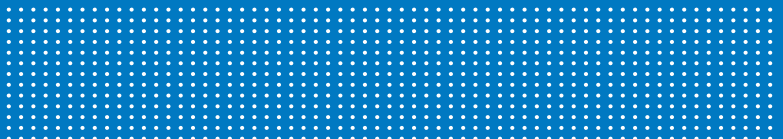


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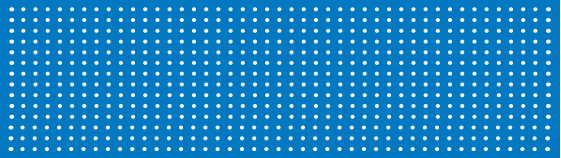
LEARN ALCOHOL BASICS

Information for **PARENTS**



Virginia Alcoholic Beverage
Control Authority
Education and Prevention
Publication Series

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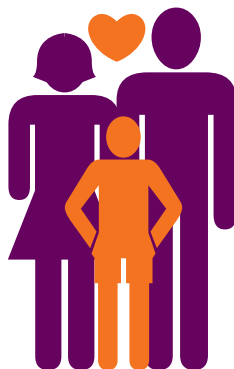


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INTRODUCTION

Parenting is a great responsibility that brings a lifetime of joy and challenges. Over the years, parents need to address the difficult subject of alcohol. It is never too early for you to start talking about alcohol with your children.

As parents or guardians, what you say and do will have a powerful impact on your loved ones.



WHY SHOULD I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Parents have the greatest influence on their children's views and behaviors and play a crucial role in preventing underage alcohol use. The average age of first consumption is 13 years old. You should talk to your children about alcohol as early as preschool with age-appropriate facts. The foundation you set with early conversations will help your child avoid underage drinking and improve their healthy development.

Listen without interruption as your children are speaking. Stress the dangers and consequences associated with alcohol use without lecturing. Have open and honest conversations with your child while providing information and making the consequences and risks of drinking alcohol very clear.

EARLY DRINKING AND THE BRAIN



The brain is still developing until people reach their twenties. Regular, especially heavy, drinking impairs learning and memory. Youth may not only affect their brain on a single night or weekend of drinking, but possibly for the rest of their lives.

Alcohol damages the two key areas of the brain that control cognitive reasoning and memory or learning. The prefrontal region of the brain controls thinking, planning, sound judgment decisions and impulse control; this area experiences the most change during adolescence. The hippocampus, involved in learning and memory, suffers the greatest from alcohol damage during the younger years. Alcohol inhibits the process of storing new information in the hippocampus, which may cause your child to impair their memory for life.

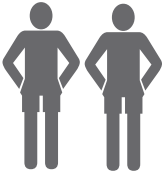


Annually, more than 6,500 people younger than 21 die from alcohol-related accidents and thousands more are injured.



Alcohol is the number one drug of choice for America's youth and is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined.

HOW CAN I STAY INVOLVED?



KNOW YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS AND FAVORITE HANGOUT SPOTS.

Keep track of and support your child's participation in school and community activities.

Know the parents/guardians of your child's friends.



MONITOR ALCOHOL USE BY ADULTS IN YOUR HOME.



Make sure your child knows that you are available during difficult times or when something has gone wrong.

Do not allow any unchaperoned parties or other gatherings in your home.



Make sure they know to never ride with someone who has been drinking and to call you if they are in a dangerous situation. After all, their safety is your number one priority!

IF YOU KEEP ALCOHOL IN YOUR HOME, KEEP TRACK OF THE SUPPLY.

BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL!



Always keep alcohol locked up and away from children.

Here are some ways you can help prepare your child to say "no" to negative peer pressure:

- Rehearse simple answers with your child so they can confidently and comfortably refuse something they do not want.
- Tell your child to speak up. Practice these simple one-liners with your child: "It's just not for me." "It's not what I want." "No thanks, I need all of my brain cells." "I love myself too much." "My parents would be upset."
- Teach your child to be firm and not allow anyone to influence them to make a decision they know is not right.



