



# ***Parents Supporting Parents: You Are Not ALONE***

*Helping Teens Make Safe & Healthy Choices*

## **LWHS PTSA Parent Pledge Program**

### **Why you should care**

***Two reasons: First and foremost “our” kids are indeed our future. Their actions today will affect their future and ours for many years to come.***

The presence and use of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, inhalants and other drugs is absolutely linked to many health, social and economic problems that slowly but most surely erode our families and communities.

Illnesses, addictions, accidents, premature deaths, birth defects, violence, domestic or partner abuse, other crimes, unwanted teen pregnancy, school failure or dropout, delinquency, depressed communities, joblessness, and homelessness - all have strong correlations to substance abuse.

If these aren't enough reasons to get involved and get active, try this: drug and alcohol abuse costs you and every member of your family. It is estimated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that substance abuse-related problems cost every man, woman and child in America \$800 a year - or nearly \$200 billion. These costs are reflected in higher health care costs, higher insurance, more tax dollars for law enforcement and incarceration, lost worker productivity, and on and on.

Prevention is everybody's business and must involve people, groups, and systems at every level of society.

School functions, academic and social, are always well supervised. Unfortunately, this is not always the case when social gatherings are held outside of school. Unsupervised social gatherings may result in situations where our children make poor choices.

# Why Talking is NOT Enough

As children enter high school, some parents would rather have their children drinking at home, to keep them off the roads and protect them from car accidents. But there are many more risks associated with “supervised” alcohol use:

## The Consequences

A person who begins drinking before the age of 15 is more than five times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than someone who waits until after age 21 to use alcohol. Every year after age 15 that a young person delays use of alcohol reduces his/her risk of dependency by 14%.

Youth who drink alcohol are at higher risk for other drug use; damage to property; use of weapons; physical and verbal violence; alcohol poisoning; inappropriate social behavior; and risky sexual contact.

Sexual activity under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is most often unprotected, increasing the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Youth can suffer an alcohol overdose more easily than adults. Even though a young person may have the same blood alcohol content as an adult, he or she is far less likely to feel the effects of intoxication than an adult would. Because they don't feel impaired when intoxicated, they are more likely to keep drinking longer than adults, thereby increasing their risk of overdose.

## The Law about Serving Alcohol to Minors

### Criminal Liability

In Washington:

It is unlawful for any person to sell, give, or otherwise supply liquor to any person under the age of twenty-one years or permit any person under that age to consume liquor on his or her premises or on any premises under his or her control.

It is unlawful for any person under the age of twenty-one years to possess, consume, or otherwise acquire any liquor.

It is unlawful for a person under the age of twenty-one years to be in a public place, or to be in a motor vehicle in a public place, while exhibiting the effects of having consumed liquor. RCW 66.44.270

These offenses are punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.

In addition, there are numerous potential crimes that may also be associated with alcohol. For instance, if a minor is found driving and has a BAC between .02-.08, the crime is punishable by a maximum 90 days jail and a \$1,000 fine. If over .08, it is punishable up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine. Of course, there are also severe licensing consequences, insurance ramifications, and other financial consequences for any DUI offense.

Parents or other adults could be held criminally liable for these offenses under a theory of "accomplice liability", even though they were not driving.

### Civil Liability

If an adult gives or allows alcohol to be consumed by anyone under 21, including one's own child and that person causes personal injury or property damages, the adult and minor are both civilly liable for financial damages. Therefore, if there is a party with alcohol in your home, even if you are unaware of it, you are responsible for injuries and damages.

## YOUTH DRUG AND ALCOHOL FAQ

1. Why should I sign a pledge to declare that I have a Drug Free Home?  
Signing the pledge will show other parents/guardians know that you support the ideas in the pledge and are making efforts to uphold it. The pledge is NOT a legally binding contract. As a parent/guardian, you cannot control absolutely everything related to your children, but you can indicate your commitment to the pledge ideas and encourage other parents to do so.
2. Why do I need to list my name and phone number in the Parent Pledge Directory?  
Being listed in the guide is optional, and you are welcome to sign the pledge without being listed. Putting your name and number on the list lets other parents know that you welcome phone calls when their children will be socializing with yours. It is one step toward making communication among parents easier and a creating a stronger community.
3. If I sign the Drug Free Homes Pledge and youth drink at my house without my knowledge, will I be removed from this list?  
No, the pledge and directory are there to support parents in their efforts, not to punish them. We hope that if something like this happens, you will be able to turn to other parents for support and to help you in working to ensure that teen social gatherings at your house are substance free.
4. If I sign the pledge, does that mean that I cannot drink at home?  
No, this is not the intent of the Drug Free Homes Pledge. It is, however, important for parents to model appropriate behavior (not necessarily abstinence) to their children. This includes showing that adults of legal drinking age may drink moderately, if they choose. Think carefully about how your behavior will be perceived by your children. Make sure you communicate that the drinking age exists to postpone use of alcohol by young people until they reach an age when they are less likely to develop a drinking problem. It is also important to show that excessive drinking is not appropriate at any age.
5. What happens if my child is going to someone's house that is not on the list?  
It is a good idea to contact that family anyway. See if your child can get a phone number for you or look in the LWHS Directory. Just because they are not listed does not mean they do not support the pledge. Direct communication is the best way to find out what will be happening at another family's house.
6. What if young people are at my house socializing and they want to stay up later than I can? Can I go to sleep and let them stay up?  
The best solution is for you or another trusted adult to stay up as long as there are young people at your house, especially when you are less familiar with the kids attending. It is important to agree in advance with your child about how late you want friends to stay, and then be awake to stick to it when the time comes. To be able to provide late night supervision, getting some extra rest before the gathering and planning a restful day for you afterwards may be helpful.
7. Will there be other information included in the LWHS Parent Pledge Directory in addition to the names and contact information of parents/guardians?  
Yes! Included in the directory will be

  - Tips on what to do when your child goes to a party;
  - List of local drug and alcohol-related resources;
  - Tips for hosting a fun and drug free party at your home;
  - Tips for keeping your child alcohol and drug free;
  - Signs of alcohol and/or drug use among youth.

# Parent Guide to Teen Parties

Your Child is Going to a Party?	Your Child is Giving a Party?
<p><b>Call the host</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure the host parents will be home all evening and that no alcohol or drugs will be allowed.</li><li>• Let the host parent know your child's transportation plans.</li></ul> <p><b>Check party plans beforehand</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know where your child is going and with whom.</li><li>• When taking your child to a party, wait to see that she/he is inside the house.</li><li>• If you don't know the host parents, introduce yourself.</li></ul> <p><b>In the event that alcohol or other drugs find their way into the party</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make it easy for your child to leave; pre-arrange for her/him to call you (or a designated adult) for a ride home.</li><li>• Establish a code word with your child in case she/he needs to leave without letting peers know.</li><li>• You might have an understanding that there will be no punishment for a call about things getting out of hand.</li><li>• Remind your child that friendship includes dissuading friends from drinking and driving.</li></ul> <p><b>Be aware than many underage drinking parties in our community take place outdoors in parks.</b></p> <p><b>Be up to greet your child when she/he comes home.</b></p>	<p><b>Plan in advance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limit the number of guests by invitation only.</li><li>• Know how your guests are getting home</li></ul> <p><b>Set a time limit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure everyone knows clearly what time the party is ending so that their rides are on time.</li></ul> <p><b>Agree to rules ahead of time, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No drugs or alcohol</li><li>• No leaving the party and returning</li><li>• No gate-crashing</li><li>• Lights on and doors open</li><li>• Some rooms of the house are off limits</li></ul> <p><b>Invite over another parent</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other adults are company for you during a long evening and can help with problems.</li><li>• Invite parents to stop in and introduce themselves that night.</li><li>• Invite parents into your house to meet you when they drop off their kids.</li><li>• Set the example that you can enjoy an evening without drugs and alcohol.</li><li>• Circulate through party rooms frequently.</li></ul> <p><b>Plan for fun!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer food and plenty of non-alcoholic drinks.</li><li>• Plan some activities such as movies, dancing, sports, karaoke, Wii tournament, etc.</li></ul> <p><b>Stay home for the entire party.</b></p> <p><b>Be visible and be aware.</b></p>

## Resources

- Washington State Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking - <http://www.starttalkingnow.org/>  
Dangers of Teen Drinking - <http://www.dontserveteens.gov/dangers.html>  
Parents. The Anti-Drug - <http://www.theantidrug.com/>  
Prevention works in Seattle - <http://www.preventionworksinseattle.org/Default.aspx?>  
Adolescent Substance Abuse Knowledge Base - <http://www.adolescent-substance-abuse.com/>

## **Tips for keeping children drug & alcohol-free**

- Most children spend most of their time doing positive, constructive activities.
  - Many young people, however, only get attention when they have done something wrong. Show your child you recognize their positive efforts through words, a note, telling someone else so they can hear you, a special meal, etc.
  - Even though schedules are busy, work around them to schedule family time.
  - Play a game, watch a movie, talk, or have dinner. This way, if your child needs to talk to you, she/he will have casual opportunities to do so.
  - Work with your child to create rules about alcohol and drugs that you agree upon and think are fair and reasonable.
  - Enforce the rules you set.
  - Know where your child is and what he/she is doing.
  - Make sure to know where she/he hangs out and that there is appropriate supervision.
  - Check on your child.
  - Don't rely on cell phones as a way of knowing your child's location. Get the telephone number for the house where they are going. Make sure cell phones are on. Learn how to text message. Be sure to tell teens that they can call or text you any time and you will pick them up.
  - Be sure that your child knows the consequences of their actions and how you would feel (sad, scared, disappointed) if he/she was involved in any alcohol or drug related accident.
  - Set positive incentives for not drinking.
  - Know your child's friends and their parents.
  - Make sure they know the rules in your house and ask them about their rules.
- 
- ▶ Signs of Potential Alcohol or Drug use among Youth
  - ▶ Parents might observe the following behaviors in a child who is using alcohol or drugs.
  - ▶ School work has declined; grades suddenly slipping or dropping dramatically.
  - ▶ Missing school (skipping secretly or too "tired" or "sick" to go)
  - ▶ Mood changes (irritable, crying)
  - ▶ Dropping out of usual activities (music, sports, hobbies)
  - ▶ Physical appearance changing (poor hygiene, unusual style changes)
  - ▶ Friends suddenly change; doesn't introduce new friends
  - ▶ Money or valuables missing from parents' purse, from home
  - ▶ Furtive or secretive behavior (e.g., bedroom door locked and takes long time to answer)
  - ▶ Hostile, aggressive outbursts
  - ▶ Seems to have "lost" motivation
  - ▶ Forgetfulness
  - ▶ Unusual sleeping habits, (changing over time or dramatic change)
  - ▶ Depressed
  - ▶ Anxious
  - ▶ My child just doesn't seem "right"

Parents who notice a shift from their child's normal patterns and behavior that cannot be attributed to the ordinary stresses of adolescence and changing level of independence should pay particular attention to their child's appearance, speech, and behavior. Their independence should not simply be allowed regardless of behavior, but should be dependent upon living up to certain basic expectations. If your teen now refuses to do chores, misses curfew regularly, creates a chaotic and hostile environment in the home, and frequently appears to be depressed, agitated, or "sleepy," you should investigate further, maintain clear channels of communication, and set clear boundaries and rules.

## Parent Tips

**Parent Tip #1:** Be aware of your own alcohol use and the messages you communicate about alcohol. One of the most common reasons teens give for drinking or using drugs is to de-stress. Perhaps you can role model a different way to let go of tension after a hard day. Share ideas with your student about healthy means of relieving stress—exercising, talking to a friend, getting more sleep, having a good laugh.

**Parent Tip #2:** December is a time for teens to enjoy a short break from school and to celebrate the winter holidays. One way for you to make sure that your teen's celebrations are drug and alcohol free is to offer to host a party. Provide all the food and beverage; ask the party goers to leave all backpacks, food and drink at the door. Have one way in and out of the party and keep an adult posted to screen for teens that may have "partied" beforehand. Don't allow teens to come and go.

**Parent Tip #3:** Make a resolution to be a better listener to your teen. Your student probably has a lot of stress as they heads back to school after the holidays. The semester ends January, and they probably intended to study more than they actually did over the break. Listen as your student expresses concern about the work ahead. Resist the temptation to advise or scold.

**Parent Tip #4:** Your teen—even when s/he is critical or distant think of a way to say "I love you" or "I am proud of you" every day. Students are receiving semester grades. Good or bad, don't let grades define your teen's sense of worth or accomplishment. Help your teen see his/her non-academic value to your family and the larger community outside of the academic arena.

**Parent Tip #5:** What's the biggest deterrent to your child using drugs and alcohol? **IT'S YOU.**

As one parent said: "I wish I'd known how important it is to be awake when your teen comes home in the evening. Give him or her big hug, and take a deep sniff for tell-tale signs of alcohol or marijuana use. Engage your teen in conversation about the evening to make sure your teen is sober and coherent before going to bed. Teens are awake and talkative late at night and you'll probably find these conversations enlightening and insightful." There are many misconceptions by parents and teens concerning adolescents and alcohol use, which need to be addressed.

**Myth: All teenagers will drink at some point, no matter how hard we try to stop them. Myth: A person will not do anything while intoxicated that he or she would not do sober.**