

Parent Learning Community

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Ann Stemen -President RRHS PTA
Melissa Liberatore, RRHS and Community Challenge



NEWS YOU CAN USE

The purpose of this newsletter is to gather and organize information about topics that are useful and supportive to parents. Our Parent Learning Community promotes information- and idea-sharing as we work with and care for our teens.

Parents can explore and share ideas in a time-effective way. Our hope is that questions and concerns can come through the email address anonymously so that parents feel more comfortable asking questions that are otherwise difficult to discuss. There are “no holds barred” on questions and topics that may arise for discussion.

So, how does this work?

First, the topics of interest are emailed to me. I can gather articles and information and compose the newsletter. Then, the newsletter is distributed. Parents are invited to meet to discuss the topic together.

Just let me know...I can set up the meeting for you. Panera? Starbucks?

My e-mail is Liberatore.Melissa@rrcs.org



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The Question...Dear Mrs. Liberatore

Dear Mrs. Liberatore,

I am a RRHS parent who wants to learn more about how to help my teen resist using drugs and alcohol when at a party?

~a RRHS Parent

RRHS Parent,

Many parents of teens have this concern, especially knowing that Winter and Spring events, like Winter Formal and Prom (& soon to follow graduation parties), are right around the corner. Parents sometimes struggle to make sure their teen is safe, while still allowing appropriate freedom.

Parents can affect adolescent perspective that “get-togethers” with friends involve availability of alcohol. Parent supervision and communication of rules and expectations can really have an impact on teen behavior. Teens may not agree with you, but they can be made aware of what you expect.

Teens also need to know how you can assist

them when they are not sure how to handle a party situation. Expectations may involve leaving a party where alcohol is present. However, it is important that you talk with them about how to leave and whether you can help them leave.

Are you willing to pick them up? Can friends come to your family’s house instead? Can they have a ride (or drive) to go bowling or the movies? What other activities are they interested in? Do they have friends with similar interests? Do they volunteer? Would they like to?

Be prepared for some conflict with this topic. Set rules and stick to them. Just because teens are older does not mean that they don’t need your help with decisions (even if they don’t want the help).

Feel free to call if you have questions or need support. The RRHS Guidance phone number is (440) 356-6804. The Safe School Helpline is 800-418-6423 x 359.



TEEN DRINKING & TEENS AND ALCOHOL

Adapted from Vincent Iannelli, M.D., About.com Guide, December 17 2004

While parent-child conversations about drinking are essential, talking isn't enough. You also need to take concrete action to help your child resist alcohol. Research strongly shows that active, supportive involvement by parents and guardians can help teens avoid underage drinking and prevent later alcohol misuse. Ways to provide it are the following:

Monitor Alcohol Use in Your Home. If you keep alcohol in your home, keep track of the supply. Make it clear that unchaperoned parties and gatherings are not allowed. Encourage your child to invite friends over when you are home so that you know more about your child's friends and activities.

Connect With Other Parents. This will help you keep closer tabs on your child. It is easier to call the parent of a teen who is having a party if you know them. You can make sure the party is supervised and alcohol will not be served. You may also find you are not the *only one* who wants to prevent teen alcohol use.

Keep Track of Your Child's Activities. Be aware of your child's plans and whereabouts. Your child may be more open to supervision knowing that you care, not because you distrust him/her.

Develop Family Rules About Teen Drinking. When parents establish clear "no alcohol" rules and expectations, their children are less likely to begin drinking. Some possible rules are:

- Kids will not drink until age 21
- Older siblings will not encourage or give alcohol
- Kids will not stay at parties where alcohol is served
- Kids will not ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking

Once you have rules, you will need to establish appropriate consequences. Be sure to choose a penalty that you are willing to carry out. The idea is to make the penalty "sting" just enough to make your child think twice about breaking the rule (ie. Temporary restrictions on socializing). Finally, consequences must be consistently enforced. If your child knows certain privileges are lost each and every time, they will be more likely to follow the rules.

Set a Good Example. Parents and guardians are important role models for their children. Some suggestions:

- Use alcohol moderately
- Don't communicate to your child that alcohol is a good way to handle problems (ie. "I had a rotten day. I need a drink.")
- Instead, show your child healthier ways to cope with stress (ie. Exercising, listening to music, talking)
- Don't tell your kids stories about your own drinking in a way that conveys a message that alcohol is funny or glamorous
- Never drink and drive or ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking
- When you entertain other adults, make available

alcohol-free beverages and plenty of food.

