

A Parents Guide to Hosting Teenage Parties

As Winter Ball and February break approach, your kids may ask if they can have a party at your home that includes alcoholic beverages. Here are a few things to consider:

What Message Do We Send?

When we allow a minor to consume alcohol, we send a message that it is okay for them to drink. We also send a message that it is okay to break the law and they can pick and choose what laws we feel are just. We may think we can “teach” young people to drink responsibly, but issues of personal development and peer and societal influence often complicate the responsibility of drinking alcohol.

- Teens who are allowed to drink at home are significantly more likely to drink with their friends. 57% of teens who reported their parents allow them to drink at home also drink with their friends; while 14% of teens who reported their parents do not allow them to drink at home also drink with their friends (SADD).

The Laws in Vermont (www.state.vt.us/dlc/education/ctap.html):

- Even if you are on your own property you can be imprisoned for up to two years and/or fined a minimum of \$500 if you sell or furnish alcohol to a minor, including your own child.
- If a minor who consumed alcohol at the party breaks a law, you may be charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor. If someone dies, you may be prosecuted with involuntary manslaughter.
- Parents or other adults may be held responsible if there is property damage, fighting, sexual assault or any other injury.

Why Be Concerned About Teenage Drinking?

- Young people who start drinking under the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21 (NIDA).
- By the age of 17 approximately 12% of adolescents can be categorized as at risk for substance abuse (NCASA, Columbia University).
- Alcohol use by teens affects still-developing cognitive abilities and impairs memory and learning (SADD).
- Teens who drink are more likely to commit or be the victim of violence (including sexual assault) and to experience stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts (SADD).

Talk with your Teenagers:

- 7 in 10 high school teens rate their parents the most influential in their decisions not to drink (Teens Today).

For more information please contact MMU’s Student Assistance Counselor, Sara Mabley at 858-1636 or sara.mabley@cesu.k12.vt.us.