

Credits

Information, suggestions and recommendations in this Guide were compiled from a variety of sources, including Norfolk County Police Departments, public and independent schools and publications produced by the Consortium for Prevention of Substance Abuse (Caritas Norwood Hospital), the Johnson Institute, the Massachusetts Prevention Centers, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), Milton Takes Action and the Milton Youth Department, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Reduce Teenage Drinking Needham, Remove Intoxicated Drivers (RID), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Westwood Cares Committee



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Underage Drinking:

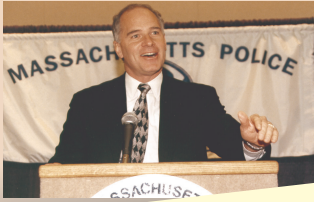
Choices & Consequences

A Guide for Parents



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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Each year across our nation, promising futures are lost forever by uninformed decisions and poor choices. In far too many of these needless teenage tragedies, alcohol is the common denominator.

It doesn't have to be that way. As Norfolk District Attorney, I have seen a substantial parent, school and community-based commitment to preventing alcohol abuse and underage drinking — a commitment that reflects the gravity and complexity of the issues involved. The parents, schools, police and communities of this county should be proud of the many encouraging prevention and awareness initiatives that they have undertaken to combat this problem.

Despite its illegality, underage drinking is prevalent among adolescents and highly prevalent among high school and college students. Underage drinking is not only illegal, it's dangerous. It is estimated that alcohol takes 6.5 times more young lives than all other illicit drugs combined. Alcohol is one of the most common contributors to injury, death and criminal behavior among young people — adolescents, "tweens," teens and young adults.

Although parents sometimes underestimate their impact and influence, survey after survey shows that young people rank parents among the top reasons for not using alcohol. In fact, parents most often rank above friends or peer pressure. Recognizing parents as a key to preventing underage drinking, this guide is designed to remind parents how critical it is to talk with our kids about alcohol and other drugs.

Sincerely,

Bill Keating

William R. Keating
Norfolk District Attorney

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Parents drinking
Children thinking

At what age will children see the difference between a glass of wine and a keg of beer?

How Serious is the Problem of Underage Drinking?



As they make the transition from childhood to adulthood, young people begin to take risks and experiment. Without support and guidance, some youth may engage in behavior that places them and others at risk. Such behavior may include alcohol use. Many teens experiment with alcohol while others go through high school without ever having a drink. Among teens who do drink, excess is too often the norm.

Did you know...

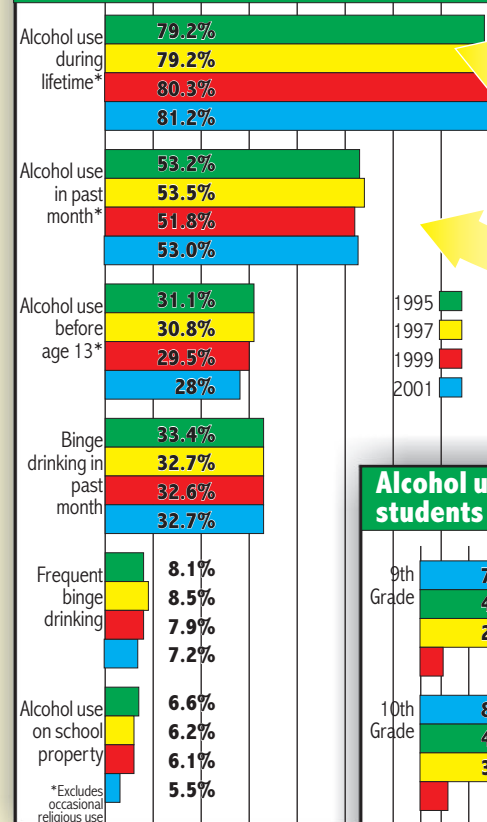
- Peer pressure begins early. One third of 4th graders and more than half of 6th graders say they have been pressured by friends to drink alcohol (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA).

- The median age at which chil-

dren *begin drinking* is about 13 (National Institute on Drug Abuse and Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

- Teens who use alcohol are more likely than teens who do not drink to become sexually active at earlier ages, to have sexual intercourse more often and to have unprotected sex (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism).
- Young people who begin drinking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who wait until the legal drinking age of 21 (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism).

