents Who Host, Lose the Most Parent Party Tips*



UNDERAGE DRINKING PREVENTION

The message is clear: Teens still need plenty of adult supervision and guidance. Parents who express expectations that their children remain alcohol free have kids who use alcohol less, have better refusal skills and stronger resistance to negative peer influence. Make sure your children know where you stand on underage drinking, and that you will be there to support them in their decision to say no. Don’t miss the chance to help them stay alcohol-free.

Develop Family Rules About Teen Drinking. First time consumption is experimentation, but any consumption after that is “use.” Accepting use as “normal experimentation” is dangerous because it requires a judgment call on how much experimentation is “normal,” a very gray area. Although giving alcohol to your own child in a private location is not illegal in New Jersey, it is dangerous for several reasons: 1) it indicates to kids that laws are flexible; 2) it assumes that kids will not use alcohol when on their own, and 3) it sets up a continuing process of negotiation over when and how much is ok to use.

By establishing a clear “no alcohol” rules and expectations, your children are less likely to begin drinking AND it liberates you! Since it is a law, you do not have to continually assess, judge, justify or negotiate it. Once you have chosen rules for your family, you will need to establish and communicate appropriate consequences for breaking those rules. This makes your KIDS accountable because then it is not you who is choosing to punish them, but rather they who chose an action that was illegal and against family rules, which carries with it an established set of consequences. If your children knows that they will lose certain privileges each and every time an alcohol use rule is broken, they will be more likely to keep their agreements.

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Here are other ways to support them:

- Talk with your child and calmly explain your feelings about him/her drinking alcohol or using illicit drugs and driving under the influence. Make it clear to your youth that you do NOT approve of substance use because it is dangerous. Be firm, but nonjudgmental. Ask them how they plan to keep safe and avoid actions they will regret. Reinforce your belief in their character and in their ability to act responsibly.
- Allow your child to talk about any questions or concerns he or she may have. Remember that communication involves not only speaking, but also listening.
- Also emphasize that the legal drinking age is 21- no exceptions. A minor who consumes alcohol is violating the law and is risking his/her life and possibly the lives of others.
- Talk to older siblings about the consequences of supplying alcohol to younger brothers and sisters or their friends.
- If possible, encourage him or her to invite friends over when you are at home. The more entertaining your child does in your home, the more you will know about your child's friends and activities. Don't be afraid to talk to your child's friends about the consequences of alcohol and other drug use.
- Give your children the unconditional option of calling you at any time if he or she needs a safe ride home or for help or advice. Assure them that you always welcome being part of their making smart and safe decisions.
- Make sure your child has a plan for the evening and that you know it. Ask your child for specifics about whom she or he will be with, where they will be, and what they will be doing. Make sure you will be able to reach him or her at all times.
- Know where your child is attending a party; call your child's friend's parent to confirm that there will be parental supervision, that there will be a zero tolerance policy for alcohol and illicit drugs, and that you're on the same page as to how your child will be to and from the party.
- Impress the importance of using the "buddy system" (3 or more is best) to watch out for each other.
- Also stress the need for teenagers to keep an eye on their beverages while out and never accept a drink from someone they do not know. "Date-rape drugs," such as GHB and Rohypnol, can be slipped into a person's drink in mere seconds. The drugs are tasteless and odorless and the victim may not even be aware he or she is being drugged. These drugs cause the victim to lose consciousness or be unable to move so that a person can take advantage of him or her.
- Do not serve or allow alcohol at any party you are hosting. An adult who provides alcohol to minors is subject to arrest and is risking that child's life. Take stock of the alcohol in your home.
- Do not rent hotel rooms for partygoers.
- Know who is driving. Be careful about letting your child drive or ride in a car with other teenagers. Regardless of how many times you have talked about them about the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you need their promise that they will not drive if they have been drinking or taking drugs or ride with someone who has. You must also set rules for your teenager about driving while talking on a cell phone, carrying other teenagers as passengers, and following curfews. Emphasize the importance of watching out for drunk and careless drivers.
- Come to a fair decision on a curfew, based upon your child's past level of responsibility in this area. Stay up for his or her return home.
- Be a good role model.
- You can also join school and community efforts to discourage alcohol use by teens. By working with school officials and other members of your community, you can help to develop policies to reduce alcohol availability to teens and to enforce consequences for underage drinking. Get involved with a local organization working to prevent youth substance use.
- Sign the Center for Prevention and Counseling's [Parents Who Host pledge card](#).
- Call the **Center for Prevention and Counseling at 973-383-4787** for a free copy of alcohol and other drug fact and prevention brochures. You may also find out more about getting involved with the Coalition for Healthy and Safe Communities, a coalition of community members from Sussex and Warren Counties who are dedicated to *creating healthy and safe communities that are free from substance abuse, addiction and related issues among people of all ages*.

