

Public Service Announcement **Township of Wyckoff**

For Immediate Release

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THOSE WHO HOST – LOSE THE MOST ***Parents Encouraged to Take a Pro-Active Approach***

As a parent, you have the most influence on your child's decisions about drinking. Preparing your teen for the challenges and decisions about alcohol consumptions must begin before they are faced with these situations. Parents need to educate teens that their actions have serious consequences. Not only do statistics show that alcohol-related car crashes are the number one cause of death for persons between the ages of 14 and 22, but incidents of alcohol poisoning are not uncommon. The law holds parents responsible for these serious consequences when they allow underage drinking at their home.

Talk, talk, talk and talk some more with your teen about dealing with peer pressure and discuss feasible ways to turn down alcohol and other drugs. Among the most important things to discuss with your teenager is the issue of drinking at home or at friends' parties, and the consequences that will result.

Set guidelines that they may attend only parties that will be supervised and where no alcohol will be served. Agree that they will never get into a car with a driver who has been drinking. Let your child know that they can always call you at anytime to pick them up if they find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Some Specific Strategies!

We are approaching the season for proms, graduations and summer parties. These occasions may provide a venue for teenage drinking.

If you are holding a party in your home, discuss the guidelines with your child beforehand. Some strategies are:

- A parent must be home during the party. Circulate among the guests and make your presence known.
- Set specific hours for the party and establish the number of guests attending.
- Do not let teens leave and return to the party.
- Provide plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages.

If your teen is attending a party, make sure you:

- Have the name, address and phone number of the party host.
- Confirm with the host that the party will be supervised responsibly and that no alcohol will be served.
- Establish a time when your teen will come home.
- Set up an agreement with your teen that they will not drive while intoxicated or get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.

Guidelines for Communicating with your Teen about Drinking

Be a good role model.

- Telling your teen that they should not drink then over-indulging in alcohol yourself sends a mixed message.

Communicate the facts.

- Speak frankly about the effects of alcohol. Don't use scare tactics.

Set up clear rules with established consequences and stick with them.

- Often having a teen do a task such as mowing the lawn or taking out the trash is more effective than grounding them or taking away privileges.

Know your teen's friends.

- Friendship is an important part of our lives. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents.

Keep the lines of communication open.

- Talk with your teen about dealing with social pressure, as well as feasible ways to turn down alcohol and other drugs. Encourage dialogues with your teen.

Penalties for Parents who allow Underage Drinking. Know what your responsibilities really entail.

NJSA 2C:33-15 (NJ Criminal Code) establishes a criminal offense for an underage person to consume or possess alcohol in a public place or motor vehicle.

Wyckoff Ordinance #1521 prohibits underage individuals from consuming alcoholic beverages on private property.

NJSA 2C:33-17(b) (NJ Criminal Code) establishes a criminal offense for any person who makes their home or property available, or leaves such home in the care of another person who makes such property available, for the purpose of allowing underage persons to consume alcohol.

NJSA 2C:33-17(a) (NJ Criminal Code) establishes a criminal offense for any person who makes available an alcohol beverage to a person under the legal drinking age.

CONSEQUENCES FOR PARENTS

1. It's a criminal offense in New Jersey to allow underage drinking in your home; so for starters, you're looking at a disorderly person's charge, which means a record and a fine.
2. Your homeowner's insurance may increase. The company may even drop you. Most policies don't cover damage or theft from underage drinking parties.
3. If an underage party-goer drives after drinking, it will cost you. If there is a crash, you are responsible and can be sued.
4. Injuries, alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, drowning or suicide may result in lawsuits. You will be civilly liable if sued by another parent.
5. You can't put a price on relationships, but take note – you've just lost the trust of other parents and you've lost the respect of your neighbors and friends.