



The Coalition Newsletter

February 2013

Our vision is to prevent and reduce youth substance use & abuse in the Pequannock Twp. Community through collaboration, education and community-wide change.

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An Initiative of:



Teen Drinking is NOT Inevitable!

More than 59% of high school seniors don't drink alcohol, reducing their current risk of injury. ALL adults can play a role in **reducing teen access** to alcohol & related harm.

Teens report that alcohol is easy to get. Social sources, like family & friends, are the primary sources of alcohol for kids who drink.

~ In a 2012 government survey of underage drinkers 12 to 20, 69% said they got alcohol without having to pay for it. Some were given alcohol by parents, other family, or friends; others took it without permission.

Nationwide, parents strongly support 21 as the legal drinking age.

~In one recent survey, 79% of parents said the drinking age should stay the same or be raised.

~In another recent survey, 84% gave this answer.

Take Steps at Home to Eliminate Teen's Easy Access to Alcohol

1. Keep track of the alcohol in your home. Make sure teens can't access it without your knowledge.
2. Let your teen know the minimum legal drinking age is 21 & that besides the serious health & safety risks drinking can cause, LEGAL CONSEQUENCES are extremely serious for a person who provides the alcohol.
3. Talk with your kids about how to say no to a drink: no thanks, I don't feel like it, alcohol's not my thing.
4. Be real but set the expectation for your children of 21!

Most teens report that alcohol is easy to get – including 61% of eighth graders, 80% of sophomores, & 90% of seniors.

What Can You Say to People Who Think Teen Drinking is Not a Serious Problem?

Despite the statistics & the science, some people still think teen drinking is not a serious problem. Here are some of the more common questions neighbors & friends may ask about teen drinking & the answers.

- Q. *If the kids drink when I'm home, I can control what happens. Isn't that the best way to prevent teen injury and bad things from happening?*
- A. Can you really control what happens? There are too many real stories about teens who are injured from drinking under adult supervision. That's not a liability I'm willing to take on. Besides, giving permission to drink at home may also be interpreted to mean the you approve if they drink with friends when you're not around.
- Q. *I drank when I was a kid, and I'm okay, so what's the problem with letting my teen drink now?*
- A. Many of us are lucky we made it through our teen years! Many teens are not as lucky. On average, 6.4 American teens die each day from alcohol-related crashes. Teen drinking is associated with long-term alcohol dependence, increased sexual activity, unprotected sex, suicide and smoking.
- Q. *Doesn't a "legal drinking age" and not allowing access just make alcohol "forbidden fruit" that teenagers try harder to get?*
- A. If this were true, teen drinking would have increased after adoption of the legal drinking age., but it didn't. Believe it or not, having a legal drinking age has substantially reduced drinking by teens. Also, the drinking habits of 18-year-olds have a big influence on younger teens, especially those who are 15 to 17.
- Q. *If kids can vote and join the military at 18, why do they have to wait until they're 21 to drink legally?*
- A. Well, it is the law! But also, ages of "initiation" vary. You can work at 14, vote at 18 and drink at 21, but you can't run for congress until you're 25. Researchers who have evaluated the data say the minimum legal drinking age delays the onset of alcohol use. As a result, it reduces drinking-related injuries among teens and the risk of alcohol abuse and dependence later in life.
- Q. *Wouldn't a lower drinking age allow parents to teach their kids to drink responsibly?*
- A. Parents don't have to drink with their children to teach them responsible drinking. Additionally, letting kids drink at home underage sends the wrong message about appropriate conduct away from home.
- Q. *Kids are going to drink anyway. They always have. Isn't it better to hold the party at my house, so my kids and their friends aren't out driving?*
- A. That's not a decision I'd want to make — letting other teens drink in your house undermines other parents and in NJ violates the law. Drunk driving isn't the only danger associated with teen drinking, and how are you going to guarantee that your teen guests won't drive when they leave? What if a kid took medication before coming to your house that would react with alcohol? I'm thinking that's not something I would want to open myself up to.

Take Steps In Your Community

Stand up, & spread the word that you don't want other people serving alcohol to your teen or condoning teen drinking. **SILENCE CAN BE MISINTERPRETED!** Let your friends, neighbors, family member know that you do not want your teen to drink.

Talk to the parents of your teen's friends. Let them know that teen drinking poses unacceptable risks & that you **DO NOT WANT**-or expect-anyone to allow your teen to drink alcohol.

Talk to adults who host teen parties. Let them know that 86% of parents support the legal drinking age of 21 & **96% of adults agree THAT IT IS NOT OKAY TO SERVE ALCOHOL TO SOMEONE ELSE'S TEEN**—and not okay to turn a blind eye to teens' alcohol consumption.

Let your law enforcement know **THAT YOU DO NOT OPPOSE ACTIVE POLICING OF NOISY TEEN PARTIES.**

Read up on Pequannock Township's Alcoholic Beverages Code:

http://code.peqtwp.org:88/Chapter_043/index.html

A Taskforce of:

