

As your child enters into this season of fun and celebrations, we ask you to remember the following:

- Talk with your child and calmly explain your feelings about him/her drinking alcohol or using illicit drugs and driving under the influence. Make it clear to your youth that you do NOT approve of substance use because it is dangerous. Be firm, but nonjudgmental. Ask them how they plan to keep safe and avoid actions they will regret. Reinforce your belief in their character and in their ability to act responsibly.
- Allow your child to talk about any questions or concerns he or she may have. Remember that communication involves not only speaking, but also listening.
- Also emphasize that the legal drinking age is 21- no exceptions. A minor who consumes alcohol is violating the law and is risking his/her life and possibly the lives of others.
- Give your children the unconditional option of calling you at any time if he or she needs a safe ride home or for help or advice. Assure them that you always welcome being part of their making smart and safe decisions.
- Make sure your child has a plan for the evening and that you know it. Ask your child for specifics about whom she or he will be with, where they will be, and what they will be doing. Make sure you will be able to reach him or her at all times.
- Know where your child is attending a party; verify that there will be parental supervision and that there will be a zero tolerance policy for alcohol and illicit drugs.
- Impress the importance of using the "buddy system" (3 or more is best) to watch out for each other.
- Also stress the need for teenagers to keep an eye on their beverages while out and never accept a drink from someone they do not know. "Date-rape drugs," such as GHB and Rohypnol, can be slipped into a person's drink in mere seconds. The drugs are tasteless and odorless and the victim may not even be aware he or she is being drugged. These drugs cause the victim to lose consciousness or be unable to move so that a person can take advantage of him or her.
- Do not serve or allow alcohol at any party you are hosting. An adult who provides alcohol to minors is subject to arrest and is risking that child's life.
- Take stock of the alcohol in your home.
- Do not rent hotel rooms for party goers.
- Know who is driving. If it's a limo, talk with your child's transportation provider and emphasize that you expect him or her to forbid drinking. Be especially careful about letting your child drive or ride in a car with other teenagers during school-end events.

Regardless of how many times you have talked about them about the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you need their promise that they will not drive if they have been drinking or taking drugs or ride with someone who has. You must also set rules for your teenager about driving while talking on a cell phone, carrying other teenagers as passengers, and following curfews. Emphasize the importance of watching out for drunk and careless drivers.

- Come to a fair decision on a curfew, based upon your child's past level of responsibility in this area. Stay up for his or her return home.