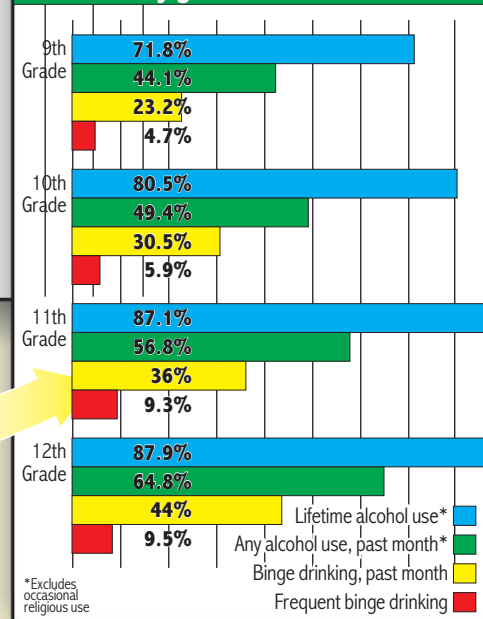
Alcohol use among Mass. high school students 1995-2001



4 out of 5 Mass. high school students have used alcohol

Half have used alcohol in the last month

Alcohol use among Mass. high school students by grade



Will YOUR teenager be a high school drinker?

Binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks in a row within a couple of hours. Frequent binge drinking is six or more episodes of binge drinking in the prior month. Source: Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results.

Binge Drinking & Alcohol Poisoning



How Easy is it for Kids to Get Alcohol?

Alcohol is relatively cheap and it is not difficult for adolescents to obtain.

According to a 2001 national study, 70% of 8th graders and 88% of 10th graders report that it is "fairly or very easy" for them to obtain alcohol when they want it (National Institute on Drug Abuse).

- One six-pack of beer costs about \$5 and contains more than enough alcohol to make the average 18-year-old legally intoxicated.
- Young teens skim alcohol from parents.
- Some get fake IDs.
- But the biggest connection, kids say, is older people who agree to buy alcohol for them — friends or relatives who are of legal purchase age or adult strangers whom kids approach and "shoulder tap" to buy.

"There are two things we depend upon. Parents not paying attention and parents not wanting to believe their middle school child knows anything about alcohol and other drugs older kids use." — A 10th grade student reflecting on the start of his drinking and alcohol-related legal problems



Kids don't know the alcohol content of the things they

drink. Some think that if they stick to beer or wine, they will be able to drink more without getting drunk. That assumption is not only untrue, it can be dangerous. One beer, one glass of wine and one shot of whiskey each have about the same amount of pure alcohol.

drink speak of cleaning up friends, putting them in showers, giving them Ipecac syrup to induce vomiting, changing their clothes and putting them to bed to sleep it off.



"People drink till they throw up or pass out. No one stops and says, 'I've had enough.' There has to be some kind of physical consequence for them to quit... To some extent there's even a little pride that goes with it. People say things like, 'I used to throw up, but now my tolerance is really high. Now I just pass out.'" — An 18-year old high school student

Teens are trying alcohol at younger and younger ages and many don't know when to stop. Kids drink to get drunk. Sometimes falling down or passing out is the only way they know when to stop. Others get sick and start all over again. For too many kids, the attitude about drinking is "Why bother if you're not going to get drunk?"



Kids who don't

College Students

National studies show that binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row for men or 4 for women, at least once in a 2-week period) is prevalent on many campuses. Media coverage of alcohol-related deaths among college students has focused on collegiate substance abuse. However, research indicates that college binge drinking has been a public health dilemma for decades and has only recently been given the attention it deserves.

Did you know....

