

Raising Healthy Teens

**Special
Holiday Safety
Edition**

Promoting the Health & Safety
of Kent & South County Teens

Message from the Directors – Parents as Role Models During Holidays

The holidays may feel very different this year with smaller gatherings and social distancing, but they're still celebrations that traditionally involve the presence of alcohol. After the Fourth of July, the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day is where we usually see the highest levels of alcohol consumption. Adults should keep in mind that kids are paying attention and their idea of acceptable behavior when it comes to alcohol use are formed by watching adults.

Parents can take advantage of holiday gatherings as an opportunity to be good role models for their kids by being responsible when it comes to both drinking and serving alcohol. Let your child know that although some adults may be drinking alcohol, underage drinking is never acceptable. When it comes to preventing underage drinking, It Starts with You!

— Heidi Driscoll, Director, South County Prevention Coalition & Kathy Sullivan, Director, Kent County Prevention Coalition

Holiday Season a Teaching Opportunity for Parents With Teens

Parents are still the #1 influence on their kids! During this season of parties and celebrations, it's important for adults to keep in mind that they are role models for young people when it comes to being responsible when drinking and serving alcohol!

Although Americans seem to find a reason to drink for every holiday (even candy-centered Halloween), certain celebratory events are 'boozier' than the rest. Christmas, New Year's Eve, the Superbowl and St. Patrick's Day are considered the booziest of the year.

For most people, holidays are a time for celebration and quality time with family and friends. While alcohol is often present during these occasions and consumed more than on an average day, the tradition to drink can make holidays an important time of year to talk with your kids about alcohol.



With the upcoming holidays and winter season, we need to remember to continue to talk to our children and their friends about the seriousness of underage drinking and drug use. Ask yourself: Have I discussed alcohol with my kids? If NOT, why not?

Open communication with our kids is the most important deterrent to underage drinking; even if we 'think' they are not listening; they are! Keep in mind that kids not only listen, they

watch too! They are really good 'watchers'! Pay attention to your own alcohol use habits. Yes, as an adult, alcohol use is legal-however you are your child's primary teacher and role model. What you do and say has a great impact on their decisions.

When and How to Talk to Your Kids About Drugs and Alcohol

Substance abuse is a subject that keeps parents up at night at some time or another. It can damage individual lives as well as the lives of those in close proximity.

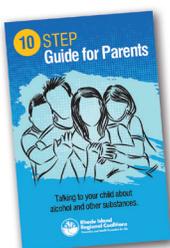
It's particularly insidious because substance use — not abuse — is often socially acceptable. Adults drink wine with dinner or have a cocktail in the evening. Recreational marijuana has been legalized in several states as we speak. In fact, in many ways drug and alcohol use is more socially accepted today than smoking cigarettes was just a decade or two ago.



This means kids can be exposed to alcohol and drug use through the media and through observation of their parents and their parents' friends at an early age. For this reason, research shows it's a good idea to talk to them about substance use and abuse — sometimes as early as ages eight or nine.

A good way to broach the subject is to take advantage of a teachable moment when it presents itself. Perhaps your child sees a person who has consumed too much alcohol and is behaving erratically — at a restaurant or football game, perhaps. Take the opportunity to explain that while drinking alcohol is legal and accepted for adults, overconsumption can lead to bad and even dangerous situations. You might also point out that when you're with your children and you consume a glass of wine, you're doing so responsibly and you know when you've had too much. Taking advantage of these moments is ideal because the child can relate to them as they are witnessing them.

The bottom line is, the earlier you talk to your kids about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, the earlier they will be armed against the pressure to use illicit substances as they get older.



[Click Here for a Helpful Resource for Parents to Help Start the Conversation](#)
Check out this 10 Step Guide on how to talk to your child about alcohol and other substances.

More helpful information for parents is available at Boystown.org/parenting.

Social Host: Know the Real Costs

Do you know the social hosting law? Social hosting refers to adults who knowingly or unknowingly host underage drinking parties on their property, regardless who supplies the booze. It's all about the property the crime is being committed on."



Parents and Caregivers, here's what you can do to help?

- Know and respect the legal drinking age and expect your kids to do the same.
- Don't allow underage drinking on your property; make sure your child knows this and understands why.
- Research your state and local laws on social hosting, be aware of the risks.
- Talk with your kid's friends' parents. Agree to not allow underage drinking in your homes!"

In a recent survey of local parents, 76% surveyed stated that underage drinking is a problem in their community.

Only 37% of parents have talked to their children's friends' parents about whether alcohol is available to minors in their homes.

