

PARENTS' ROLE IN PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING AND SOCIAL HOSTING

Prevention Action Alliance

Lifetime Prevention | Lifetime Wellness

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING

Underage drinking is illegal and dangerous. Alcohol use during adolescence interferes with brain development and increases the risk of alcohol use disorder.¹ Teens who drink are more likely to face academic struggles, legal trouble, social issues, and physical or sexual violence.^{1,2} Alcohol contributes to thousands of youth deaths each year, including car crashes, overdoses, and suicides.¹

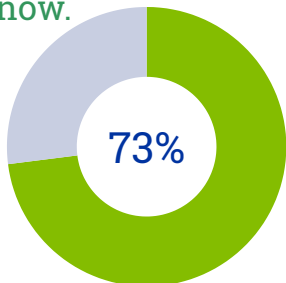


Alcohol is the most used drug among adolescents.³

- 10.4 million people ages 12–20 drank alcohol in the past year
- 5.1 million drank in the past month
- 2.9 million reported binge drinking
- 576,000 reported heavy alcohol use⁴



Most underage drinkers get alcohol from people they know.



- In Ohio, 73% of adolescents reported obtaining alcohol without having to pay for it.
- This includes 32% who received it from a parent or a friend's parent.⁵

[1] [Underage Drinking in the United States \(ages 12 to 20\) | National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#).

[2] [About Underage Drinking | Alcohol Use | CDC](#)

[3] [Substance Use in Adolescence | HHS Office of Population Affairs](#)

[4] [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2024 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

[5] [Ohio Healthy Youth Environments Survey - OHYES! Entire State Report for 2023-2024](#)

[6] [Providing Alcohol for Underage Youth: What Messages Should We Be Sending Parents? - PMC](#)

[7] [Ohio Alcohol Law for Parents and Students | Ohio Investigative Unit](#)

WHAT IS SOCIAL HOSTING?

Social hosting is when adults provide alcohol to minors, often at parties. It's illegal across the U.S. and is linked to serious health and safety risks for teens. It also undermines the adult-teen relationship and encourages risky behavior.⁶

Is it ever legal to provide alcohol to minors?

In Ohio, it is illegal to serve or allow alcohol consumption by anyone under 21 on your property, unless they consume alcohol in the presence of their parent, legal guardian, or spouse who is over 21, the consumption is part of a religious service or prescribed for medical treatment by a doctor. Penalties for violating Ohio Alcohol Law can include fines, jail time, and civil liability for any harm caused by underage drinking.⁷



THE ROLE PARENTS PLAY IN PREVENTING UNDERAGE DRINKING

As a parent, your choices send powerful messages. If you provide alcohol to minors, you're showing teens that it's okay to ignore rules or that being "cool" matters more than their health. Taking away the car keys may prevent drinking and driving, but it ignores the many other dangers of underage alcohol use, like brain development issues, risky behavior, and addiction.

Giving teens alcohol doesn't teach responsibility – it signals permission. This often encourages more experimentation, not less.⁶ Instead, parents should act as the first line of defense against underage drinking by setting clear expectations and following through with consequences.

What can parents do?

Talk openly about alcohol.

- Ask what your child knows about drinking. Do their friends drink? Do they feel pressure to drink? Listen closely and respond with empathy.

Know your teen and their friends.

- Pay attention to your teen's well-being. Shifts in mood, sleep, grades, hygiene, or social groups may be signs that it's time to check in about their health and behaviors, including the risks of underage drinking.

Be a good role model.

- Don't serve alcohol to teens. If you drink, exercise moderation, and make healthy, low-risk choices.

Secure alcohol at home.

- Teens may sneak drinks from the fridge or liquor cabinet. Keep alcohol stored and monitored.

Partner with other parents.

- Stay in touch with other families to ensure kids are where they say they'll be and that no alcohol is being served. Align on shared expectations.

If you're hosting a party, be present.

- Safely store alcohol and supervise kids. Check in regularly to prevent risky behavior.

If your child is attending a party, ask questions.

- Contact the host's parents to confirm plans, supervision, and that no alcohol will be available. Don't be afraid to offer alternative activities if needed.



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