



## What Families Can Do To Help Prevent Underage Alcohol Use

### **Be aware of factors that may increase the risk of teen alcohol use.**

- Significant social transitions such as graduating to middle or high school or getting a driver's license
- A history of conduct problems
- Depression and other serious emotional problems
- A family history of alcoholism
- Contact with peers involved in deviant activities

### **Be a positive adult role model.**

- If you drink yourself, drink responsibly. That means not drinking too much or too often.
- Stay away from alcohol in high-risk situations. Like – don't drive or go boating when you've been drinking.
- Get help if you think you have an alcohol-related problem.
- Don't give alcohol to your teens. Tell them that any alcohol in your home is off limits to them & to their friends.

### **Work with schools, communities, and government to protect teens from underage alcohol use by ensuring that:**

- Schools and the community support and reward young people's decisions not to drink;
- Rules about underage drinking are in place at home, at school, and in your community;
- Penalties for breaking the rules are well-known. Rules are enforced the same way for everyone;
- All laws about underage alcohol use are well-known and enforced; and
- Parties and social events at home and elsewhere don't permit underage drinking.

### **Support your children and teens and give them space to grow.**

- Be involved in your teens' lives. Be loving and caring.
- Encourage your teens' growing independence, but set appropriate limits.
- Make it easy for your teens to share information about their lives.
- Know where your teens are, what they're doing, who they're with, and who their

friends are.

- Find ways for your teens to be involved in family life, such as by doing chores or caring for a younger brother or sister.
- Set clear rules, including rules about alcohol use. Enforce the rules you set.
- Help your teens find ways to have fun without alcohol.
- Don't let your teens attend parties where alcohol is served. Make sure alcohol isn't available at teen parties in your own home.
- Help your teens avoid dangerous situations such as riding in a car driven by someone who has been drinking.
- Help your teens get professional help if you're worried about their involvement with alcohol.

### **Here are some general tips:**

- When you talk with your children about drinking, listen to them and respect what they say.
  - Make clear your expectation that your children will not drink.
  - Teach your children about the dangers of underage drinking.
- Discuss laws about underage drinking, including the age 21 law.

**Source: Office of the Surgeon General. (2007). The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking: A Guide for Families (PDF 889KB) Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.**