

Branford Coalition To Prevent Underage Drinking

Parties and the Social Scene

Parties or "gatherings" are a major part of the high school social scene. However, without proper planning and careful supervision, "get-togethers" or parties can be a disaster waiting to happen.

When young people are at your house.

Before:

- Set the ground rules. Your children need to know what you expect.
- Limit attendance. Curb the "open party" situation.
- Designate the "off-limits" rooms in your house.
- Know your legal responsibilities. Share this info with your child.
- Remove any family liquor from areas where young people will be.
- Set a time for guests to leave. Invite other adults to help chaperone.
- **During**
- Be present and visible. Greet guests as they arrive
- Occasionally check on food and soda and monitor your yard.
- Don't be pressured into staying out of sight.
- No smoking, and no alcohol, no drugs/no leaving then returning.
- Backpacks and coats must be left at the door. Consider checking contents of backpacks.
- Cups, open cans/bottles (water etc.) cannot be brought into the party.
- Call police if unwanted guests refuse to leave.
- Never allow anyone you suspect to be high drive. Call their parents/caregivers or ask a sober adult to drive them home.

When young people are elsewhere

- Call the host parent to be sure that a parent will be present and that no alcohol will be allowed.
- Know how your child will get to and from the party.
- Make sure you can be reached if your child wants to leave early.
- Be awake for your child's return or have him or her awaken you.
- Be wary of impromptu sleepovers. Verify plans with host parents.
- Establish firm, clear rules against driving under the influence AND riding with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.

If the parents are out of town

Tell a neighbor about your scheduled absence, leave contact information, and instructions to protect yourself against "surprise parties." Inform your child of your preparations.

Don't pressure kids to attend parties/events/concerts they do not want to attend.

They may know that alcohol and drugs will be present

CT SOCIAL HOST LAW

KNOW THE LAW!

Persons who permit underage drinking to occur in their homes can be held accountable. You can be fined up to \$500 and/or 1 year in prison. Please visit our website www.branfordcoalition.org for information.

Believing in the Future of Our Kids

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THE BRAIN

Brain 101

Brain Development

Brains in Transition. Brain development is a life-long process. Rapid periods of change occur not only prior to birth and during infancy, but also during adolescence. Among the brain regions undergoing pronounced transformations during the teen years are the prefrontal cortex and the mesolimbic brain regions, which regulate "executive functions" that are critical for learning, decision-making, and judgment. These areas provide kids with the ability to plan, execute plans, solve complex problems, inhibit inappropriate impulses, and integrate feelings with thinking-many of the characteristics of successful adults. However, these same brain regions are particularly sensitive to alcohol and other drugs.

Wiring. Since many complex changes in brain wiring take place during the teen years and even into the mid-20's, these years offer both great opportunity and great vulnerability for children. As parents, we can provide information about how to capitalize on opportunities and minimize risks.

Healthy Brain Campaign. To help children have more energy and achieve their best, here are some ideas:

Avoid alcohol, tobacco and other drugs

Exercise your brain. Hours of TV do not promote healthy brain growth. Talk, read, look at maps, learn a new hobby. Take classes that are challenging, but not overwhelming. Active use strengthens the brain.

Protect your head. Always use a seatbelt. Wear helmets during sports.

Provide good nutrition. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and drink enough water (6-8 glasses per day)

Get plenty of physical exercise Get enough sleep.

Getting less than 6 hours can cause problems with coordination, thinking and mood. Most people need 7-9 hours of sleep, and teens may need more.

Brain 101

The Adolescent Brain is Vulnerable

There is emerging evidence from both biochemical and structural studies of the brain that adolescents are not "young adults" because their brains are structurally different from that of adults. Young brains respond differently to alcohol and other drugs and may be less resilient to the negative effects of these substances than adult brains.

Addiction. The National Institute of Health reports that most addictions develop during adolescence. Addiction is the continuing, compulsive use of a substance that occurs despite negative consequences to the user. Addiction is a disease - it is chronic, progressive, potentially fatal, and can be very difficult to overcome without professional treatment.