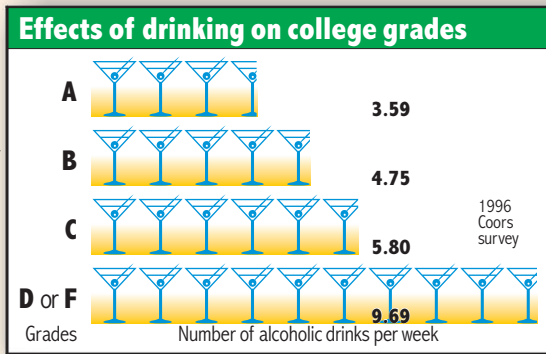
- More than 40% of college students are binge drinkers — drinking 91% of all alcohol consumed by college students (*Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention*).
- Alcohol is associated with missed classes and poor performance, causing lower grade point averages. The more drinks a student has each week, the lower the GPA.
- College students encounter problems when others drink too much:
 - ❖ 60.5% had study or sleep interrupted
 - ❖ 53.6% had to care for a drunken student
 - ❖ 20.1% of women experienced an unwanted sexual advance

(Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention).

Alcohol Poisoning Can Be Fatal: Knowing the Facts Can Save Lives

The following information literally saves lives. Your teen and young adult needs to know the critical warning signs of alcohol poisoning and how to respond safely.

Critical signs of alcohol poisoning:



- Mental confusion, stupor, coma, or unconsciousness
- No response to pinching the skin
- Vomiting while sleeping
- Seizures
- Slow (less than 8 breaths per minute) or irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, paleness.

If you suspect that someone may have ingested a fatal dose of alcohol, get help immediately!

- Call 911 or the emergency medical number
- Stay with the person
- Keep the person from choking on vomit
- Tell emergency medical technicians the symptoms and, if you know, how much alcohol the person drank.

Prompt action may save a life!



Drinking and Driving

Alcohol is related to dangerous (and illegal) driving decisions. According to the 2001 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Education:

- Almost half of all students who had used alcohol in the last month rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking.
- Over 12% of students who had used alcohol in the past month drove after they had been drinking.



It is estimated that as many as 4,000 deaths occur each year from alcohol overdosing: drinking too much too fast. Families learn, in the most difficult way, that alcohol can be a lethal drug (*Remove Intoxicated Drivers-RID*).

The Connection Between Alcohol Crime and Other Problems

Aside from being illegal, alcohol use is also associated with:

- highway crashes
- violence
- depression
- suicide attempts
- teen dating violence and sexual assault
- accidental injuries
- other drug use
- unsafe sexual activity
- academic difficulties
- interpersonal problems
- other criminal behavior

Alcohol-Related Crime

- National Crime Victimization Surveys have consistently found that alcohol is more likely than any other drug to be involved in violent crimes (United States Department of Justice).
- It is estimated that alcohol is involved in anywhere from 20% to 35% of all violent crimes. The rates are higher for some crimes, including domestic violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism).

Alcohol use is associated with fighting and suicide attempts

In comparison with students who had not used alcohol

within the past 30 days, Massachusetts' high school students who reported alcohol use within the past month were:

- Over twice as likely to report carrying a weapon in the past 30 days (18% vs. 6.6%)
- Nearly twice as likely to have been in a fight in the past year (42.8% vs. 21.8%)
- Over twice as likely to have attempted suicide in the past year (12.4% vs. 6%).

(Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results).

For female students, recent alcohol use is strongly associated with dating violence and unwanted sexual contact

- Compared to female students who had not used alcohol in the previous month, those who did report recent alcohol use were significantly more likely to report having been hurt by a date (21.4% vs. 9.6%) and to have ever experienced sexual contact against their will (17% vs. 10%) (Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results).

