



A Unified Message for Prom and Graduation Parties

Parents play a major role in their children's choices about alcohol, tobacco or other drugs. In a recent national survey of parents and teens by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, one-third of teen partygoers have been to parties where teens were drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, or using cocaine, ecstasy or prescription drugs while a parent was present. By age 17, nearly half (46 percent) of teens have been at such parties where parents were present.

Drug-Free Action Alliance and SATUCI are working together to bring the *Parents Who Host, Lose The Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking* public awareness campaign to Marshalltown to provide parents good information about the health risks and the legal consequences of providing alcohol to youth. The campaign encourages parents and the community to send a unified message at prom and graduation time that teen alcohol consumption is not acceptable.

Hosting a prom or graduation party where alcohol is available to underage youth is illegal and can pose serious health risks and legal ramifications for everyone involved. Parents should understand that taking away the car keys does not solve all of the problems related to underage drinking. Every day at least six youth under 21 die from non-driving alcohol-related causes, such as drowning and suicide; sexual activity and delinquent behaviors also increase with underage drinking. There are many health-related consequences of youth consuming alcohol including negative effects on brain development, deviant behavior including stealing and skipping school and a greater risk of becoming alcohol-dependant later in life.

Parents who knowingly allow a person under age 21 to remain on their property while consuming or possessing alcoholic beverages can be prosecuted and face a jail sentence, fines and loss of property.

Adults providing alcohol to underage youth send a mixed message and can only add to a teenager's confusion about the acceptability of drinking. They are also sending the message to teens that they do not have to obey the law. Research shows that most teenagers appreciate it when their parents set boundaries and establish expectations that are fairly enforced. Our youth deserve to live and grow to adulthood in an environment where alcohol is not misused. Let's be unified in our message, and host alcohol-free parties with plenty of fun activities to show our youth that we care about their future.

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