



# Week Of AWARENESS

FOR PARENTS

In the wake of the tragic death of a Chiles High freshman in a preventable car crash, local organizations are teaming up in a community-wide discussion on the pressures and dangers facing today's teens related to alcohol and drug use.

In a partnership with the Leon County School District, the "Week of Awareness" is scheduled for May 17-22. It will feature in-depth, collaborative reporting by both the Tallahassee Democrat and WCTV – in print, on television and online at Tallahassee.com and WCTV.tv.

The goal is to arm students, parents and school officials with the information and confidence to have difficult discussions.

The Tallahassee Teen-Parent Alcohol Attitude Survey documents widespread alcohol use (and some drug use) at parties and informal get-togethers, especially beginning in high school. Chances are good that your teen may be offered alcohol and may face peer pressure to drink and engage in other risky choices. The best way to keep your teen safe is to open up the lines of communication with him or her and with his or her friends' parents. Some tips on how to talk with your child about alcohol and drugs:

► **Acknowledge prevalence, temptation and peer pressure**

*"I know that alcohol is present at many parties and get-togethers and becomes accessible more and more toward the end of high school"*

*"You are going to meet people in high school who make different choices, including using alcohol and drugs. You may even face pressure to do that yourself"*

*"I realize that you are moving closer to adulthood every day and you may be tempted to experiment with drinking or using pot or pills"*

► **Clearly express your desires for your child**

*"But it's important to me that you know I do not approve of you drinking alcohol or using drugs, including pot or prescription medicines that weren't prescribed for you, because I'm responsible for you, and I care about your health, happiness, and future."*

*"I also care about you being open with me, and feeling comfortable to share your thoughts, experiences, or desires. While it is not always easy to do so, I will share my views with you, too."*

► **Discuss consequences (natural and imposed)**

*"I realize you may hear different things from different people, but the fact is there are real consequences to using alcohol or drugs, including:*

- *Legal consequences – these choices are against the law*
- *Safety consequences – impact on adolescent brain, risk of being in a crash, greater lifetime chance for alcoholism/addiction, higher risk of sexual assault/activity*
- *Life consequences – impact on getting into college, our ability to trust you and grant you freedoms, how you are viewed by others*
- *Imposed consequences – our willingness to let you drive a car, go to parties, spend the night with friends, participate in extra-*

*curriculars, have unrestricted access to your mobile devices*

► **Talk through scenarios, "what ifs"**

**"So what do you think you'd do if..."**

*... You spent the night at a friend's house, their parents weren't home and they started drinking*

*... You went to a party where drinking or drug use was going on*

*... Other teammates offered you pot and teased you for saying no*

*... You were at a party and a girl who was drinking a lot was going into a bedroom with a guy*

*... A friend who'd been drinking was planning to drive home*

*... Someone you don't know as well at a party had been drinking and was about to drive home*

*... You went to a party with a friend who was drinking, and he was supposed to be your ride home*

*... Your friend drank to excess and was vomiting or unconscious..."*

▶ **Reach agreements, have a system, sign a contract**

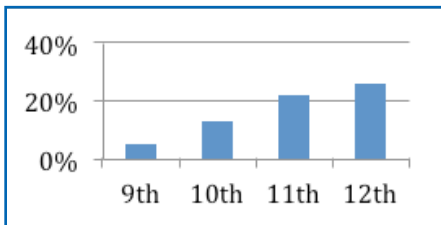
Negotiate terms with your teen and record those agreements in a “contract” that both of you sign:

- *Make clear that they have no guarantee of privacy if you have reason to suspect that they may be making unsafe decisions (i.e. you may review their text messages, computer history, contents of their room, etc.)*
- *Discuss what you agree to do if your teen is uncomfortable in a social situation (i.e. pick them up, have friends lined up to pick them up, etc.)*
- *Include consequences for violations, i.e. loss of privileges*

▶ **Teens use of alcohol**

26% of parents who believe their child has consumed alcohol

40% of students who report that they've used alcohol



Students who drink monthly or more by grade

▶ **Drinking at parties**

11% of parents believe alcohol is always present at parties

30% of students who report that alcohol is always present at parties

▶ **Where students get alcohol**

54% at friend's house without parents knowing

53% at home without parents

61% at house party with no parents

15% report their friends' parents have supplied alcohol to them

▶ **Parent views**

58% say under no circumstances should my child drink alcohol

42% say most teenagers try alcohol and they would rather they did it in a safe setting

18% say they would permit their teen to drink in their home if suspected their child would be out drinking

▶ **Parent-to-Parent Strategies**

Meet with the parents of your child's friends

Host a get-together to openly discuss attitudes regarding teen alcohol and drug use, parental oversight, supervision and verification

Don't assume other parents have the same rules and values as you. Discuss expectations: Do they allow or forbid drinking? If friends are spending the night, can they go out without clearing it with parents?

The Tallahassee Teen-Parent Alcohol Attitude Survey can be used as a starting point for discussions with other parents about their attitudes, preferences and perceptions

Exchange home and cell phone numbers for parents and teen friends

Reach agreements about what information you will share, when you will call to verify plans, etc.