Alcohol and Other Drugs

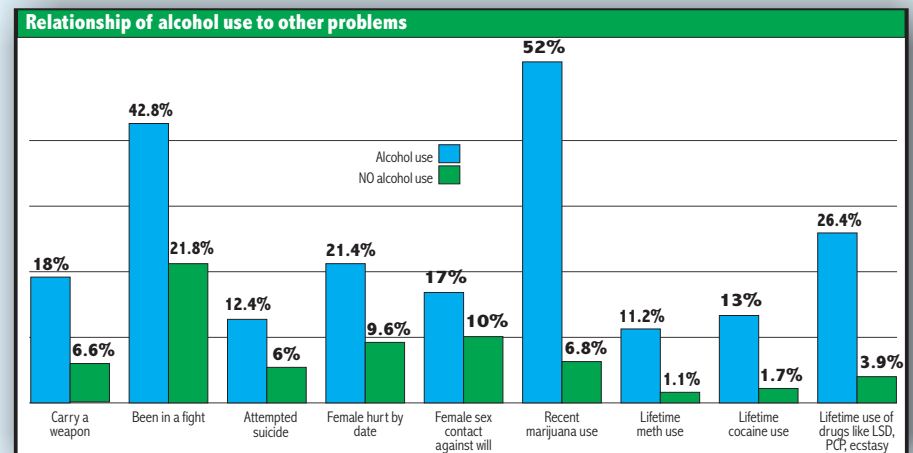
Alcohol use is correlated with illegal drug use. It can be a gateway drug for the use of other drugs. In comparison with students who did not report any recent alcohol use, adolescents who reported alcohol use within the past 30 days were:

- Almost eight times more likely to report recent marijuana use (52% vs. 6.8%) or other drugs such as LSD, PCP or ecstasy (26.4% vs. 3.9%)
- About ten times more likely to report lifetime use of cocaine (13% vs. 1.7%) or methamphetamines (11.2% vs. 1.1%)

(Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results).

Alcohol-Related Injuries

Alcohol use is related to accidental injuries. Alcohol use puts all people at greater risk for falls, drowning and other accidents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the four leading injury-related causes of death among youths under the age of 20 are: 1. motor vehicle crash; 2. homicide; 3. suicide; 4. drowning. Alcohol is involved in many of these deaths.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results.

Guidelines & Tools for Parents

“One of the best things for teenagers is to hold them accountable for their mistakes or poor choices, including decisions about alcohol. Teenagers have needs for independence, separation, and decreased parental control. But this doesn't mean no discipline. The key is to develop a system that incorporates the need for limits and accountability with the need for less control. A family contract can provide this balance.” — *Mothers Against Drunk Driving*

Some families find that having mutually agreed upon rules and expectations may help to avoid or limit misunderstandings and potentially unsafe situations.

Some questions to consider in deciding if a family contract works for your family:

- What are our family ground rules?
- How do I communicate them to my child(ren)?
- How do I enforce these rules?
- How do I change the rules as my family changes?

Family ground rules — A family contract could include ground rules on:

- Reasonable Hours/Curfews
- Get-togethers and parties at home and away from home
- Driving
- Drinking
- Drug use (including



prescription and “designer” drugs as well as inhalants)

- Riding in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs

Suggested family rules about drinking

- Kids will not drink alcohol until they are 21.
- Older siblings will not encourage younger brothers or sisters to drink and will not give or sell them alcohol.
- Kids will not stay at teen parties where alcohol is served or used.
- Kids will not ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

Sample Weekend Curfews

| | |
|------------|----------|
| 8th grade | 10:30pm |
| 9th grade | 11:00pm |
| 10th grade | 11:30pm |
| 11th grade | Midnight |
| 12th grade | 12:30am |

In the case of special events such as proms, graduation, etc., many parents decide to extend the curfew time (*Consortium for the Prevention of Substance Abuse, Caritas Norwood Hospital*).

Protecting Your Child and Your Home When You Are Away

Parties sometimes happen at houses when parents are away. If you are going to be away from home overnight, consider calling your Police Department to ask that they check your home daily for unwanted parties. This may help take the pressure off your teenager when uninvited friends show up wanting to party because they heard you were out of town.

Parties and Other Social Events: Suggested Ground Rules

When Your Child Attends Activities

Ask questions:

- Where will you be?
- At what phone number can you be reached?
- Who is attending the event? How old are they? How do you know them?
- What will you be doing?



- Who are the adults chaperoning the activity?

Hosting Teen Get-Togethers and Parties in Your Home

Here are some tips to think about for hosting a safe teen party at your home.

- Limit the number of invitees.
- Agree on a specific guest list in advance. Know the age of invitees and how they know your child.
- Set a beginning and ending time for the party.
- Discuss other ground rules with your child before the party.
- Encourage your teen to plan the party with a responsible friend that he or she will have support from if a problem arises.
- Define an area for the party. Designate areas that are off limits.
- Do not allow guests to return after leaving the party.
- Do not admit party crashers.
- If an underage guest brings alcohol into your house, you may wish to contact the police. If he or she appears under the influence, be prepared to call a parent to request safe transportation.
- Be visible and available but don't join the party!
- Establish a signal that your child may use if he or she needs help with a situation.

