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Middle School: It's Not Too Early To Talk To Kids



It's never too early to let your children know how you feel about underage drinking. Parents of middle school children might not think they need to worry about the subject, but statistics show that about 10 percent of 12-year olds say they've tried alcohol.

By age 15, that number jumps to 50%. Government and health officials involved in "We Don't Serve Teens"—a national campaign to prevent underage drinking—advise parents to talk early, talk often and get others involved to protect kids from alcohol-related injury.

Talk early. Kids who drink are more likely to engage in risky behavior. In fact, underage drinking is linked to about 5,000 deaths every year. The reason most children choose not to drink is because their parents talk to them about it. The sooner you start talking to children about alcohol, the greater chance you have of influencing their decisions about drinking.

Talk often. One conversation isn't enough to give kids the information and guidance they need about alcohol. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, children who regularly talk to their parents about alcohol are less likely to drink. Try using everyday opportunities to talk—in the car, during dinner or while you and your child are watching TV.

Get others involved. Most kids who drink alcohol don't pay for it—instead, they get it from older friends and family members, at parties or from your liquor cabinet. So let the people around you know that you don't want your child to have access to alcohol. And let your kids know that the alcohol in your home is strictly off-limits.

"Teens who drink harm themselves and others," says Mary Engle of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). "It's never too early for parents to start letting their children know that they disapprove of underage drinking."

For more information about the risks of underage drinking and tips to help protect young people from alcohol-related injury, visits the sites to the left of this article.

Source: www.napsnet.com



For more information on youth and alcohol, check out the following websites:

- <http://bethechange.ellington-ct.gov>
- www.theantidrug.com
- www.teen-safe.org
- www.stopalcoholabuse.gov
- www.preventionworksct.org
- www.housepartybill.org
- www.madd.org/under21
- www.mourningparentsact.org
- www.dontserveteens.gov
- www.alcoholfreechildren.org
- www.Alot2Lose.com
- www.thecoolspot.gov
- www.sadd.org
- www.niaaa.nih.gov
- www.notmykid.org
- www.drugfree.org



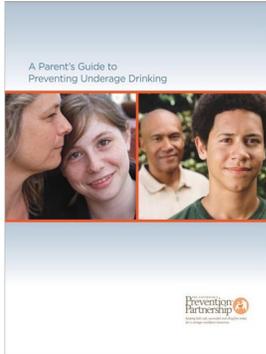
Parent Connection Meeting

The Parent Connection was created in February of 2007 and consists of parents who are interested in bringing awareness and education to the Ellington Community of the dangers of underage drinking. Due to scheduling issues, meetings were suspended and we'd like to start meeting again to discuss where we have been and where we are going with our efforts. **The meeting will take place on Wednesday, February 16th at 7 pm at Ellington Youth Services at 31 Arbor Way.** Please contact Debbie Stauffer at dstauffer@ellington-ct.gov if you would like to join us.

Be sure to check out our websites!

<http://youth.ellington-ct.gov> and <http://bethechange.ellington-ct.gov>

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FREE PARENT GUIDE!

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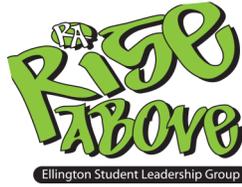
- Myths and facts about underage drinking
- Talking with your child about alcohol use
- Why youth use alcohol
- When should I start discussing alcohol?
- What legal issues should I be concerned about?
- What if I suspect or already know my child has a problem with alcohol?
- And much more....

****WANTED: TUTORS****

Youth Services is looking for high school and middle school volunteers to be tutors for elementary after school homework club. Please contact Diane Lasher-Penti at 860-870-3130 for more information.



Rise Above Student Leadership Group



Rise Above members hosted a dodge ball tournament on December 11th at Ellington High School for Ellington Middle School students. Over 160 students participated. The Rise Above EMS Outreach Committee developed the theme *Be Yourself* and hung posters spotlighting 20 Rise Above members. The Rise Above mission was emphasized the entire night (encouraging positive choices regarding drugs and alcohol) and wrist bands with the theme *BE YOURSELF* on it were handed out. A table was also set up with information for parents.

Rise Above membership has grown to over 130 students. Activities so far this year have been dodge ball, a pool tournament, flag football and bowling. Rise Above students have been sought out for community service and activities have included Fall Festival at Brookside Park and future activities include hosting bingo at Snipsic Village, more outreach to younger students and running the kids' games at Fair on the Green in May. With the influx of members, the group has felt some growing pains this year and a policy committee made up of advisors and members has been formed. The committee hopes to formalize the membership process and establish policies to ensure that all members are supporting the true mission of Rise Above. Visit our website for more info on the group. Rise Above is also on facebook.

