

Your Role

Alcohol and other substance abuse problems are not easy topics to deal with—they are complex issues. Here you will find a list of useful first steps to use at home. Children care about their parents' opinions, even if they don't show it directly. In fact, the key reason kids give for not drinking is that they do not want to disappoint their parents.ⁱ

Starting at an early age, there are some basic steps you can take with your children to minimize their risk of underage alcohol use:

- Communicate and stay involved.
- Set clear expectations for behavior.
- Practice good supervision and consistent discipline.
- Minimize conflict in the family.
- Eat dinner as a family as often as possible—this is a good time to talk about the issues your children face in a non-threatening way.ⁱⁱ

Every Vermont child and family is different, and there is no single magical solution, but the following steps have been proven to help.

Be Active

Don't assume that your children will know how you feel about underage drinking. You must take an active role in shaping their perceptions about alcohol use:

- Discourage underage drinking by directly explaining why you are against it and demonstrating appropriate decisions when alcohol is involved in your own life.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Ask questions. You can help moderate your child's drinking habits by actively monitoring their activities.^{iv v}
- Having a positive relationship with your children can serve as a protective factor and help reduce some of the risks involved with peer alcohol use.^{vi}

Limit Access to Alcohol

You can affect your children's risk of drinking by limiting their access to alcohol:

- Refuse to give or sell alcohol to your children.
- Keep your alcohol under lock and key and monitor the quantity.
- Thank store clerks for carding on alcohol purchases.
- Stay at home when your child hosts a party.
- Do not allow others to bring alcohol into your home for your children.
- Talk to other parents about not having alcohol at parties with your child.
- Plan activities in your home that are alcohol-free.

- Report underage drinking to the police.

When Your Child Attends a Party

If your child is going to a party, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Confirm that adults will be present the entire time. Get their names and contact them before the party.
- Ask if there will be any alcohol.
- Ask if there is a phone number that your child can be reached at, and ask him to contact you on a landline phone. That way the caller ID can help identify where he is.
- Discuss how your child is getting to and from the party.
- Remind teens to never get into a car with someone who has been drinking.
- Remind your child that she can call you anytime to get picked up.
- Set and enforce a strict curfew.

Planning a Safe Party

Hosting an alcohol-free party is a fun way to be a part of your child's life while encouraging healthy behavior. Here are some helpful guidelines for planning a successful event:

- Set a limit on the amount of people you plan on having.
- Decide on a specific start and end time.
- Work with your child in planning the guest list, and make sure it is by "invitation only."
- List your phone number on the invitations and welcome calls from parents.
- Set strict rules against the use of alcohol.
- Secure your own alcohol or eliminate it completely from your home.
- Set a rule that once guests leave, they cannot return. This will prevent guests from leaving, using alcohol and then returning.
- Leave backpacks at the door and do not let guests bring in their own beverages.
- Provide plenty of food, snacks and alcohol-free drinks.
- Check in on the party, but find a healthy balance between monitoring and showing respect for your teen's independence.

When You Are Away

If you go out of town and leave your teenager at home, there are a few things you should do before you leave:

- Set strict rules for when you're gone, including a no-party rule.

- Ask responsible relatives or neighbors to stay at your home, or ask them to stop by every day.
- Ask the police to drive by your house and let your child know that you've done so.

Want more information? We can help. Visit www.parentupvt.org or dial 211 for tools and resources.

ⁱ Monitoring the Future, *National Results on Adolescent Drug Use*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

ⁱⁱ *The Importance of Family Dinners*, September 2009. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, *Ninth Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health*, Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997.

^{iv} *Parenting moderates a genetic vulnerability factor in longitudinal increases in youths' substance use*, Brody, Gene H.; Beach, Steven R. H.; Philibert, Robert A.; Chen, Yi-fu; Lei, Man-Kit; Murry, Velma McBride; Brown, Anita C., *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*. Vol 77(1), Feb 2009, 1-11.

^v Lee, A. & Crano, W. D. (2009). *Monitoring matters: Meta-analytic review resells the reliable linkage of parental monitoring with adolescent marijuana use*, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4, 578-586.

^{vi} Jacob, T., and Johnson, S., *Parenting Influences on the Development of Alcohol Abuse and Dependence*, *Alcohol Health and Research World*, Volume 21, 1997.