Don't support Teen Drinking. Your attitudes toward teen drinking can influence your child. Avoid making jokes about underage drinking or drunkenness, or other wise showing acceptance of teen alcohol use. In addition, never serve alcohol to your child's underage friends. Research shows that kids whose parents or friends' provide alcohol for teen get-togethers are more likely to engage in heavier drinking, to drink more often and to get into traffic crashes. Remember, too, that it is illegal to provide alcohol to minors who are not family members.

Help Your Child Build Healthy Friendships. If your child's friends use alcohol, your child is more likely to drink, too. Encourage your teen to develop friendships with kids who do not drink and who are otherwise healthy influences on your child. A good first step is to simply get to know your child's friends better. Talk directly with your child about the qualities in a friend that really count, such as trustworthiness and kindness. When you disapprove of one of your teen's friends, the situation is harder to handle. Forbidding your child to see that friend may make your teen more determined to hang out with him/her. You can communicate reservations gently and limit your child's time with that friend through family rules.

Encourage Healthy Alternatives to Alcohol. One reason kids drink is to beat boredom. Therefore, it makes sense to encourage your child to participate in activities that are challenging and fun. The time utilized by the activities can help to decrease use. Start by asking your child and other kids what they want to do, since they will be most likely to participate in activities that truly interest them. Find out whether your church, school or community organizations can help sponsor a project.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

~Ben Franklin

Parents, Parties & Preventing Underage Alcohol Use

Adapted from The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (SAMHSA Family Guide)

Would you let your teenage son drink beer at his best friend's birthday party? Would you let your daughter attend a graduation party where wine would be available to underage kids? What if a parent were chaperoning these events?

Kids, parties and alcohol are never a good mix. However, in a poll by the American Medical Association, 1 in 10 parents said it was ok for teens to attend prom or graduation parties with alcohol if a parent were present.

Laws in many states call for parents to be prosecuted if minors drink alcohol in their homes. But some parents still allow alcohol (and buy alcohol) for the event. This group of parents is the minority. Most parents do not allow their underage kids to drink and would not buy alcohol for a teen party.

Here are some tips to help keep your teen alcohol-free:

- Before the party, talk to the parents hosting to get the details. You're not being nosy. They may feel supported and relieved that your child is not allowed to consume alcohol.
- Ask the parents hosting if alcohol will be served, including their plans to communicate to teens that no one brings alcohol to the party.
- Talk to your child about what to do if he/she is at a party where alcohol is served. Let your teen know that even if other teens are drinking, you expect him/her not to. Tell your teen that you will pick him/her up right away no matter how late it is. You may want to create a "code word" that your child can use to ask to be discreetly picked up. When surrounded by friends, the code word may be the best way to communicate the need to leave the party.

When the busy prom and graduation season starts, you may need to make difficult choices about what parties your

kids attend. It can be hard to say "no" to your teen when he/she wants to attend the party that "everyone" is going to. You may wonder if your rules are too tough.

It's ok to be tough when it come to protecting your kids from underage drinking. Underage drinking is a key factor in the two leading causes of teenage deaths: car injuries and fatal injuries. It is also linked to two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes of teens, and it increases the chances of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. So, go ahead, be tough on underage drinking, and be on the lookout for risky situations during end-of-the-year (and for that matter, any time of the year) parties.



Go to

www.drugfreeactionalliance.org/familycontract.php

and view a sample contract. It's a great way to let kids know your rules about substance use.

What's Next?

Look for **upcoming class presentations** featuring great speakers during our PLC time (**Wednesdays from 7:55 am to 8:55 am**). **Parents are welcome to attend!!!**

- **2/3 (Juniors) Internet Safety/Sexting with Judge O'Malley & Officer Lichman**
- **2/10 (Freshmen) Internet Safety/Sexting with Judge O'Malley & Officer Lichman**
- **3/31 (Juniors)OVI/DUI with Judge Hagan & Judge Fitzsimmons**
- **May...date tbd...(Seniors) Parties and Substance Abuse with Russ Goodwin**

YOUR LOGO
HERE

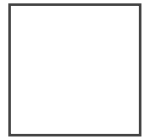
Rocky River High School
20951 Detroit Rd
Rocky River, OH 44116

Phone:
(440) 356-6804

E-mail:
Liberatore.Melissa@rrcs.org

We're on the Web!
<http://rrcs.org>

Rocky River High School
20951 Detroit
Rocky River, OH 44116



RECIPIENT NAME
STREET ADDRESS
ADDRESS 2
CITY, ST ZIP CODE