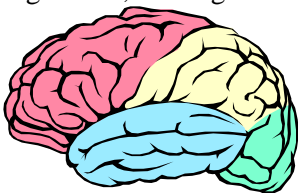


# Parents Prevent: Focus on Underage Drinking

ERASE - East of the River Action for Substance Abuse Elimination, Inc.

## Alcohol's Impact on the Developing Brain

Latest research shows that the teenage brain does not fully develop until age 25. Between puberty and adulthood, extensive development occurs in the frontal lobe, the area of the brain that controls self-control, judgment, emotion regulation, and organization.



This may help explain certain teenage behavior that adults can find mystifying, such as poor decision-making, recklessness, and emotional outbursts.

Alcohol consumption

during this developmental period may have profound effects on brain structure and function. Heavy drinking has been shown to affect neuropsychological performance of young people and may impair the growth of certain brain structures. One study done on 15-16 year olds showed cognitive impairments in teen alcohol abusers even weeks after they stopped drinking, suggesting that teens' alcohol abuse may have long-term negative effects on the brain, especially in terms of learning and memory.

There are other compelling reasons to delay onset of drinking in teens,

besides potential brain damage. A NIAAA survey of 43,000 U.S. adults showed that those who began drinking in their early teens were at greater risk of developing alcohol dependence at some point in their lives and they were also at greater risk of developing dependence more quickly at younger ages.

Even though the research on alcohol's effects in adolescence and young adulthood is still in ongoing, one important message is clear: Young people can help maximize their neurocognitive potential by waiting until age 21 and drinking responsibly when of age.

## Connecticut Legislation:

### How the "House Party" Law Impacts Parents

Many parents are unaware of the House Party Law (HB 2511), which was put in effect a year ago (10-1-06). The house party bill makes it illegal for youth to possess alcohol on private property, even at their own home or a friend's home.

Under the "house party" statute, minors are subject to fines of up to \$500, while adults - anyone from friends to siblings to parents - who permit minors to drink at their home, would be fined at

the first offense, and possibly jailed for repeat offenses.

This law does not make it illegal for parents to provide alcohol to their own children. Rather, it prevents other adults from knowingly allowing children other than their own to possess alcohol on private property.

Why is this law necessary? House parties are the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol. In fact, 77% of high school students report obtaining alcohol at home,



with or without parental permission. This law reduces easy access to alcohol by youth and holds teens and adults accountable for their behavior. Finally, this bill reinforces a consistent message that underage drinking is unhealthy, unsafe, and unacceptable.

Visit [housepartybill.org](http://housepartybill.org) if you wish to learn more!

## NATIONAL DATA ON UNDERAGE DRINKING\*:

- 43% of students in grades 9-12 have drunk alcohol in the past month.
- 1 out of 5 (26%) high school students binge drank (5 or more drinks at one occasion) in the past month.
- 17% of teens aged 16-20 reported driving a vehicle under the influence of alcohol in the past year.

\*YRBSS, 2005, CDC

\*NSDUH, 2002-2003, SAMHSA

## LOCAL DATA:

- Over half (58%) of Ellington H.S. seniors drank alcohol in the past month.
- 44% of Ellington youth have obtained alcohol from their parents, without their permission.
- 36% of Ellington H.S. students have engaged in binge drinking at least once before.

\*Ellington Student Drug Survey, 2005, ERASE

**Alcohol is the key-contributing factor in the 4 leading causes of death among people under the age of 21. These include: traffic crashes, accidents, homicides, and suicides.**

*Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility, National Research Council. Institute of Medicine. National Academies of Science. 2003.*

## GET INVOLVED:

### Ellington Drug Abuse Prevention Council (DAPC)

The Ellington DAPC has been coordinating substance abuse prevention initiatives for the youth of Ellington for more than 10 years. The DAPC received grant funding from the state to target underage drinking prevention in Ellington.

PACT (Parent Action Community Task Force), a new subgroup of the DAPC, connects concerned parents interested in bringing awareness to the community at large, especially other parents of the dangers to our youth.

#### Interested? Contact:

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[dstauffer@ellington-ct.gov](mailto:dstauffer@ellington-ct.gov)

On **Oct 17 at 7 pm** in the Ellington HS Auditorium, come hear **Dr. John Rosemond**, family psychologist and best-selling author, hold seminar on “**Teen Proofing: Fostering Responsible Decision Making in Your Pre-Teen or Teenager**” Tickets: \$10, Call 870-3130 for more info!

## TIPS FOR PARENTS ON UNDERAGE DRINKING:

- Be clear, direct, and specific. Let your child know exactly what is acceptable and unacceptable when it comes to alcohol. Be clear about expectations.
- Monitor alcohol use in your home. If you keep alcohol in your home, keep track of the supply. Do not keep alcohol in an accessible place. Never serve alcohol to underage youth.
- Set a good example. Parents and guardians are important role models for their children. If you use alcohol, set a good example and drink responsibly.
- Take advantage of the media to discuss alcohol related issues. Television, newspapers, movies, and magazines present opportunities for discussions.
- Talk with your teen about ways to handle peer pressure. Teach your teen how to say "no" and to suggest doing something different (safe). To feel comfortable talking openly with you, your teen needs to know that you will not punish him or her for being honest.
- Encourage your child to talk. Use door-opening statements ("Tell me what is going on.") that invite a response.
- Develop family rules about teen drinking. When parents establish clear "no alcohol" rules and expectations, their children are less likely to begin drinking.
- One reason kids drink is out of boredom. Studies indicate that the availability of enjoyable, alcohol-free activities is a big reason for deciding not to use alcohol.

**Underage drinkers are responsible for almost 20% of all alcohol consumed in the United States, spending an average of 22.5 billion dollars on alcohol a year.**

*-Foster et al, JAMA, 2003*



## RESOURCES FOR PARENTS:

[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org): Visit the clearinghouse to find information on substance use disorders, prevention, local treatment options, and to learn of events and trainings going on in the state.

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com): Learn the facts of drug and alcohol use, learn tips on communicating with your teen, and read advice from parents who have dealt with their own teens' drug and alcohol issues.

[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org): Click on Statistics and Resources, then Underage Drinking Research to learn more about how alcohol impacts the developing brain, why the "21 and over" law is in place, and see latest DUI rates.

This issue of Parents Prevent Newsletter was made possible by Ellington's Drug Abuse Prevention Council (DAPC) and ERASE, your Regional Action Council.

For more information about ERASE, please visit [www.ctprevention.org/erase](http://www.ctprevention.org/erase).