

# Be Aware: Underage Drinking

## What is the extent of the problem?



- Alcohol is the most widely used substance among America's teens and youth adults.
- The average age of first drink is 14.
- Forty percent of teens do not perceive any risk of having one or two drinks nearly every day.
- 90% of underage drinking is in the form of binge drinking.
- People ages 12-20 drink 11% of all alcohol in the United States.

## What is the danger?



- Underage drinking is a leading contributor to death from injury, including drunk driving, the main cause of death for people under 21.
- Drinking alcohol prior to or during puberty can affect the hormonal balance necessary for normal development of organs, muscles and bones.
- Underage drinking has long lasting effects on brain health.
- Underage drinking plays a significant role in risky sexual behavior – increasing the risk of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

## What can parents do?



- Don't make alcohol available to your child or their friends.
- Kids ages 11-14 see approximately 1,000 alcohol ads a year. Discuss what you see and help put context around the alcohol messaging your child receives from friends and the media.
- Supervise any parties in your home to make sure there is no alcohol and make sure your teens know the rules ahead of time.
- Is your child socializing at someone else's home? Know where he or she will be. Call the parents in advance to verify the occasion and location and that there will be supervision. If the activity seems inappropriate, express concern and keep your child home.
- Communicate your expectations and rules for when your teen goes out with friends and include regular check-ins.
- Assure your child that he or she can call you to be picked up whenever needed.

## Know the Law

It is against the law in the State of Alabama for an adult to allow or provide alcohol to a minor under the age of 21 in their residence. A violation occurs if:

An adult has authorized the party at the residence and is in attendance.

The adult knows that an underage person possesses or is using an alcoholic beverage or controlled substance.

The adult fails to take reasonable action to prevent an underage person from possessing or using an alcoholic beverage or controlled substance.

Adults who are charged with this violation face a maximum fine of \$1,000 and/or a sentence of six months imprisonment in county or city jail. Hosts can also be sued.

**Parents have the greatest influence on their child's decision about whether or not they drink alcohol. Make sure your child knows your expectation for them to not use alcohol.**



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