No Thanks!

SOCIAL MEDIA



Technology is another way you can stay connected with your child as they age and your schedules become more hectic. Social platforms are great for communicating, tracking school activities, knowing what your children are doing, staying aware of who your teen is hanging out with and knowing the latest trends in pop culture.

IT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY. IT'S THE LAW!

Some parents provide alcohol to their underage children at parties and fail to understand the impact of early alcohol use. If you're a parent who is thinking about providing or allowing alcohol at a party in your home (or elsewhere) you need to know the laws. Parents may be held responsible if someone, as a result of alcohol use:

- Gets into a fight and hurts someone else
- Falls and hurts themselves or someone else
- Sexually assaults someone
- Damages property
- Dies from drinking too much
- Injures or kills someone while driving after leaving the party

You have a civil liability (meaning you can be sued) to pay damages if either a partygoer is hurt or a third party is injured. Virginia law recognizes your liability for negligence if you provide alcohol to a minor who causes injury to another or him/herself. You may also face criminal charges for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

For example, it is against Virginia law to allow (aid or abet) underage persons to possess or consume alcohol. This is a Class 1 misdemeanor and is punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine. Purchasing for and/or giving alcohol to a minor is also against the law, and penalties can include losing a driver's license for up to one year. This is called social providing and can cost you up to \$2,500 in fines and/or 12 months in jail.



MYTHBUSTER: “I think it’s safer for my children to drink at home when I’m around than for them to drink without my knowledge.”

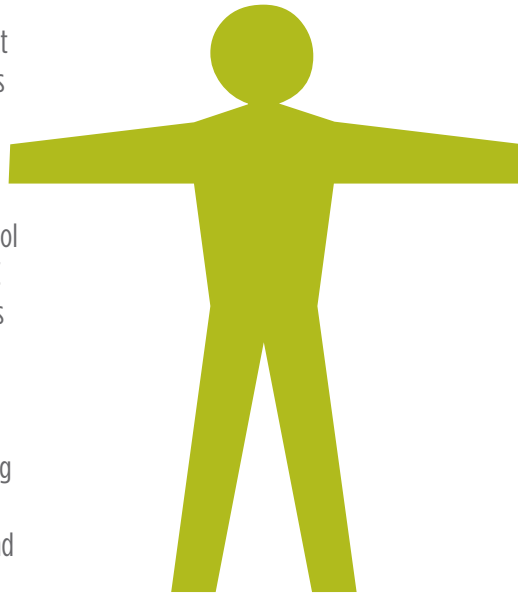
WRONG! This is a common misconception as some parents think that forbidding alcohol can harm their relationship with their children or can lead to other negative consequences. Providing alcohol to your underage children sends the message that you support them breaking the law.

Laying Down the Law for Your Child

- It is illegal for anyone younger than 21 to purchase, possess or consume any alcoholic beverage.
- Virginia's Zero Tolerance law makes driving under the influence of any amount of alcohol a serious criminal offense for drivers younger than 21.
- No one may use an altered or fake ID such as a driver's license, birth certificate or student identification card to establish a false identity or false age to purchase an alcoholic beverage.
- Violators of the above are guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, may face a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or one year in jail and/or 50 hours of community service, and may lose their driver's license for up to one year.
- Young adults (ages 18–20) who purchase, possess, or drink alcohol, upon conviction, may lose their privilege to drive for no fewer than six months (and up to one year maximum). They face a mandatory minimum fine of \$500 or must perform a mandatory minimum of 50 community service hours.

ALCOHOL AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE BODY

Whether it's one drink or many, alcohol can affect people in different ways. The way a person reacts to alcohol depends on many factors, including gender, weight and rate of alcohol consumption. All of these influence a person's **blood alcohol concentration** or BAC. BAC is the amount of alcohol that is present in the bloodstream. At certain BAC levels, alcohol has been shown to alter a person's visual functions and perceptions, affecting one's ability to react, concentrate or pay attention, process information and operate a vehicle. The measurement of BAC is important for determining the role alcohol plays in car crashes, physical injuries, fires, crimes, family violence, suicides and other forms of injury.



HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD IS DRINKING?

HERE ARE SOME TYPICAL SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MAY EXHIBIT IF THEY HAVE BEEN DRINKING:

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability and defensiveness
- School problems: poor attendance, low grades and/or recent disciplinary action
- Rebellious against family rules
- Switching friends along with a reluctance of introducing you to their new friends
- A “nothing matters” attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests and low energy in general
- Finding alcohol in your child’s room or backpack, or smelling alcohol on their breath
- Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration or bloodshot eyes
- Lack of coordination or slurred speech



REMEMBER, WHILE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE HONEST CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM.



Each day, 7,000 kids in the United States younger than 16 take their first drink.



If a child begins drinking before age 15 they are five times more likely to develop alcoholism than one who begins at or after age 21.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS THE PARTY HOST



- Decide on a guest list; give your child a maximum number to invite; set an age limit for guests; keep a copy of the guest list for your records.
- Send invitations! Have your child inform their guests that the party is by invitation only; avoid the “open party” situation.
- Put your phone number on the invitation and welcome calls from parents.



Set a party time, inclusive of a start and end time.



Have parents or responsible adults drop-off and pickup their child. If teens drive to the party, plan to hold all keys to eliminate the temptation of leaving and returning to the party.



- Stay at the party, your presence is important. Walk through the party area frequently and have additional adult supervision on site during the party.
- Ask all uninvited guests to leave immediately; call the police to escort unwanted guests out if necessary.
- If you suspect an invited guest is intoxicated, contact their parents/guardians immediately.
- Have guests remain at the party location; do not allow guests to go back and forth to a parking lot or their car.
- Hold the party in an area where you can monitor party guests.
- Watch for strange behavior. Pay attention if a guest frequents the bathroom after getting a drink; this could indicate the use of illegal substances or alcohol.



Inform parents/guardians about the party and explain your expectations of partygoers; no alcohol!



Lock up your personal alcohol, firearms and other hazardous items in your home.



- Serve a variety of drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid serving punch or soft drinks in cups.
- Do not allow anyone to bring outside drinks, cups or open bottles into the party.



Serve a wide variety of foods, including healthy options.



Know the signs of alcohol poisoning and be prepared to call 911 if anyone presents the following symptoms:

- Confusion
- Slow or no reflexes or response
- Difficulty or inability to remain conscious
- Vomiting
- Trouble with breathing
- Clammy, pale or bluish lips
- Seizures



MILESTONES

During high school, your children will experience some of the most anticipated and rewarding events in their lives—such as class trips, celebrations and learning to drive! As a parent, you have a responsibility to talk to your child before these high-risk events. It is important to plan ahead and then monitor what happens. Creating a contract with your child is a great way to clearly outline your expectations.

Underage drinking often occurs during prom, graduation, beach week, spring break and other big trips or events. The use of alcohol compromises your child's well-being. Step up with strong parental guidance to ensure that your child is prepared to have fun, make responsible decisions and be a safe driver.



GETTING READY FOR COLLEGE

This is a period of preparation and anticipation, excitement and apprehension. It represents a turning point in your relationship with your child. Although they may not admit it, leaving home for the first time can make your child feel insecure.

You can be a big help in your student's successful transition to college life. You should continue to talk with your child about underage drinking and the laws and issues surrounding heavy drinking.

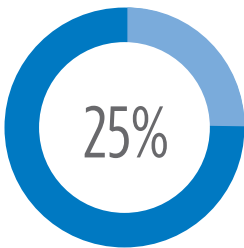
It is important for you to be aware of the risks and consequences associated with alcohol so you can prepare your student. Impaired judgment from drinking can lead to risky behavior causing academic, legal and personal problems. It is most effective for you to help your student understand that "not everyone is doing it." They should be aware that more students across Virginia are choosing not to drink. Do research ahead of time and look into opportunities for your child to become active and involved on campus. There are many clubs and organizations that provide an alcohol-free environment.