WORDS MATTER

In your conversations at the dinner table, in the car, during the holidays, and even on zoom — choose your words carefully.

Try and be clear and authentic to yourself, but just use caution with your words as they could be interpreted completely different by whoever is hearing them.

Make sure the words you choose to use when speaking to your family, friends and even your children, clearly express your expectations about underage drinking and drug use.

What Teens Say!

What's Does "Party" Mean to You?

"It is a group of at least 10-15 people, typically planned, it doesn't always have drinking, but most high school parties do. It has music, games, usually beer pong. In summer, they can be any day of the week, during school, it's typically a Friday, Saturday, long weekend or holiday break. They take place at houses where parents are away, lenient or just "negligent." – **High School Senior**

"It depends on who is asking. If I know someone who drinks asks, then alcohol will be there. If my friends ask, I think it means they want to hang out and eat pizza — that is a party to me. If my grandparents ask me, then I think it's a birthday party with cake, food and family." – **High School Sophomore**

"My friends just want to hang out. There may be chips or snacks and Gatorade or water." – **Middle School 8th Grader**

"At college, when someone says 'party' that means this will involve drinking alcohol." – **Junior College Student**

Darty is day drinking which some Rhode Island teens have reported going on since the start of the pandemic. Some teens didn't know what it was.

"Darty is a day party, presumed alcohol will be there." – **High School Senior**

"Dage or Darty; depends on the part of the US you are from, means that there will be drinking games. – **Junior College Student**

"Go to have fun, smoke, and drink. Can be a daytime party. It's a college term I learned from my older brother." – **High School Sophomore**

"I do not know what a darty is, I suspect it is a word adults think is slang and really it isn't." – **High School Sophomore**

Do You Know What a 'Darty' Is?

How Do You Feel When Friends Say They Will Use Alcohol or Drugs?

"I would feel more concerned about my friend admitting that they consumed an entire bottle of Jack Daniels in a week, which is different than if they were going to a party. In college, it's normal to go to parties with alcohol. I did confront a friend who told me that he only drinks at night while doing his homework as a way to cope. I told him that he shouldn't do that again." – **Junior College Student**

"That's their thing that they want to do. I can't stop it but will go to make sure they're ok. I am not interested in doing that, I want to be a kid and play sports. My mom says time for that when I'm older." – **High School Junior**

"Be safe about it. I can't say anything because I do the same thing. It depends on the drug. Cocaine is worse than weed and alcohol. – **High School Senior**

"My friends never say they are doing drugs and alcohol; we're only 12." – **7th Grader**

Help Keep Our Kids Safe

Lock Your Liquor



Approximately 1 out of 10 alcoholic drinks in the U.S. is consumed illegally by a person too young to drink. More than 70% of youth report drinking alcoholic beverages before they turned 21.

Where do they get alcohol? The truth is that most adolescents get alcohol from a convenient source: their own homes. Two out of three teens say it's easy to get alcohol in their homes without their parents knowledge. Think about your house, do your children have easy access to alcohol? If a beer or bottle of liquor went missing, would you notice? Alcohol is still the most widely abused substance among youth.

With Covid limiting teens' social life and outside activities and the increased exposure to alcohol-promoting media and more alcohol around the house during the holidays, the temptation for them to drink may be greater.

2/3 of teens say it is easy to get alcohol from their homes without their parents knowing.

When we suggest you "Lock Your Liquor," we do not mean literally putting a padlock on the refrigerator, although, locking a garage fridge might be a good idea. We mean that as the adult of the home it is your responsibility to keep alcohol secure and out of the hands of kids.



You should take precautions for the beer and liquor in your home to prevent the temptation of underage drinking. Unmonitored alcohol, including alcohol stored in a cabinet, basement, or garage, should be locked up or difficult to take. Keep an eye on inventory levels to make sure no bottles are unaccounted for. Whether you lock up your alcohol or simply check to make sure it is not "mysteriously" disappearing, parents hold the key to preventing underage drinking.

If you want to really secure your liquor or prescription meds, there are products available such refrigerator locks, wine bottle locks, prescription lock bags and key entry cabinets and crates.

Virtual Coalition Meetings

To get a Zoom invitation link, email your local coalition. Contacts provided below.

