



Parenting for Prevention: Prom & Graduation Safety

Talk with your Teen about Celebrating the Season Safely

Prom and graduation season can be a high-risk time of year for alcohol use by teens. Your son or daughter may feel additional pressure to drink at an after-prom party or believe that a few drinks after graduation is a "rite of passage". Remind your teen that drinking under the age of 21 is illegal and poses numerous potential risks to their health and safety. Talking with your teen now about your expectations, listening to their perspective and staying involved can help set the foundation for good decision-making while they celebrate these milestones.

In the weeks leading up to prom and graduation

Take advantage of small opportunities leading up to the big day to talk with your teen about prom and graduation. Reassure your teenager that you understand prom and graduation night pressures and fears and talk about them.

- Have a conversation with your teen about substance use. Be clear that you do not want your teen to drink alcohol or use other drugs.
- Discuss your expectations regarding alcohol use, driving, and curfew. Make sure your teen understands the consequences for violating the rules.
- Prepare your teen for peer pressure. Encourage them to make the right choices. Acknowledge and praise the good decisions your teen has made in the past.
- Practice refusal skills. Come up with ideas for handling challenging situations such as being offered an alcoholic drink or a ride with someone who has been drinking.
- Share in their enthusiasm and support them during this exciting time.
- Remind them that you are available if they have any questions or concerns.



Tips for hosting a safe prom or graduation party

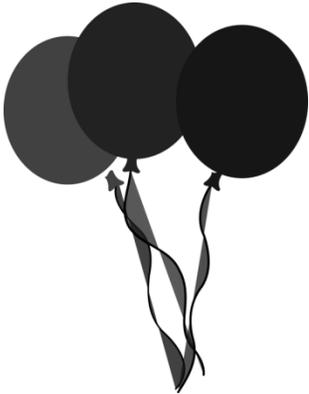
Hosting an after-prom or graduation party in your home can be a memorable occasion for you, your teen and their friends. You can provide a substance-free and safe space for celebrating by following a few tips:



- Set clear rules and consequences for violating these rules in advance. Communicate the rules ahead of time to your guests.
- Do not serve alcohol. Do not allow alcohol to be brought into your home.
- Greet guests at the door. Check all bags to see that alcohol is not being snuck into the house.
- Stay at the party. Occasionally walk through the party area to ensure that guests are safe.
- Guests may not leave and return to the party without supervision or permission.
- Do not allow uninvited guests to crash the party.
- Secure all alcohol. Lock liquor cabinets and remove alcohol from refrigerator and put in a safe place.
- If you suspect a teen guest is intoxicated, contact his or her parents or guardians immediately.

What you need to know before your teen attends a party

The more you talk with your teen about good decision-making and your expectations regarding substance use, the more prepared they will be to make healthy choices, such as refusing alcohol or other drugs. Help them deal with the possibility of additional pressures to make risky choices when celebrating prom or graduation at a friend's house.



- Know where your teen is going, who your teen will be with and when you expect your teen to be home.
- Remind your teen to wear a seatbelt (when driving or as a passenger) and to never get in the car with someone who has been drinking or using any other substance, like marijuana.
- Decide on a code word that your teen can use with you if they are uncomfortable. Let your teen know that you will be available to pick them up if they feel unsafe.
- Remind your teen of the refusal skills you practiced with them.
- Encourage your teen to stay with a group of friends throughout the night and to watch out for each other.
- Tell them not to leave any possessions or food/beverages unattended.
- Make sure your teen's cell phone is fully charged before leaving home for the night.
- Stay up until your teen returns and remind them how happy you are that they arrived home safely.

Social Host Law – Q&A

What is a Social Host?

A Social Host is anyone (adult or minor) who is in control of the premises and who furnishes alcohol or allows it to be consumed on those premises.

Am I breaking the law if I allow my child's underage guests to consume alcohol in my home?

Yes. The legal drinking age in Massachusetts is 21. It is against the law to serve or provide alcohol to underage guests or to allow them to drink alcohol in your home or on other property you control. If you do, you may be prosecuted criminally. The penalty is a fine of up to \$2,000, imprisonment for up to a year, or both.

Can I be sued if my child or an underage guest at my home drinks alcohol and injures someone?

Yes. You may be financially responsible if your child or underage guest injures another person (or himself) after having consumed alcohol, if you controlled the supply of the alcohol, made it available, or served it. Civil judgments can be for millions of dollars.

What if my child allows underage guests to drink or possess alcohol at my home or other property I control?

You or your child may be charged criminally. For you to be found guilty under the Social Host Law, the Commonwealth must prove that you or your child knowingly or intentionally supplied, gave, provided, or allowed minors to possess alcohol at your home or other property you controlled. You or your child may also be sued civilly.

Does the Social Host Law apply if I rent a hotel room for my daughter's party?

Yes, since you control the hotel room, the Social Host Law applies.

Will my homeowner's policy cover the costs of litigation and any judgment against me or my child?

You may or may not be covered, especially if the underage drinker causes injury or death by use of an automobile. Many insurance policies do not cover situations where criminal conduct is involved.

Source: <http://www.mass.gov/essexda/docs/publications/alcohol-and-drugs/social-host-tagged.pdf>

RESOURCES

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/GraduationFacts/graduationFact.htm>

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/AlcoholFacts&Stats/AlcoholFacts&Stats.htm>

http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm

Teen Safe After-Prom Safety

<http://teen-safe.org/faq/>

Social Host Liability

<http://socialhostliability.org/>

Parenting for Prevention is a Decisions at Every Turn Coalition educational series for parents and other caring adults to increase awareness and knowledge about important youth issues and to encourage dialogue about making healthy choices.

Please visit <http://www.AshlandDecisions.org/parent-tip-sheets.html> for our complete library of tip sheets.

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