Guidelines for parents of teenagers hosting a party

Before the Party

- Set up the ground rules with your teen before the party.
    - Your child needs to know what you expect and why you have set the ground rules. Let your teen know how you would respond to problems so that she/he knows what to expect if that situation ever occurs.
    - Share the responsibilities for hosting the party with your teen.
    - Allow for opportunities for both of you to express feelings and concerns.
    - You and your teen should know and understand local and state laws about curfew, alcohol and other drugs. It is illegal to serve alcohol to guests under the age of 21 or to allow guests to use drugs in your home. You may be brought to court on criminal charges and/or fined monetary damages in a civil lawsuit if you furnish alcohol or other drugs to minors.
    - You and your teen should decide if the ground rules you have determined apply at all parties. Sometimes, parties can occur spontaneously. In those cases, it is safer and easier to maintain control if guidelines are clearly understood.
- Decide what part of the house will be used for the party and what areas are off limits. Be sure to choose an area where guests will feel comfortable and where you can maintain supervision.
- Limit party attendance and times.
    - Smaller groups are easier to supervise.
    - Open-hour parties can make it more difficult for hosts to maintain control.
    - Other parents will be appreciative of time limits that enable teens to be at home at a reasonable time.
    - Make it clear that party-crashing is not allowed.
- Plan to have plenty of food and non-alcoholic drinks on hand.
- Encourage your teenager to organize group activities or games. Such activities help keep the party lively and ensure involvement by everyone.
- Have your child take responsibility for choosing the music for the party and for keeping the music playing during the party.
- Be courteous to your neighbors. Notify them that there will be a party. Encourage your teen to call or send a note to close neighbors telling them about the party.
- Notify the police if you will need to establish a plan for guest parking.

During the party

- Make sure you (or another responsible adult who understands your rules) will be present for the entire party.
    - Help keep supplies of snacks and non-alcoholic beverages on hand. Not only will your presence help keep the party running smoothly, but it will also allow you to meet your child's friends.
- Do not allow guests to come and go. This expectation will discourage teenagers from leaving the party to drink or use other drugs elsewhere and then return to the party.
- Avoid easy access to alcohol and other drugs in your home.
- Stay alert to signs of alcohol or other drug use by teens at the party.
- Be prepared to ask guest to leave if they try to bring alcohol or other drugs into the party or if they refuse to cooperate with your expectations. Be willing to call the police if unwanted guests refuse to leave.

- Notify the parents of any teen who arrives at the party under the influence of alcohol or other drugs to ensure her/his safe transportation home. If the parents are unavailable, make safe transportation arrangements home for the guest.

Never allow anyone to drive under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, even if it means taking the car keys and calling a cab or asking a sober adult to give the guest a ride home.

Guidelines for parents of teenagers attending a party

- Know where your teen will be and for how long she/he will be there.
    - Get the address and phone number of the party host.
    - Let your teen know that you expect a phone call if the party location is changed.
- Call the parents of the party host to:
    - verify the occasion;
    - offer assistance;
    - confirm a parent will be present and supervising the party;
    - be certain that no alcohol or other drugs will be permitted at the party.
- Know how your child will get home from the party
    - Assure your teen that you or a specific friend or neighbor can be called for a ride at any time. Make certain your child has that phone number.
    - Discuss with your daughter or son the possible situations in which she/he might need to make such a call.
- Discuss with your teen how to handle a situation where alcohol or other drugs are available at the party.
    - Let your child know what your expectations are. If your family has set firm guidelines against illegal drinking, reinforce those guidelines to make them clear.
    - Help your teen come up with ways to refuse alcohol or other drugs if offered them.
- Make sure your teen knows what time she/he is expected to be back home. Be awake or have your teen awaken you when she/he arrives home. This is often a good time to discuss the party and how your child felt about the event.
- If your teen stays overnight with a friend after the party, check with the parents of the friend to verify that they want your child to stay over and that they will be home. Spontaneous "sleepover" arrangements should **always** be confirmed with the host parents.
- You and your teen may want to call the party host the next day to express your thanks.

Concerns for all parents of teenagers

- **Parents are their childrens' most influential role models.** Thinks about the choices you make regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs. And think about how alcohol is used at parties you host for adults. Your actions influence your teenager much more that any verbal guidelines you may set.
- **Teenagers frequently have parties at home when parents are away.** If your family rules prohibit unsupervised parties, make certain that your children understand that no parties are allowed when you are not at home. If you must be away, make arrangements for quality

supervision to ensure protection for you and your child(ren). Let your neighbors know when you will be gone and leave a phone number where they can contact you if problems arise.

- **Get to know your childrens' friends and their parents.**
- **Parents need to look to each other for guidance and support.** It is easier to assure that guidelines are followed if your teen's friends have the same ground rules to follow. It is much easier to deal with alcohol or other drug problems facing young people in your community if you have the support of other parents.
- **Parents can and should share the responsibility of chaperoning parties.** If you are hosting a party, ask the parents of your teen's friends to come join in the fun. If you daughter or son is attending a party at someone else's house, ask if there is anything that you can do to help with the party. Volunteer to chaperone at school parties and community activities as well.

Rules for the road

One of the most tragic consequences of alcohol or other drug abuse — both among adults and teens — is traffic accidents. By the time your teenager is driving or riding with friends who drive, you should have discussed your teen's perspective as well as how you feel about driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Your family must establish firm, clear rules against driving after drinking or using other drugs or riding with drivers who have been drinking or using other drugs. Take the time to talk with your children about the dangers and legal consequences that can result and suggest alternatives to riding with an intoxicated driver. Clearly express you concern for her/his safety and well-being.

Make certain that your teen is aware of all of the available alternatives to riding with an intoxicated driver such as calling a cab or taking other public transportation, or contacting you or another responsible adult for a safe ride home. You should also decide how family rules against drinking, drugs and driving apply to teenagers and adults. Some parents and teens even sign contracts that set out in writing what everyone will do to find a safe ride home.

For more information contact:

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