Get-togethers and Parties Outside Your Home

As a parent of a child invited to an activity, get-together or party:

- Call the host parent.
- Verify the occasion and location.
- Check on adult supervision.
- Confirm there will be no alcohol or drugs allowed.
- Make certain your child knows where you will be and how to reach you.
- Plan to be awake or awakened for a quick “check in” when your child returns home.



sends a mixed message that can have dangerous, potentially deadly, consequences. Consider the following interview of a Connecticut father and son reported in *Driven*, a magazine published by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. “Under supervision, we allowed Kevin to have a beer at home,” said Kevin’s father. “We figured that if he was going to drink, at least he would not be on the road.” Kevin’s response: “It sent me a mixed mes-

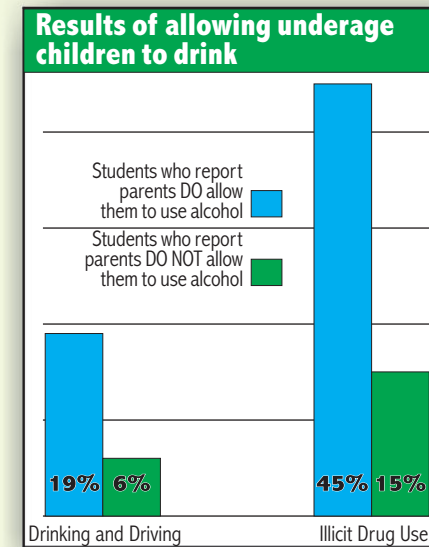
sage. If I could drink at home, I decided I could drink anywhere.”

Kevin’s best friend, David, was killed in a drunk driving crash. Kevin pleaded guilty to the crime of negligent homicide (under Connecticut law). He was sentenced to a year in jail, six months fulltime community service and the loss of his driver’s license. Kevin recognizes “I’ve lost years of my life, but that doesn’t equal the loss that David’s family will have forever.”

The Power of the “No Use” Message

High school students were asked in an anonymous survey conducted by the Johnson Institute whether or

not their parents gave them “permission” to drink under certain circumstances (for example, at home, as long as not driving, on special occasions, etc.). The study results may surprise you. Students who report that parents do allow them to use alcohol under certain circumstances reported three times the rate of drinking and driving as well as illicit drug use.



Source: Johnson Institute

Other Parent Messages That Work:

As parents, guardians and other caring adults we can:

- Make it clear that underage drinking is against the law.
- Be consistent with our words and actions.
- Model positive behavior for teens and young adults who often tune out

attempts to lecture, but watch our every action.

- Show that we value our freedom to think and act independently — we don’t have to do something because “everyone is doing it.” This helps kids see that negative peer pressure can be rejected.
- Be aware of how our own use of alcohol can influence kids. Drinking responsibly in front of kids has not been shown to be harmful. Kids do notice how much we drink and how we act when drinking.
- Keep in mind that appropriate supervision, setting limits and providing a good example are key to prevention.
- Express our strong disapproval of underage drinking, dangerous alcohol consumption, driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs and riding with a driver who has been drinking or drugging.

How and When to Talk to Your Son or Daughter About Alcohol and Other Drugs...

Most parents want to learn how to better communicate with their kids about the dangers of alcohol and other drug use. Yet many of us find it very difficult. We can’t find the right way to start up a conversation and, in some cases, may feel reluctant because of our own past use.

“Efforts to tackle underage drinking must involve parents who, in their best efforts, can sometimes make uninformed and dangerous decisions....Many parents allow their teenage children to drink alcohol at home in an effort to teach them how to drink responsibly. They may have good intentions, but the results can be deadly. What they do, in fact, is facilitate their kids’ comfort with alcohol, and the trouble only begins there.” — *Mothers Against Drunk Driving*

What Can We Do? What Really Makes a Difference?

