

# An Issue of Influence...

## Underage Alcohol Abuse

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month



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### *Underage and under the influence.*

What does that mean exactly? Alcohol is by far the substance of choice for our youth, as supported by our own Hubbard County statistics. We talk a great deal about kids on drugs, but how much attention do we pay to those who are drinking? Did you know that a teenagers brain was not designed to handle the influences of alcohol? The teenage brain is on a mission. From about age 10-23, the human brain is out to learn, to reinforce what its learned and get rid of what isn't being used.

So what does that have to do with underage drinking? Everything. A teen who drinks consistently trains his or her brain to become familiar with the effects that alcohol has on it. During this time the frontal lobe of a teen brain is immature and still developing. The brain's frontal lobes are important for planning, forming ideas, making decisions, and using self-control. When a teen is using, thought processes that develop and become permanent involve the brain's reaction to alcohol or drugs.

### **Bottom line:**

Drinking alcohol over a long period of time can damage the frontal lobes forever.

So back to the influence part:

- Underage drinking is involved in most deaths from injuries, which are the main cause of death for people under age 21.
- Persons reporting first use of alcohol before age 15 are more than five times as likely to report alcohol dependence or abuse than persons who first used at age 21 or older.
- Underage alcohol use increases the risk of failing in school, other drug use, and tobacco use. It can cause a range of physical problems, from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning. It can cause changes in the structure and function of the developing brain, having consequences reaching far beyond adolescence.

Moms, dads, and grandparents are the most trusted sources of information for 9-13 year olds. So being **under the influence of a caring, loving adult** is the better way to go.

Statistics from The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking 2007

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### Now Add Energy!

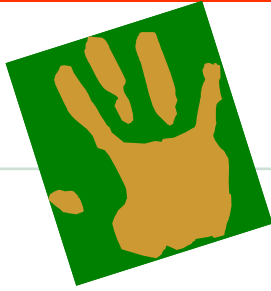
Energy Drinks are popular for kids, but in some circumstances kids drink too many and can use them as mixers for alcohol, resulting in an "alert drunk".

More alcohol is likely to be consumed because awareness of the level of intoxication is covered up by the stimulant properties of the energy drink. Once the stimulant wears off, the person may feel the effects of their blood alcohol level quickly and may have severe physical symptoms of nausea, difficulty breathing or dehydration.

Alcohol poisoning can occur without warning.



About what percentage of youth: Answer:  
 Binge drink alcohol? 20%, 40%, 60% or 80%?  
 Drink some alcohol? 20%, 40%, 60% or 80%?



## Five Tips for Parents

As a result of the CDC report, New York University Child Study Center developed five tips for parents to use to curb teen binge drinking by

**maximizing the influence** they have over their children's decision-making.

- **Clearly state what actions you expect your teen to take** when confronted with substance use. Teens who know what their parents expect from them are much less likely to use substances, including alcohol.
- **Talk about the alcohol use that your children observe.** Parents need to make it clear how they want their children to handle substances, such as alcohol and tobacco. Children need to have controlled exposure to learn the rules of acceptable use.
- **Help your teen find leisure activities** and places for leisure activities that are substance-free. Then, keep track of where, with whom, and what your teen is doing after school and during other free times.
- **Limit the access your children have to substances.** Teens use substances that are available. They report that they sneak alcohol from home stocks, take cigarettes from relatives, and obtain marijuana from people that they know well.
- **Inform teens about the honest dangers** that are associated with alcohol use and abuse. Although teens are not highly influenced by such information, some discussion of negative consequences has some impact on the decisions they make. Especially emphasize how alcohol clouds one's judgment and makes one more likely to be harmed in other ways.

### It's an Issue of Influence.

## Did you know?

### *Parents Do Have Influence*

"Contrary to popular belief, parents remain the greatest influence over their children's behavior," said Richard Gallagher, Ph.D., Director of the

Parenting Institute and the Thriving Teens Project at the NYU Child Study Center, in a news release. "Though media and peers play a role, parental influence is critical and there are ways parents can maximize that influence to reduce the likelihood that their children will engage in binge drinking."

### Youth Event Calendar

#### **Rock Sober**

#### *Creative Expression*

**April 6th:** 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

**April 7th: Posters** 5:00-6:30 Laporte School

#### **Alternative High:**

#### **April 9th: Domination Dodgeball**

7:30-10:30@ Laporte School

#### **Rock Sober**

#### *Community Building*

**April 13th:** 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

**April 14th:** 5:00-6:30 Laporte School

#### **Alternative High:**

**April 17th** TBA

#### **Rock Sober**

#### *Guest Speaker*

**April 20th:** 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

**April 21st:** 5:00-6:30 Laporte School

#### **Alternative High:**

**April 24th: Back to the 50's**

8-11:30 @ Minnesota Fountain

#### **Rock Sober**

#### *Reflection, Totems and*

#### *Individual Plans*

**April 27th:** 4:00-5:30 pm @HAPA Office

**April 28th:** 5:00-6:30 Laporte School



Laporte Health Fair Expo April 7th, 09