



How Do We Reduce Underage Drinking and Adult Contribution to Minors?

A decade ago, The Parents Matter Coalition of Pierre and Fort Pierre was established to address underage drinking issues. Since then, in working with schools and the community efforts, we have been very successful in reducing underage drinking. Data collected from surveys in 2004 group in 2004, 36% of 6-12 graders had not used alcohol within the last 30 days. In comparison to surveys in 2016, 86% had not used alcohol in the past 30 days. That is a 50% decrease in teen alcohol consumption in our area! Hard work, education, promotion and legislation have been key factors in getting changes to take place.

Parents Matter has worked diligently to reduce underage drinking by decreasing youth's access through planning and implementation strategies. This didn't happen overnight; the changes took years. The survey

percentages speak volumes and the majority of our youth either have limited access to alcohol or they have simply chosen not to drink.

In questionnaires supplied by Parents matter, parents and community members revealed that teens source of alcohol were parents and other adults. Main barriers were the "attitudes and beliefs" of parents regarding underage drinking. Simply stated, if the parents didn't approve of underage drinking, most teens didn't participate drinking. Unfortunately, there are parents that not only approve of underage drinking but they are too willingly the source of the alcohol for the teens, otherwise known as "social hosting".

What exactly is Social Hosting? A Social Host is an individual who hosts a social gathering and knowingly permits consumption of alcoholic beverages his or her premises to underage teens or adults. Many people don't realize this in an actual law passed in July 2014, by Governor Dugaard. The law was pressed by Joyce Glynn, who lost her son Michael to a one car accident the morning after he got drunk at a friends' graduation party. This law also makes it easier for law enforcement to make arrests when social hosting is happening and any violation is a misdemeanor.

So what can you do if you suspect or are aware of a Social Hosting situation occurring? Contact Law Enforcement, and let them follow through appropriately. The Social Hosting law gives them a backbone to arrest anyone who contributes alcohol to a minor, and rest assured your name will remain anonymous. You could actually save someone's life by reporting it. If you choose to look the other way and neglect to report it, should an accident or incident happen, it could weigh on your conscience the rest of your life.

Putting aside the legal ramifications of teenage alcohol usage, other than the obvious short term affects of alcohol use most everyone is familiar with, how does alcohol affect a teen? Teens brains are still developing and drinking alcohol can cause permanent damage in brain function, such as memory loss, major and fine motor skills and coordination. Teens cannot metabolize alcohol as fast as an adult either. Teenage girls and boys who drink and binge drink are at a high risk to car accidents, violent behavior, alcohol poisoning, and other health problems. When teens drink it significantly increases the chances of them developing alcohol problems in their adult life. Their cognitive thinking is impaired under the influence which in turn leads them to make bad decisions. The harsh reality is even if your teen might not be drinking at a party;, they are still in danger for being assaulted or raped, by others who have been drinking.

Although we are proud of our efforts in educating teens and adults to reduce underage drinking and Social Hosting, our work is ongoing. You can join us in our efforts to prevent underage drinking, social hosting and an array of efforts in keeping our communities safe and healthy places to live, work and play.

Contact us for more information at: 224-3189 www.parentsmattercsd.com or email: parentsmatter@pie.midco.net or "Like Us" on our Facebook page: ParentsMatterCoalition for updates and helpful ideas.

The Social Hosting Law was created in 2014 making it a crime for adults to provide alcohol to teens.

Supplying alcohol to a person under 18 is a Class 1 Misdemeanor.*

No person, acting as a social host, may, knowingly, permit any person under the age of 18 to illegally consume any alcoholic beverage, regardless of the source of the alcoholic beverage, on or at the premises of the person acting as social host.

Supplying alcohol to a person age 18-20 is a Class 2 Misdemeanor.*

No person, acting as a social host, may, knowingly, permit any person aged 18, 19 or 20 to illegally consume any alcoholic beverage, regardless of the source of the alcoholic beverage, on or at the premises of the person acting as social host.

It is a defense against a conviction for a violation of sections 1 and 2 of this Act that, immediately upon learning of the illegal consumption, the social host or an agent of the social host took effective and appropriate action to stop the illegal consumption and to secure or to attempt to secure the contraband alcoholic beverages.