How Can I Be

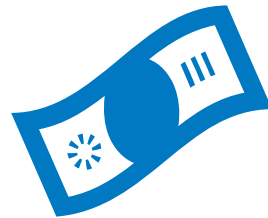
A GOOD ROLE MODEL?

You have a powerful influence on your child's future. Exhibit responsible behaviors and make good choices around your children. Children listen and watch the actions of their parents. If you demonstrate healthy and safe decision making, your children will follow your example.

- Start the conversation about alcohol with your child early on. Be open and honest about the risks of drinking at an early age.
- Know who your child's friends are and keep in contact with their parents/guardians. Don't allow them to have a party without an adult present.
- Secure the alcohol in your home and make sure that it is not accessible to your child.
- Don't provide alcohol to your child or anyone else under the age of 21! This is a serious offense and you will be held responsible if anyone is injured.
- Know the signs that your child may exhibit if they begin to drink and intervene if needed.
- Be a responsible party host and closely monitor your children and their friends.



Twenty-five percent of U.S. children are exposed to alcohol-use disorders in their family.



Underage alcohol use costs the nation an estimated \$62 billion annually.

RESOURCES

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) (www.ncadd.org)

NCADD is a voluntary health organization that provides education, prevention, training, information, referral, intervention, treatment and recovery support services. The council advocates for education, prevention, treatment, research and the rights of persons and families affected by the disease of alcoholism and drug dependence.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) (www.madd.org)

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) is the nation's largest nonprofit working to protect families from drunk driving, drugged driving and underage drinking.

ParentsEmpowered.org (www.parentsempowered.org)

ParentsEmpowered.org is a media and education campaign designed to prevent and reduce underage drinking. It provides parents and guardians with information about the harmful effects of alcohol on the developing teen brain, along with proven skills for preventing underage alcohol use.

Virginia ABC Education and Prevention Resources

Miss Virginia School Tour

In partnership with Virginia ABC, Miss Virginia travels across Virginia to elementary schools spreading a message of health, wellness and prevention with students and teachers.

Being Outstanding Leaders Together (BOLT) Against Drugs and Alcohol

Provides drug and alcohol prevention knowledge to middle school students through regional community collaboration and high school peer leadership.

Youth Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Project (YADAPP)

A high school youth-led leadership conference equipping teens with a strategic plan and empowering them to keep their schools and communities alcohol and drug free.

Power of Parents

The Power of Parents program is designed to empower parents of middle and high school students through resources and training to have ongoing, intentional conversations about the dangers and consequences of underage drinking.

Virginia Office for Substance Abuse Prevention (VOSAP)

An organization that promotes collaboration among state and local agencies, organizations, coalitions and faith communities that address substance abuse prevention.

Higher Education Alcohol and Drug Strategic Unified Prevention (HEADS UP)

Strengthening and supporting the mission of healthy and safe campus-communities through strategic initiatives, resources and capacity building.

Project Sticker Shock

Supplies are provided to community groups in an effort to decrease social providing. The project includes stickers being placed on alcohol packaging reminding buyers to not provide to minors and is done in conjunction with a press event to help raise awareness.

Virginia Higher Education Substance Use Advisory Committee (VHESUAC)

VHESUAC is led by an Executive Council and Workgroup which develop and update a statewide strategic plan for substance use education, prevention and intervention at Virginia's institutions of higher education.

Responsible Sellers & Servers: Virginia's Program (RSVP) Managers' Alcohol Responsibility Training (MART)

Two courses are offered to help licensees become more responsible and to better understand Virginia laws, rules and regulations. Both courses are available online and in classroom settings, instructed by a team of Virginia ABC special agents in your region.

Educational Materials

Publications, online training and public service announcements are available to the general public at no cost.

Grant Program

Alcohol education and prevention grants assist community partners to develop and enhance initiatives related to alcohol education and prevention. Grant cycle is July through June with applications due in the spring.



**Virginia Alcoholic Beverage
Control Authority**

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