Allowing underage drinking under any circumstances

Some parents say that because alcohol is a legal drug, it's hard to think of it as being dangerous. Yet, it is critical for parents to regularly talk with our kids about substance abuse and other issues that are important to their good health and future.

Before you begin....

- Assess and review your own feelings about alcohol and other drug use.
- Avoid contradictions between your words and actions.
- Be prepared to establish an ongoing conversation rather than giving a one-time speech.
- Remember...the first discussion is likely to be the toughest to initiate.
- Talk with other parents who have learned through experience. They may have information to share on successful conversations they've had with their child.

Teachable Moments

Look for and create “teachable moments” such as



television shows, news, books or newspaper articles that deal with alcohol or other drug use. Consider one of the following “teachable moments:”

- You hear about a teen party at which alcohol was served.
- You are planning a party and will serve alcohol. Your child sees you or helps you prepare for the party.
- You have a family member who has a problem with alcohol.
- You are driving in a car with your child and his or her friends. They start to talk about an incident involving alcohol or other drugs (party, news item, school assignment, etc.).

Talking Points to Consider

1. **Set clear and realistic expectations.**
2. **Make it clear that underage alcohol consumption and alcohol-impaired driving are against the law and dangerous.**
3. **Begin a discussion using examples of someone you knew who was injured, imprisoned or died as a result of alcohol.**
4. **Know the alcohol and other drug scene in your community and talk to your child about it.**

“Tweens,” teens and college students grossly exaggerate the use of alcohol and other drugs by their peers. Kids and young adults are highly influenced by peers and tend to drink up to what they perceive to be the norm. Confronting misperceptions about alcohol use is vital.

Share with your son or daughter the following information from a recent survey of Massachusetts’ high school students:

- Nearly half of all Massachusetts’ high school students (47%) had not used alcohol within 30 days prior to the survey.
- Roughly half of all Massachusetts’ high school students (46%) report never having used any illegal drug in their lifetime.

(Massachusetts Department of Education 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results).

5. **Stress that alcohol is toxic and high risk drinking can fatally poison.** Many teenagers don’t know that a person

High risk drinking is:

- Chugging, drinking games, shots or drinking anything out of a punch bowl, trough, hose, or funnel
- Drinking to get drunk (intoxicated)
- Driving after drinking or riding with someone under the influence
- Drinking too much too fast
- Going to parties where people drink too much
- Not knowing what is in your glass or leaving it unattended
- Mixing alcohol with medications or illegal drugs

can die from an alcohol overdose. Discuss what high risk drinking is. Review the information in this Guide on binge drinking.

6. Avoid tales of drinking exploits from your own high school and college years.

Your son or daughter may interpret your stories of drinking during high school or college as approving of dangerous alcohol use. If you drank alcohol at their age, avoid entertaining your child with these stories (*Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention*).

Resources listed on page 19 of this Guide offer tips on how to discuss alcohol, drugs and other sensitive issues with kids.

Conversation Starters You May Want to Use

Ask your son or daughter

- How will you decide whether or not to drink?
- What will you do if you find yourself at a party with only alcohol to drink?
- What will you do if you're with a friend who wants to drink and party and you don't?
- What will you do if you find someone passed out?

Warning Signs



Some indicators that a child may be involved in alcohol or other drugs include:

- Smell of alcohol on breath, or sudden, frequent use of breath mints
- Abrupt changes in mood or attitude
- Sudden decline in attendance or performance at school
- Losing interest in school, sports, or other activities that once were important
- Sudden resistance to discipline at school
- Uncharacteristic withdrawal from family, friends or interests



- Money or valuables missing from home
- Liquor or prescriptions in the house being taken
- Possession of drug paraphernalia (e.g. hand rolled cigarettes, cigarette papers, roach clips, plastic baggies)
- Legal problems (e.g. possession or sale of alcohol or other drugs, thefts, vandalism).



This is only a quick checklist of some possible warning signs. At the very least, the warning signs alert parents, guardians and other caring adults that a teen or young adult may be in trouble and need intervention and support.

What To Do if You Suspect Your Child May Have a Problem with Alcohol or Other Drugs

Contact a health care or substance abuse professional if you suspect a problem. They can provide guidance and assessment for your child. The assessment process by a qualified professional will help determine if an alcohol or other drug problem exists or if there is another problem

requiring assistance. Once the problem is evaluated, appropriate treatment alternatives can be explored with the child/teen/young adult and family members.

