Not in Our House
www.2young2drink.com

Alcohol & Your Child
Facts about Underage Drinking
Every Parent Should Know

Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
www.tabc.state.tx.us

Texas Department of Transportation
www.txdot.gov
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Report Underage Drinking 1-888-THE-TABC
Message to Parents

This pamphlet has been developed to provide you, the parent, with helpful information that will assist you in understanding your role in protecting your child from problems associated with underage drinking. We also want to inform you about the laws put in place to protect your child. The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission believes that parents are key players in helping to enforce underage drinking laws as well as helping to avoid the consequences of underage drinking.

Underage drinking is a serious problem especially during Spring Break, Prom and Graduation time. Unfortunately, adults play a major role in the consequences of underage drinking when they sell or serve alcohol to youth under 21. Some parents believe that it’s safer for their teens to drink at home than to drink anywhere else. Other adults, including some parents, mistakenly think that underage drinking is part of growing up. But Texas, along with other states, assigns responsibility for underage drinking not only to the teens who consume alcohol but also to adults who provide it to teens. Adults who serve or supply alcohol to persons under the age of 21 can be held liable if any of those underage persons are killed or injured. Adults also can be held responsible if teens who drink at their homes kill or injure another person. In addition to lawsuits, Texas parents may find themselves subject to criminal prosecution for underage drinking by their teens and their teen’s friends.

Parents who host parties where young people are drinking alcohol are condoning an act associated with the three most common causes of teenage deaths:

- accidental deaths;
- homicides; and
- suicides.

In fact, the National Traffic and Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that Texas leads the nation in the rate of alcohol-related traffic deaths among 15- to 20-year olds.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) reports that underage alcohol use plays a significant role in risky sexual behavior and increases the risk of physical and sexual assault. It is also associated with:

- poor grades;
- higher drop out rates; and
- problems with the law.

The health and safety of Texas’ future cannot continue to be compromised by the devastating, and often-fatal consequences of underage drinking. Texas must reduce the use of alcohol by youth under 21.

Research has shown that parents are the most influential factor in protecting their children from engaging in high-risk behavior, including underage drinking. We hope this information is helpful and we encourage parents to talk to other parents and their children before prom and graduation parties to promote a clear, consistent no-use message.

Statistics for Parents

The enforcement of underage drinking laws continues to be a concern in Texas. Studies show that alcohol is the most widely used substance in our state. The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission would like you to consider the following statistics:

Primary School Students

Among students in grades 4-6 in 2008, 23% had ever drunk alcohol, and 15% had drunk alcohol in the past year. Eleven percent of fourth graders had used alcohol in the school year, compared with 21 percent of sixth graders.

Secondary School Students

In 2008, 63% of Texas secondary school students (grades 7-12) had ever used alcohol, and 30% had drunk alcohol in the last month. Of particular concern is binge drinking, which is defined as drinking five or more drinks at one time. In 2008, 12% of all secondary students said that when they drank, they usually drank five or more beers at one time, and 13% reported binge drinking of liquor.

College Students

A 2005 Texas college survey found that 84% had drunk alcohol in their lifetime, and 66% had drunk alcohol in the past month. Almost 30% of college students reported binge drinking. Although the legal drinking age is 21, 58% of college students age 18 to 20 reported drinking an alcoholic beverage in the past month.

In 2008, 187 Texas youth under 21 died in alcohol-impaired motor vehicle accidents.

When 10-18 year olds were asked the question, “How do you and your friends get the alcohol you drink?” a majority (65%) of today’s youth who have consumed alcohol in the past year report family and friends as the leading source from which they get alcohol.

Even though youth identified parents as one of their primary sources of alcohol, parents are the most influential person or thing in a child’s decision not to drink at all or not to drink on occasion. Seventy-four percent of youth report parents are the leading influence in their decision to drink or not drink.

Regardless of how youth obtain alcohol, they report access to alcohol is easy. A large majority of secondary students (92% of 12th graders, 81% of 10th graders and 64% of 8th graders) report that alcohol would be “fairly easy” or “very easy” to get.

The health and safety of Texas’ future cannot continue to be compromised by the devastating and often-fatal consequences of underage drinking. Texas must reduce the use of alcohol by youth under 21.
Binge Drinking/Alcohol Poisoning

Binge drinking is defined as having five or more standard size alcoholic beverages during a two-hour period for males and four or more standard size alcoholic beverages during a two-hour period for females. A standard size drink is illustrated below.

Among 12-20 year olds, approximately 17% reported having engaged in binge drinking.