Biology of Addiction. Neuroscientists have learned a lot about addiction in the past few years. They now know that brain chemical dopamine is one of the keys to addiction. The chemical, which makes a person feel euphoric, is released by every addicting substance. It is critical for establishing the long lasting craving for alcohol and other drugs. Scientists speculate that adolescents may release more dopamine than adults in response to drugs, and this would explain why youth are at greater risk for addiction. Whatever the biological reason, young people seem to be far more vulnerable to addiction than adults and exposing them to addictive substances is extremely risky.

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Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use

It can be difficult to tell if your child is using alcohol or drugs because some of the signs, such as changes in mood, or unusual temper outbursts are common in some teens. You know what is "typical" behavior for your child. If you have a concern or think there may be a problem, seek the help of a substance abuse counselor or medical doctor:

Academic Performance

Slipping grades/absent often
Change in attitude toward teachers
Change in motivation to perform

Behavioral Changes

Change in friends/avoids old friends
Sudden concern for privacy
Lack of interest in appearance
Withdrawal, isolation, fatigue,
Depression, anxiety; lying
Lack of cooperation/defies rules
Difficult to talk to/restless
Increased need for money
Gets home late/avoids interaction
"It's not mine. It belongs to a friend."
Interest in pro-drug music/literature
Legal problem

Physical Changes

Blood shot eyes/dilated pupils
Weight loss or gain/bruises
Runny nose/eyes
Spurts of snack-food hunger
Forgetful/dazed look
Sleeping more/less than usual

Physical Evidence

Mouthwash/gum/burning incense
Lighters/rolling papers/pipes
Disappearance of alcohol from home
Eye drops (Visine or Murine)
"Stash cans" disguised as soda cans
Wears pro-drug hats, shirts

Four Stages of Substance Abuse

Initial Use

- A. User learns to tolerate the adverse effects of the drug-e.g. nausea from first cigarettes
- B. User learns drugs produce euphoric feeling

Regular Use

- A. User actively seeks the drug
- B. Achieving the "high" is a preoccupation

Addiction-Early Dependency

- A. Increased tolerance to the drug
- B. Increased frequency and amount of drug use

Addiction-Complete Dependency

- A. User loses control over use-difficult to moderate or stop using
- B. User shows withdrawal symptoms (e.g., anxiety, nervousness, physical illness) when attempting to quit
Continued use despite negative consequences

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What Can I do if I Think My Son or Daughter is Using Alcohol, Tobacco or Other Drugs?

Be wary of denial

Denial is a way of coping with painful situations that allows a person to avoid dealing with a problem. There is the element of shame and inadequacy associated with alcohol and other drug use. Many adults feel helpless and feel that they can take care of the problem in the family itself. It is never too late or too early to act.

Confront the problem

Agree on a course of action with your spouse or other adult family member BEFORE talking with your child. Be open and honest with your feelings, but do not let anger or fear overwhelm your effectiveness to communicate.

Do let your child know that you do not condone his or her behavior.

Do set new guidelines and limits for your child's behavior.

Do become more aware of your child's activities.

If your child is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs:

Right now:

Do try to remain cool and calm.

Do try to find out what he or she has taken and under what circumstances.

Do call a doctor or take your child to the hospital if he or she is incoherent and/or seriously ill.

Do tell your child that you will talk about the matter the next day.

Don't shout, excuse, or use physical force. This will only make matters worse.

The next day:

Do talk to your child as soon as possible and have them assume responsibility for their actions, including clean-up.

Do try to find out the circumstances under which your child came to use, including others who were with them. Consider calling the other young people's parents.

Do seek help from community supports: medical, mental health, legal or self-help groups.

Don't name call, belittle, blame, threaten or discuss anything with your child if you are too angry. Mutual respect should be safeguarded.

Do enforce consequences, e.g., loss of privileges such as driving.

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