The following list of resources is a starting point for parents and other caring adults who are seeking alcohol and other drug prevention, counseling and treatment programs and services.

Contact Information

Massachusetts

Alateen/Al-Anon
Regional Office
460 Washington Street,
Room 9
Braintree, MA
781-834-5300
www.al-anon.alateen.org

Massachusetts Substance Abuse Helpline
1-800-327-5050
617-445-1500
www.helpline-online.com
Resource and referrals for treatment and counseling programs and services throughout Massachusetts. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

National

DrugHelp
Offers on-the-spot counseling and referrals to treatment programs in your area from the American Council for Drug Education.
1-800-DRUG-HELP
www.drughelp.org

Marijuana Anonymous
Operates a voice-mail service for information on marijuana abuse and referrals to local meetings.
1-800-766-6779
www.marijuana-anonymous.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
1-800-633-6233

Narcotics Anonymous
Gives referrals to programs for problems related to drugs.
818-773-9999
www.na.org

National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline
Trained counselors provide information on substance abuse as well as referrals for local treatment options.
1-800-662-HELP

National Institute on Drug Abuse
This 24-hour hotline offers information on abuse and addiction.
1-888-644-6432

Listings of additional resources are available on the Norfolk District Attorney's web page at www.norfolkda.com

Legal Issues & Consequences



For people under the age of 21, there are serious legal consequences — arrest, fines, loss of driver's license, maybe even imprisonment — connected with alcohol possession and use.

In Massachusetts, it is illegal for:

- Any person under 21 to be in possession of alcohol.
- Any person under 21 to use false identification to buy alcohol.
- Any person (regardless of age) to drive under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, inhalants or other drugs. You don't have to be drunk to break the law. Impaired driving (driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs) is illegal.
- Any person to sell, deliver or furnish alcohol to a person under 21.

Following is a summary of some of the criminal offenses and potential legal consequences associated with underage alcohol possession and use.

Non-Driving Related Alcohol Offenses For Persons Under 21

Each of the following are subject to fines and other penalties as well as license suspension.

- Possession of Alcohol by Persons Under 21 (G.L. c. 138, sec. 34C) — It is



illegal for any person under 21 to possess,

carry or transport alcohol unless:

- 1) accompanied by a parent or guardian; or
 - 2) at least 18 and acting in the course of employment.
- Person Under 21 Purchasing or Attempting to Purchase Alcohol (G.L. c. 138, sec. 34A) — It is illegal for any person under the age of 21 to purchase, attempt to purchase or induce another to purchase or in any way procure alcohol.
 - Altering, Stealing, Falsifying or Forging a Massachusetts License or Identification Card (G.L. c. 90 sec. 24B; G.L. c. 138, sec. 34B) — It is against the law to use a false license or ID, to alter a license or ID, or to use another person's license or ID. It is also against the law to use false information to obtain a license or ID.

Driving-Related Alcohol Offenses For Persons Under 21

Driving skills can be impaired by a blood alcohol content ratio (BAC) as low as 0.02. The BAC refers to the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream, measured in percentages. For instance, having a BAC of .02 percent means that a person has 2 parts alcohol per 1,000 parts blood in the body.

Thus, although the public most commonly associates blood alcohol concentration (BAC) with “drunk driving,” it is more accurate to refer to “alcohol-impaired driving.” A person doesn't have to be drunk (intoxicated) to be

Based on research by the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol Information, a person weighing 180 lbs. or less would have a BAC of at least .02 percent up to one hour after having just one drink.

demonstrably impaired and operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

The penalties for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs include arrest, fines, license suspension and possible imprisonment.

- Driving Under the Influence (G.L. c. 90, sec. 24) — For a person under 21, Massachusetts law defines a .02% blood alcohol content ratio (BAC) as operating under the influence. For a person over 21, Massachusetts law defines operating under



the influence as a BAC of .08 or above. Massachusetts laws that define violations and penalties for operating under the influence of alcohol also apply to drugs, including illegal drugs and prescription medicines.

license suspended immediately for a period of 180 days. The under-21 driver must complete an



alcohol education program or face an additional 180 day suspension. Any person under 18 who does not complete the required alcohol education program faces an additional suspension (depending upon his or her age).