Among high school students in the U.S., those who binge drink frequently are at higher risk for the following outcomes than are students who abstain from drinking:
- Risky Sexual Behavior
- Assaults
- Sexual Assaults
- Injuries
- Academic Problems
- Legal Problems

There are growing concerns about extreme binge drinking among college age youth. The 2007 Monitoring the Future Study conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) revealed one in eight college students (13%) reported having 10 or more drinks in a row at least once in the prior two weeks and 5% reported 15 or more drinks in a row. Their non-college peers had about the same rates (14% and 7%, respectively). The most serious consequence of binge drinking is alcohol poisoning.

Alcohol poisoning occurs when someone has consumed more alcohol than their body can safely metabolize. It takes the body 1 to 1.5 hours to process a single drink.

Alcohol poisoning is a medical emergency! You and your child should know the signs of alcohol poisoning and what to do should a friend exhibit some of the symptoms. You should not wait until all symptoms are present before calling 911 for help.

The signs of alcohol poisoning are:
- Unconscious or semi-conscious (passed out)
- No response to pinching
- Slow or irregular breathing: less than 8 breaths per minute, 8-10 seconds between breaths
  - Low body temperature
  - Slow heart rate
  - Bluish or pale, cold clammy skin
  - Vomiting while “sleeping” or passed out

**DON’T:**
- panic
- leave them alone to “sleep it off”
- give them food or coffee
- try to make them vomit
- put them in a cold shower

**DO:**
- call 911
- keep him/her on their side
- perform CPR until medical help arrives if their pulse is less than 40 beats per minute or their breathing is less than 8 breaths per minute

A Strategy for Parents

Start by giving your child a clear no-use message and make sure they know and understand that you do not approve of a youth their age consuming alcohol. Research shows that when parents communicate clearly to their children about their expectations to abstain from drinking until 21, teens and preteens are less likely to drink. A majority of secondary students perceived that their parents strongly disapprove of youths their age drinking beer (64%). However, as students got older, the perceived disapproval of beer use declined (73% of 7th graders compared to 51% of seniors). Students who perceived their parents of approving of someone their age drinking were over 2.5 times more likely to drink than students who perceived their parents of disapproving.

As parents, it is important to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol. Less than 50 percent of secondary students thought alcohol was very dangerous to use. However, more than 21 percent reported experiencing at least one of the following negative consequences related to alcohol:
- Difficulties with friends
- Criticism from a date
- Trouble with teachers
- Trouble with police
- Driving after drinking

Let your child know it is against the law to consume alcohol. Be a good listener, ask open-ended questions and most of all focus your attention on the conversation and listen to what your child is saying. To avoid pitfalls, have all relevant facts. For some additional information, visit www.2young2drink.com.

As a parent, it is important that you stay informed. Learn what is happening in your area and about prevention programs being offered at your child’s school and in your community. Work with other parents, school officials, community group leaders, local law enforcement and state and local agencies to prevent underage drinking in your community.

Be a parent, not a friend!
**Enforcement**

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) regularly works to enforce alcohol laws relating to licensed establishments. These enforcement efforts include:

- Minor Stings
- Public Safety Operations
- Cops in Shops
- Shoulder Tap Stings
- Operation Fake-Out

The TABC also works closely with retailers and the community to encourage voluntary compliance with underage drinking laws through education. These programs include:

- Manager’s Awareness Program (MAP)
- Project SAVE for Retailers
- Enforcement Operations-Educating the Retailers
- Parent Workshops
- Project SAVE for Schools

Parents can play an active role in providing a safe environment for their children by contacting the TABC to report bars, restaurants or stores that violate the law.

Unfortunately, the TABC and/or other local law enforcement do not generally receive advance notices for private teenage drinking parties. Local law enforcement agencies and the TABC only hear of these parties after an incident, accident, or injury occurs. If parents contact the TABC or the police immediately when they learn about upcoming drinking parties, we might be able to prevent the party from occurring without the need for arrest or tragedy.

Some parents allow underage drinking parties at their home because without the facts, they feel their children will be safe. Unfortunately, statistics have shown that there is no fail-safe plan and the parents sponsoring the drinking parties are subjecting themselves to criminal and civil liability and the community to potential tragedy.

**Laws for Parents**

Underage drinking laws are designed to protect minors and the community from the tragedies and sometimes deadly consequences of underage drinking.

**Civil Liability**

Texas holds parents/adults civilly liable for damages caused by the intoxication of a minor younger than 18 if they knowingly provided alcohol or allowed alcohol to be served on property owned or leased by them and:

- The minor is injured or dies as a result of drinking on the property.
- The underage person gets into a fight, falls and hurts him/herself or is sexually assaulted.
- The minor attending the party damages someone else’s property.
- The underage person who is drinking on the property, leaves and is involved in a motor vehicle accident and causes injury to themselves or others.

