

Prevent This

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Back To School Time

Going back to school signifies a time of new beginnings—new teachers and friends, more difficult classes and exciting experiences. It can also be a time of new challenges for many young people with added pressure from friends when it comes to teen drug and alcohol use.

Underage drinking (when anyone under the age of 21 drinks alcohol) is against the law. Underage drinking is also dangerous. It can harm the mind and body of growing teens in many ways people don't realize.

Yet, children and teens still drink. Underage drinking is a serious problem with roots deep in our culture. It's time to change that picture—it's time to take action. It's time to stop looking the other way. It's time to tell children and teens that underage drinking is not okay. It will take a lot of work over time to change how people think about underage drinking. It's a long-term project for parents, schools, local groups, community leaders, and other concerned adults. And it's a project that should start when children are young and continue through the teen years.

It's Time To Take Action!



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Most 6-year-olds know that alcohol is only for adults. Between ages 9 and 13, youth begin to think that alcohol use is okay. That's why it's never too early to start talking with young people about the dangers of underage drinking.

Underage Drinking is Everyone's Problem

Underage drinking can affect anyone, including people who don't drink.

- ◆ Underage alcohol use can lead to dangerous behavior, property damage and violence.
- ◆ The results can be injury and even death for the drinker and for other people nearby.
- ◆ About 45% of people who die in car crashes involving a drinking driver under age 21 are people other than the driver.

The effects of underage drinking can be felt by everyone. That makes underage alcohol use everyone's problem.

What Families can do about Underage Alcohol Use

- **Support your teens and give them space to grow.**
Encourage your teens' growing independence, but set appropriate limits. Know where your teens are, what they are doing, who they're with, and who their friends are.
Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.
- **Talk with your teens about alcohol use.**
When you talk with your teens about drinking, listen to them and respect what they say.
Discuss laws about underage drinking, including the age 21 law.
- **Help your teens make good decisions about alcohol.**
Help them find ways to have fun without alcohol.
Do not give alcohol to your teens. Tell them that any alcohol in your home is off limits to them and their friends.
Don't let them attend parties where alcohol is served. Make sure alcohol isn't available at teen parties in your home.
- **Be aware of factors that may increase the risk of teen alcohol use.**
A family history of alcoholism.
Contact with peers involved in deviant activities.
- **Be a positive adult role model.**
If you drink yourself, drink responsibly. That means not drinking too much too often.
Stay away from alcohol in high-risk situations. Don't drink and drive.
- **Work with others.**
Reach out to the schools, communities, and government.
Make sure all laws about underage alcohol use are well known and enforced.
Make sure rules about underage drinking are in place at home, at school, and in your community.

Time to Text: Take "Time to Text" your teens. For many teens, text messaging is a primary form of communication. It's a quick, easy way for them to make plans and instantly stay in touch.

Texting can help parents open new lines of communication and it's a non-confrontational way to start conversations with their kids about sensitive topics like alcohol and drug use.

Download a Free "Time to Text" guide at www.timetotalk.org.

Surveys show that more than half of teens who text message think it has improved their relationship with their parents, and 51% of parents who text their teens agree that they communicate more often.

There is a role for everyone!

* Everyone can work together to create a community where young people can grow up and feel good about themselves without drinking.

* Everyone in the community should deliver the message that underage drinking is not okay. The message should be the same whether youth hear it in school, at home, in places of worship, on the sports field, in youth programs, or in other places where young people gather.

* It is important for families to pay attention to what's happening with their teens.

* Young people can learn about the dangers of alcohol use. They can change how they and others think about drinking.