Non-Driving Related Drug Possession Offenses and License Suspension. It may surprise you and your son or daughter to learn that there are a number of crimes that do not involve driving but that could result in license suspension, fines and other penalties. For example, any person convicted of a drug offense, whether in Massachusetts or another state, will have his or her driver's license suspended. Even if no motor vehicle was involved in the offense, the law requires loss of license for 1 to 5 years, depending on the conviction.

According to state and federal accident statistics, drivers under age 21 are twice as likely as other drivers to be involved in motor vehicle accidents in which alcohol is a factor. This is one reason that laws applying to under-21 drivers are more strict.

- Possession of an Open Container of Alcohol in a Motor Vehicle (G.L. c.90, sec. 24I(b)) — It is illegal for any person to have an open container of alcoholic beverage inside a motor vehicle. Any person under 21 can be arrested, fined, and have his or her license suspended. Penalties may be more severe if the driver is under age 18 and is arrested or charged with operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated or refusing to take chemical tests or analysis of breath or blood.
- Refusal to Take Alcohol Breath Test (G.L. c. 90, sec. 24(f) (1); G.L. c. 90, sec. 24N) — Any driver under 21 cited for refusing an alcohol breath test will have his or her

| License Suspensions & Reinstatement Fees | | |
|--|--|--|
| Criminal Conviction (Within 10 Years) | Suspension Period | Fee to Reinstatement |
| Operating a motor vehicle with a suspended or revoked license | 60 days-1 year | \$300 |
| Operating a motor vehicle without the owner's authority | 1-3 years | \$300 |
| Leaving the scene of an accident when a person is injured | 1-2 years | \$300 |
| Leaving the scene of an accident involving property damage | 60 days-1 year | \$300 |
| Operating to endanger | 60 days-1 year | \$300 |
| Motor vehicle homicide | 10 years-Lifetime | \$300 |
| Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (mandatory minimum sentence for 2nd offense) | 1 year (first) 2 years (second) 8 years (third) 10 years (fourth) Lifetime (fifth) | \$300 (first) \$500 (second) \$1000 (third) \$1000 (fourth) |
| Any drug-related conviction, even if no motor vehicle is involved | 1-5 years | \$50 |

Conviction on any offense also carries a potential (and in some cases a mandatory minimum) jail or prison sentence. Additional suspension periods will apply to many of the offenses in the accompanying chart when committed by a person with a Junior Operators License and alcohol or drugs are involved. *Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles.*

Other Consequences to Consider

Fines, lawyer's fees, license reinstatement fees and higher insurance costs could all add up to thousands of dollars. A juvenile or criminal matter could impact on your child's career and college options. The effects of underage drinking may reach beyond the school or college years. More and more companies are doing background checks on potential employees. Graduates may be denied employment opportunities as a result of alcohol-related license suspensions or criminal convictions.

Legal Liability for Those Who Purchase Alcohol, Parents, Homeowners and Underage Drinking

People over the age of 21 also need to be concerned about

legal liability issues. There are a number of Massachusetts laws that impose criminal liability for offenses involving underage alcohol possession and use.

- Furnishing Alcohol to a Person Under 21 (G.L. c. 138, sec. 34) – It is against the law to sell, deliver or furnish alcoholic beverages to any person under 21. The term “furnish” means to knowingly or intentionally supply, give, provide to or allow a person under 21 years of age (except the child or grandchild of the person being charged) to possess alcoholic beverages on premises or property owned or controlled by the person charged. Conviction of this crime is punishable by imprisonment up to one year and/or fine up to \$2,000.

“Laws holding parents liable for underage drinking incidents are becoming more common. It is evident that young people alone are not at the root of the underage drinking issue—adults often facilitate youth drinking by providing or buying the drinks.” — Mothers Against Drunk Driving

In addition to potential criminal charges and punishment, a person may incur civil liability for providing or serving alcohol to a guest of any age who, in turn, hurts someone, hurts themselves or damages property.