Parents accept responsibility for the safety of minors under 18 when the minor is on their property or on property leased by them and under their care, custody, and control.

Providing/Furnishing Alcohol to Minors

In Texas, a person may provide alcohol to a minor if he/she is the minor’s adult parent, guardian, or spouse, and is visibly present when the minor possesses or consumes the alcoholic beverage.

It is against the law to make alcohol available to a person younger than 21 even in your own residence, even with the parent’s permission. This law also applies to providers under the age of 21.

If you break the law, you can face:

- A fine up to $4,000; and/or
- Up to one year in jail; and
- 180 days automatic driver’s license suspension upon conviction.

Parents accept responsibility for the safety of the minors under 18 when the minor is on their property or on property leased by them and under their care, custody, and control.
**Laws for Minors**

If a minor (anyone under 21):

- Possesses or consumes an alcoholic beverage;
- Purchases or attempts to purchase an alcoholic beverage;
- Misrepresents his/her age to obtain an alcoholic beverage; and/or
- Drives a motor vehicle, or watercraft while having any detectable amount of alcohol in his/her system.

He/she can receive:

- A fine up to $500;
- Required attendance at an alcohol awareness class;
- 8-40 hours community service; and/or
- 30-180 days loss or denial of his/her driver’s license.

For a third offense, the minor may receive:

- A fine of $250-$2,000; and/or
- Up to 180 days in jail;
- 20-40 hours community service;
- 180 days loss or denial of his/her driver’s license.

**Zero Tolerance Laws**

While it is illegal for adults over 21 to drive while intoxicated, it is illegal for a minor to drive while having ANY detectable amount of alcohol in the minor’s system. This includes motor vehicles and watercraft.

1. The consequences for the minor on the first offense of driving under the influence of alcohol:

   - Class C Misdemeanor, punishable by a fine up to $500;
   - Attendance at an alcohol awareness class;
   - 20 to 40 hours of mandatory community service;
   - 60 days driver’s license suspension. The minor would not be eligible for an occupational license for the first 30 days.

2. A second offense increases the consequences to:

   - Class C Misdemeanor, punishable by a fine up to $500;
   - Attendance at an alcohol awareness class at the judge’s discretion;
   - 40 to 60 hours of mandatory community service;
   - 120 days driver’s license suspension. The minor would not be eligible for an occupational license for the first 90 days.

3. A third offense is not eligible for deferred adjudication. The minor’s driver’s license is suspended for 180 days and an occupational license may not be obtained for the entire suspension period. If the minor is 17 years of age or older, the fine increases to $500 to $2,000, confinement in jail for up to 180 days, or both.
Conclusion

The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide parents with some additional insight and help parents understand the Facts about Underage Drinking. For additional information, numerous books, informational sources and Web Sites can be accessed for more in-depth knowledge. The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission is committed to the safety of the citizens of Texas, and we want this Spring Break, Prom and Graduation Season to be as safe as possible.

Notes

Visit us on line at www.2young2drink.com.

Other Helpful Web Sites:

- www.tabc.state.tx.us
- www.dot.state.tx.us
- www.healthallianceonalcohol.com
- www.udetc.org
- www.alcoholfreechildren.org
- www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- www.samhsa.gov
- www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org
- www.centurycouncil.org

Minor Biting Operations

Minor biting operations are undercover sting operations which identify retail establishments that sell to minors. The use of minor biting operations in Texas has been a very useful tool in addressing underage drinking. Working together with officials, we have been able to make a concerted effort to cut the availability of alcohol to minors.

Public Service Announcements

The Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission issues several 30 second public service announcements for the general public. These PSA’s include:

- “It’s Happening” - A kind of parents think it is a good idea to let their teenager and teen friends drink in their home. This PSA targets parents and informs them of some of the consequences of providing alcohol to minors at their home.
- “You Drink. You Drive. You Pay.” - Some teenagers may not be aware that Texas has a Zero Tolerance policy when it comes to minors to possess or to consume under the age of 21. This PSA highlights teenagers and informs them of some of the consequences of driving with an illegal amount of alcohol in their system. This means even one drink.
- “It’s Your Day,” Texas has the second most active duty, military personnel in the United States. For many weeds this presents a moral dilemma. They have underage service men and women that come into their establishments trying to purchase alcohol. They are old enough to go in and buy alcohol. What to do in order to sell to minors. The PSA targets these alcoholics and informs them of the consequences of selling alcohol to minors, even military minors.

Public Service Announcement

Funding for the above was provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Block Grant.