Information courtesy of the Center for Prevention and Counseling, US Dept. of Human Services, SAMHSA National Clearinghouse (www.samsha.gov), Drug Free Noble County Coalition and Carleton Kendrick, Ed.M., LCSW

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IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Ambulance/Police/Overdose	9-1-1
First Call for Help (connect & get answers)	2-1-1
Addiction Helpline of Parents Support NJ	800-561-4299
Addiction Hotline of New Jersey	800-238-2333
Alcohol Hotline: AA & Al-Anon meetings (24 hrs)	800-245-1377
Al-Anon/Alateen Information Service of Northern NJ (families/friends)	973-744-8686
Carrier Clinic (detox/in-patient)	800-933-3579
Center for Prevention and Counseling (For Evaluations/Referral/Counseling/Drug Screens)	973-383-4787
DAYTOP Adolescent Services – Mendham, NJ (in and out-patient)	973-543-5656
Hackettstown Community Hospital (adolescent services)	908-850-6810
High Focus, Parsippany, NJ (adolescent services)	800-877-3628
Lighthouse (in-patient, adolescent)	800-852-8851
Nar-Anon Family Group of Northern NJ (for families/friends of addicts)	732-591-1827
Nar-Anon New Jersey Hotline	877-424-4491 or 800-238-2333
Narcotics Anonymous of NJ	800-992-0401
National Help Lines	800-662-HELP (4357)
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	800-273-TALK
National Youth Crisis Hotline	800-442-HOPE (4673)
New Life Recovery of West Milford (adolescent)	973-728-7788
Newton Memorial Hospital ASAP (Alcohol Substance Abuse Program)	973-579-8675
Parents Anonymous/Family Helpline (for stressed parents)	800-THE KIDS (843-5437)
St. Clare's (adolescent, alcohol/chemical dependency)	888-626-2111 or 973-316-1889
Summit Oaks (adolescent in-patient)	800-753-5223 or 908-522-7071
Sussex County Division of Substance Abuse and Alcoholism	973-948-6000 x 225
White Deer Run – Allenwood, PA (adolescent program)	800-255-2335

USEFUL WEBSITES

Alcoholics Anonymous of Northern New Jersey	www.nnjaa.org
Center for Prevention and Counseling	www.centerforprevention.org
Drug Free New Jersey	www.drugfreenj.org
Family Guide	www.family.samhsa.gov
Find Treatment	www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism	www.niaaa.nih.gov
New Bridge Services	www.newbridge.org
NJ A-Anon/Ala-teen	www.nj-al-anon.org
Northern NJ SAFE KIDS	www.preventionworks-nj.org
Sussex County	http://www.sussex.nj.us/
Teens - Freevibe	www.freevibe.com
The Partnership at drugfree.org (support and resources for parents)	www.drugfree.org
Young Teens- The Cool Spot	www.thecoolspot.gov
40 Developmental Assets developed by Search Institute	www.search-institute.org

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