Substances in the News

Officials and legislators are working on some recent substances that are posing a danger to our youth:

- It's known as "blackout in a can." It's an alcohol-infused energy drink called *Four Loko* that's the rage on college campuses from coast to coast. The effects are so potent it has been banned in 4 states and suspended from shelves in Connecticut. Every 23.5 oz can of *Four Loko* contains the equivalent of 4.7 beers' worth of alcohol and an unspecified amount of stimulants, including caffeine, taurine, and guarana. The combination of alcohol and caffeine is dangerous. The body is confused because alcohol is a depressant but the stimulants causes it to feel more alert. As a result, as a person becomes intoxicated, he/she does not really feel those effects and may continue to drink and reach alcohol poisoning levels which can lead to death.



- It goes by the name Spice, K2, K4, Sence, Genie, Mr. Nice Guy and fake weed. It is sold in smoke shops, convenience and novelty stores as an incense or a spice. It contains a synthetic component that mimics THC, the active ingredient in marijuana but this ingredient is about 100 times more potent than THC. It can cause paranoia, hallucinations and a person to become somewhat psychotic. The DEA put an emergency ban on the chemicals used to make K2, Spice and related products and the senate is working on a bill to address these substances and officially label them a controlled substance which means they would be illegal to use, possess or sell.



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Website-<http://bethechange.ellington-ct.gov>

Parent Rules And Parenting Styles Do Affect Teen's Choices



As teenagers mature into their senior year of high school, many parents begin to feel more comfortable about letting them drink alcohol. But new research from brain scientists and parenting experts suggests loosening the reins on drinking may not be a good idea in the long run. And, researchers say, parents' approach to addressing teen drinking does influence a teen's behavior. In fact, new research finds that socializing kids to drink at the family table—often referred to as the “European drinking model”—doesn't necessarily translate to more responsible drinking patterns.

So if parents want to give a “no alcohol” message to their teens, what can they do? Alcohol researcher Catilin Abar from Pennsylvania State University found that parents' efforts do play a role in shaping their teens' behavior. She studied how parents deal with their high school teenagers regarding alcohol use while still at home, and she then checked after the teens' first semester of college. Her study of 300 teens and their parents was published recently in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*. “Parents who disapproved completely of underage alcohol use tended to have students who engaged in less drinking, less binge drinking, once in college,” Abar says. And conversely, a parent's permissiveness about teenage drinking is a significant risk factor for later binge drinking. The researchers also asked the teens about their parents' drinking patterns and found that parents' own drinking behavior influenced a teen's later alcohol use.

Other studies support Abar's findings. Psychology professor Mark Wood from the University of Rhode Island says that parental monitoring—knowing where your teenagers are, who they're with, what they're doing—also pays off in terms of less drinking when they go off to college.

In other studies, researchers at Brigham Young University have found that teenagers who grow up with parents who are either too strict or too indulgent tend to binge drink more than their peers. The school surveyed 5,000 teens from 7th to 12th grade. The teens who were being raised by so-called indulgent parents who tend to give their children lots of praise and warmth—but offer little in the way of consequences or monitoring of bad behavior—were among the biggest abusers of alcohol. “They were about three times more likely to participate in heaving drinking,” says Bahr. The same was true for kids whose parents were so strict that no decision was left to the teenager's judgment. “Kids in that environment tend not to internalize the values and understand why they shouldn't drink,” says Bahr. They were more than twice as likely to binge drink.

The parenting style that led to the lowest levels of problem drinking borrowed something from each of the extremes. From the strict parents: accountability and consequences for bad behavior. From the indulgent parents: warmth and support. Bahr says these parents tend to be more balanced. “They recognize their kids when they do good things and praise them, but they offer direction and correction when they get off a little bit,” he says.

Source: NPR (National Public Radio) Listening to the Story-Morning Edition—authors Michelle Trudeau and Allison Aubrey

What Parents Need to Know About Pot



The recent flurry of findings on marijuana's health risks may have baby boomers wondering “How can that be?” Aside from getting into legal trouble, is it possible their kids might be in danger of heart or mental health issues when they themselves turned out just fine? Recent surveys, both local and national show pot smoking is on the rise. Of Ellington students who used marijuana in the last month, the 2009 student survey shows an increase of 7.9% since the 2005 survey for grades 9-12. In addition, a national survey found that among marijuana users over age 12, almost 35 percent used pot 20 or more days in the past month.

One thing has changed: Pot packs a bigger punch now than it did in the '70's. Today's leaves are up to five times as potent. Teens still-developing brains are exposed to higher doses of THC. Other risks with pot smoking are increased risk of developing anxiety and depression, lung problems, and increased heart risks. See our website <http://bethechange.ellington-ct.gov> for more Ellington student survey results.

Source: U.S. News and World Report and Ellington Student Survey