Kent County Regional 3rd Monday at 3pm

Kathy Sullivan, ksullivan@risas.org

[visit website](#)

Coventry 1st Monday at 9am

Dana DeVerna, DDeverna@comcap.org

Exeter West Greenwich 3rd Monday at 6pm

Dr. Paul Mangino, Jr., paulmanginojr@outlook.com

East Greenwich 2nd Thursday at 3pm

Bob Houghtaling, rhoughtaling2@verizon.net

West Warwick 3rd Tuesday at 3:30pm

Astrid Meijer, ameijer.wwpc@gmail.com

Warwick 2nd Friday at 10am

Michael Fratus, mfratus@comcap.org

South County Regional 2nd Wednesday at 9am

Heidi Driscoll, Hdriscoll@risas.org

[visit website](#)

Block Island 2nd Tuesday at 8:30am

Jill Seppa, jseppa@gmail.com

[visit website](#)

Chariho 2nd Monday at 5:30pm

Dan Fitzgerald, Dan@charihoyouth.org

[visit website](#)

Narragansett Last Wednesday at 10:30am

Kelly Cartwright, Narraprevention@gmail.com

[visit website](#)

North Kingstown 3rd Thursday at 2pm

Kathy Yeager, kathy_yeager@nksd.net

[visit website](#)

Westerly Last Monday at 11am

Ashley ladevaia, preventionashley@gmail.com

Please Join Us!

[Click Here](#)
to Check Out Our
New Interactive
Hidden in Plain
Sight Bedroom!



Relaxing Your Mind and Body

Being a parent can be stressful! Some days are harder than others and that was before Covid! Developing healthy coping strategies can improve your health and well-being for a lifetime.

Relaxing the Mind

- Take slow, deep breaths. Or try other breathing exercises for relaxation.
- Soak in a warm bath.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Practice mindful meditation. The goal is to focus attention on things that are happening right now in the present moment. For example, listen to your body. Is your breathing fast, slow, deep, or shallow? Do you hear noises, such as traffic, or do you hear only silence? The idea is just to note what is happening without trying to change it.
- Write. Some people feel more relaxed after they write about their feelings. One way is to keep a journal.
- Use guided imagery. With guided imagery, you imagine yourself in a certain setting that helps you feel calm and relaxed. You can use audiotapes, scripts, or a teacher to guide you through the process.

Relaxing the Body

- Do yoga. You can get books and videos to do at home or take a yoga class.
- Try progressive muscle relaxation. This process involves tensing and relaxing each muscle group. Progressive muscle relaxation can reduce anxiety and muscle tension. If you have trouble falling asleep, this may also help. When you relax your muscles, your body gets the signal that it is okay to fall asleep.
- Take a walk or do some other activity. Making time to do things you enjoy can also help you relax.
- Get a massage or have someone give you a back rub.
- Have a warm drink that doesn't have alcohol or caffeine in it, such as herbal tea or warm milk.

Excerpt from <https://www.mottchildren.org/health-library/uz2209>

Empowering Families Virtually

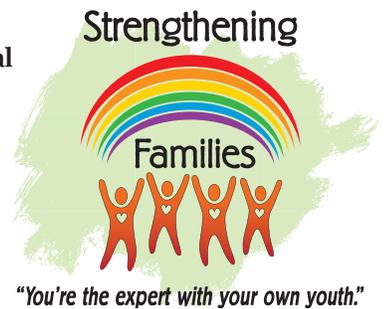
The *Strengthening Families Program* is an 11-week virtual course with 90-minute sessions designed for families with children 7-17.

Parents learn to increase desired behaviors in children by using attention and rewards, clear communication, effective discipline, substance use education, problem solving and limit setting.

Children learn effective communication, understanding feelings, social skills, problem solving, resisting peer pressure, consequences of substance use, and parental rule compliance.

Families engage in structured activities, practice therapeutic child play, conduct family meetings, learn communication skills, practice effective discipline, reinforce positive behaviors in each other, and plan family activities together.

For more information, email Kgardner@risas.org.



RI RESOURCES

BH Link Hotline — 401-414-LINK (414-5465)

24/7, 365 days/yr

Kids' Link RI — (855) 543-5465

www.lifespan.org/centers-services/kids-link-ri

National Suicide Hotline — 1-800-273-TALK (273-8255)

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

Trevor Project for LGBTQ Youth — 1-866-488-7386

24/7, Text Trevor to 1-202-304-1200

www.thetrevorproject.org

NAMI Helpline — 800-273-8255

Crisis Text Line 24/7: 741741

Parents Support Network of RI

(401) 467-6855 or (800) 483-8844 www.psnri.org

www.Preventoverdoseri.org



For more information contact South County Prevention Coalition Director Heidi Driscoll at hdriscoll@risas.org or Kent County Prevention Coalition Director Kathy Sullivan at ksullivan@risas.org and please visit us at www.riprevention.org or on Facebook.